

## St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay – Liturgy

<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany - February 2, 2025

### Call to Worship

It is love which calls us here.

**That love which may see its own shadow  
yet continues to bring light to all.**

It is love which gathers us to this place.

**That love which whispers in our hearts,  
the love which sings in our silent souls.**

It is love which surrounds us in these moments.

**That love which is fresh with each breath,  
the love which endures forever.**

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### Hymn

*Be still and know that I am God*

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- |                                     |                                     |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Be still and know that I am God. | 2. I am the Lord that healeth thee. |
| Be still and know that I am God.    | I am the Lord that healeth thee.    |
| Be still and know that I am God.    | I am the Lord that healeth thee.    |

3. In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.  
In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.  
In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.

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### Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Almighty and everlasting One, your power is incomparable,  
your majesty infinite, and your love beyond our imagining.

You are hidden in mystery, and yet so present.

In a hectic world, you are peace and rest.

In a harsh world, you are tenderness and mercy.

In the cold and dark of winter, you are light and comfort,

and so we bring you our worship, for you are the One who created us,

the One who redeems us, and the One who gives us life, our one and only God,  
to whom we offer all love and loyalty, now and always.

Your loving kindness endures forever, so we confess to you our sin:

**God, whose name is love,**

**we confess our faults and failings,**

**knowing you know us through and through.**

**You tell us that love is patient and kind,**

**and you know when our patience and kindness fall short.**

**You tell us love is never rude or selfish,**

**and you see the times we insist on our own way.**

**Forgive us the excuses we make to ourselves when our love falters.**

**Strengthen us by your Spirit so that our love is genuine and reliable. Amen.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany. Presbyterian World Service and Development Sunday. February 2, 2025. Year C.

## Assurance of Forgiveness

God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.  
As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is God's love;  
as far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our sins.  
Thanks be to God whose love and forgiveness are steadfast.  
May we be steadfast in our forgiveness of one another.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany. Presbyterian World Service and Development Sunday. February 2, 2025. Year C.

## Scripture Reading 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup>If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup>or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup>it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup>It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup>Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. <sup>9</sup>For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; <sup>10</sup>but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. <sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. <sup>12</sup>For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. <sup>13</sup>And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

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## Message What's love got to do with it?

I want to begin today by sharing with you words written on the website *2025 International Day Of Commemoration In Memory Of The Victims Of The Holocaust*. This is the introduction,

The Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities (AIPG) observes January 27, 2025, as the 20th International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, marking the 79th anniversary of the liberation of the former German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1945. The United Nations General Assembly established this annual International Day in November 2005. This day serves as a poignant reminder of the atrocities committed during one of the darkest chapters in human history.

2025 marks 80 years since the end of the Second World War and the Holocaust. Eighty years ago, in response to the atrocities of the war and the Holocaust, governments of the world established the United Nations, pledging to work

together to build a just world where human rights were enshrined, and all could live with dignity, in peace. Acknowledging the milestone year, the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme has chosen as its guiding theme for 2025, “Holocaust remembrance and education for dignity and human rights”.

The theme reflects the critical relevance of Holocaust remembrance for the present, where the dignity and human rights of our fellow global citizens are under daily attack. The Holocaust shows what happens when hatred, dehumanization and apathy win.

Its remembrance is a bulwark against the denigration of humanity, and a clarion call for collective action to ensure respect for dignity and human rights, and the international law that protects both. Holocaust remembrance safeguards the memories of survivors and their testament of life before the Holocaust – of vibrant communities, of traditions, of hopes and dreams, of loved ones who did not survive.<sup>1</sup>

Though we are a few days out from January 27<sup>th</sup> the world seems to be in a place right now where we need to remember what human beings are capable of doing to huge swaths of people. The war in the Ukraine continues, the decimation of Gaza and its people still fresh in our minds, and how in the U.S. the government is rounding up people because they are not white and English speaking and deporting them. The President is clear that diversity, equity, and inclusion is a threat and I am really afraid that Canada is going to follow a similar path.

I have wondered of myself, what would I be willing to do if the Canadian government started rounding up people based on their own definitions of a person’s value. We are not immune to having done great atrocities in our own country. We need only remember Residential Schools and the government’s work at trying to decimate the indigenous populations in those years. I am also keenly aware that churches went along with that work as the government systematically tried to take the “savage out of the Indian.”

I just came back from the Dominican Republic. There I learned that there is no such thing as an indigenous person because the indigenous population was either killed by sword or disease because of colonization, and what was left integrated into a mixed population. They are a proud people, but the traces of those who first inhabited that part of the island are growing fainter and fainter. And this is the story over and over again when we look at how Spain, Portugal, France, England, and the Netherlands colonized areas around that globe that they somehow deemed were theirs for the taking. They viewed the natural resources as valuable and the people as servants and slaves for the work of delivering those resources. They did not see the people as human beings but rather more like livestock and useful as a means to an end. The indigenous peoples were not regarded as intellectuals or equals who just happened to engage in the world in a way those who landed did not understand, nor did the colonizers feel the need to learn.

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<sup>1</sup> [2025 International Day Of Commemoration In Memory Of The Victims Of The Holocaust | The Auschwitz Institute](#)

Now I realize that I am talking generally. Of course there were individuals who cared, who tried to get to know those they were engaging with, but it was not the mandate of the explorers and conquerors to get to know those who they encountered unless it was for the purpose of exploitation, and if the people did not comply, there was violence.

In modern times we have seen or at least been taught about the holocaust. It was unimaginable horror, where one nation was used for the scapegoating purposes of a narcissistic leader who somehow convinced his own nation that Jewish people and others were the enemy, or needed to be purged. There doesn't seem to be a clear line to why Hitler chose this, but somehow, he convinced one group of people to turn against others, and people believed the rhetoric.

One could go on and on about how groups of people have turned on other human beings. Human history is replete with example after example, and if we think that we are immune to this kind of human behavior in our own time, then we are sorely mistaken.

And the church is not devoid of its own history of conflict. In fact, much conflict has been initiated due to people's beliefs. So, you may ask, why this reading about love? In Tina Turner's words, "What's love got to do with it?"

In Paul's time, as he wrote to the church in Corinth, he was well aware of the conflict within this fledgling Christian community of faith. The words you heard today in the scripture reading are so often heard at weddings as a sweet refrain about love that we don't even realize that the reason Paul was writing about love in the first place was that people were in conflict with one another. People were playing the games of power and prestige that have always plagued humans.

In terms of that church, those who had certain gifts thought of themselves more highly than others, and others gave them that power and prestige thinking that they were the better ones with the more important gifts. But Paul, using a first person perspective, and tongue in cheek was saying, "if the shoe fits" ... and so he says, "If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.<sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.<sup>3</sup> If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing."

And this passage does not come without a context. Paul has spent what we have numbered as the 12 chapters ahead of this talking about the challenges in this particular community of faith and about gifts given to each by the Holy Spirit which are important for the church and without which the church does not function as it should. Yet, once again, human beings have taken gifts to be used for the good of all and used them to set people above and apart from one another rather than becoming a community of faith, hope, and love.

And in this community of faith, hope, and love, the message of love stands above and beyond all else. So, what does love have to do with it? Well, it doesn't matter how gifted we are, if we don't know how to love in real terms, not some sentimental romantic way,

but in the dirt of life, with all the pain, struggle, and unknowns, then we are not loving as God loves.

Paul continues to write on the topic of love, and we so often hear this as being spoken by one person to another, but it is really the one person, Paul, speaking to an entire community of faith. This is love lived in community. Think about that.

It is how we as a church are to respond to each other, to the community outside these walls, and with love and how we are to respond when people are threatened. Our love is to be patient; kind; not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. Our love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. The kind of love we are called to bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

Here is a caveat, this kind of love doesn't mean you stay in abusive relationships where you can be continually threatened with harm. Staying in that kind of relationship is not love, that is control and power over another human being. The kind of thing I am warning against. The love that Paul writes about, the love that Jesus lived and died for, that love is something else. It is love in action because another's well-being or value as a human being is threatened.

As we look at what is happening politically around the globe and in our own country, I do not hesitate to say I am more than worried. I fear for those who cannot protect themselves. But I also wonder, I am able to show up and stand up if people around me, in my community, in this country are threatened. Have I stood up for marginalized people and, given the current political climate and impending elections, am I going to vote for those who will care for the least of us, the most vulnerable? How far am I willing to go to show love when the cost of standing up for what is love in God's word, the Bible, may cost me as well?

I don't have answers. I have to say, I don't know. But we need to think about what kind of love we are called to as Christians. This is a getting down and dirty kind of love, where what we say and do matters...where love has *everything* to do with it. How we show our Christian love, in word and in deed, can potentially make people angry with us, but to not stand up in love for those who have no power, is our Christian calling. It is risky. It is not easy. And it is frightening.

As I read these next lines from the last part of the scripture, they take on a new meaning for me about maturing in faith and responsibility for others. As you hear them ponder what they say to you in our own time and how we interact in and with the world.

“<sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. <sup>12</sup>For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. <sup>13</sup>And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

What's love got to do with it? Well, Everything!

## Prayers of the People

O God, your love is patient.

We give you thanks for all those who have been patient with us, teaching us and caring for us in so many ways.

We pray for the patience to love others as you have loved us.

O God, your love is kind.

Thank you for every unexpected gesture of kindness we have received.

Give us the courage to be kind to others, serving those who seem unkind, rude, or difficult to love in these difficult days.

Remind us that each one we meet is your child, our sibling made in your image.

O God, your love is not arrogant, nor does it seek its own interests.

Thank you for all who work to serve those who cannot fend for themselves.

Strengthen those who have lost hope and confidence in their own value.

Give us insight to speak the truth in love and to work for change that creates opportunities for those on the margins and respect for any who face discrimination.

O God, your love is not quick-tempered.

Thank you for every occasion when someone spared us from their anger.

We pray for those who are filled with anger and for all around them who face or fear violence.

Raise up advocates for children and elders who are abused, and rescue those who are trapped in relationships that injure and harm.

O God, your love bears all things; it never fails.

We thank you for those we have loved in this life

and who now dwell in the peace and joy of your presence.

Let your comfort settle on those who are bereaved or lonely this day.

We remember before you those with heavy burdens, many cares, much stress, and those who find too little comfort and help.

Open our eyes to those in need around us and show us how to offer support and companionship, for the sake of Christ, our friend and Saviour, who taught us to pray together:

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany. Presbyterian World Service and Development Sunday. February 2, 2025. Year C.

## Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen**

## Invitation to the offering

We are grateful for all God has given us in Christ and in creation, in community and in the Church that bears Jesus' name. So we offer our gifts to God in love, trusting God

will bless them and us. May all that we offer become tangible expressions of God's love at work in the world for Christ's sake.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany. Presbyterian World Service and Development Sunday. February 2, 2025. Year C.

And we give thanks for the support we receive for the ministry here at St. Andrew's in Thunder Bay. Head to our website at [standrewspres-tbay.ca](http://standrewspres-tbay.ca) or give directly through an e-transfer at [offerings.standrewspres@tbaytel.net](mailto:offerings.standrewspres@tbaytel.net).

## Hymn

### *The love of God comes close*

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1. The love of God comes close  
where stands an open door,  
to let the stranger in,  
to mingle rich and poor.  
The love of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk the Way;  
the love of God is here to stay.
2. The peace of God comes close  
to those caught in the storm,  
forgoing lives of ease  
to ease the lives forlorn.  
The peace of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk the Way;  
the peace of God is here to stay.
3. The joy of God comes close  
where faith encounters fears,  
where heights and depths of life  
are found through smiles and tears.  
The joy of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk the Way;  
the joy of God is here to stay.
4. The grace of God comes close  
to those whose grace is spent,  
when hearts are tired or sore  
and hope is bruised and bent.  
The grace of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk the Way;  
the grace of God is here to stay.
5. The Son of God comes close  
where people praise his name,  
where bread and wine are blest  
and shared as when he came.  
The Son of God is here to stay  
embracing those who walk the Way;  
the Son of God is here to stay.

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## Benediction

Go now to all to whom God sends you,  
and speak whatever words God gives you.  
Rejoice in the truth and do not be afraid.  
Let all that you do and all that you say  
be filled with love, for love never ends.

And may God be with you always to deliver you;  
May Christ Jesus put his gracious words in your mouth;  
And may the Holy Spirit bring you to completeness in faith, hope and love.  
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

[4th Sunday between Epiphany and Lent – Year C – LaughingBird](#)