

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

7th Sunday after Epiphany - February 23, 2025

Call to Worship

We gather to worship the God who crafts the whole of creation, yet who can be neither contained by its expanse nor fully described by its beauty and majesty.

We gather to worship the God who gave birth to our entire human family, who brought us into being in all our diversity, as bearers of the divine image.

We gather to worship the God who inhabits every second through all eternity, who animates us with the breath of Spirit and inspires us with the call to serve in Christ's name.

We gather to worship the God who bids us build a healthy global home filled with justice and peace, who equips us with a capacity for mercy and compassion, we gather this day as God's people, proclaimers of good news in every time and place.

© Glen E. Rainsley. *Hear Our Prayer: Resource for Worship and Devotions*. United Church Press, Cleveland, Ohio. 1996. P25.

*Hymn

God of the sparrow, God of the whale

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|---|---|
| 1. God of the sparrow, God of the whale
God of the swirling stars
How does the creature say Awe
How does the creature say Praise | 2. God of the earthquake, God of the storm
God of the trumpet blast
How does the creature cry Woe
How does the creature cry Save |
| 3. God of the rainbow, God of the cross
God of the empty grave
How does the creature say Grace
How does the creature say Thanks | 4. God of the hungry, God of the sick
God of the prodigal
How does the creature say Care
How does the creature say Life |
| 5. God of the neighbour, God of the foe
God of the pruning hook
How does the creature say Love
How does the creature say Peace. | 6. God of the ages, God near at hand
God of the loving heart,
How do your children say Joy
How do your children say Home. |

"God of the sparrow, God of the whale," words by Jaroslav J. Vajda

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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Faithful God,
you have gathered your people in faithfulness throughout many generations.
You have offered your blessing to us through their examples,
and led the Church through many changes and challenges by your Spirit.
Draw near to us this day to guide us in these uncertain times.
Root our faithfulness in the compassion and courage we meet in Jesus.
Renew us through your steadfast love so that we may dare to trust our future to you.

All praise and honour are yours, O God: Source, Saviour and Spirit of Life.
You are with us, even in our failings. Hear us as we confess our sins so that we might be able to begin again with you.

**Gracious God,
you test the mind and search the heart,
so you know the thoughts and intentions we keep hidden.
Trusting in your wisdom and mercy,
we confess the ways we have failed to love one another,
the times we looked the other way when someone needed help,
and the ways our actions betrayed your goodness.**

**Forgive us for missing opportunities to share your love,
and carrying grudges that keep us from offering the forgiveness we hope for.
Renew us with your mercy to become more merciful to others we meet,
in the example of Christ our Lord.**

God of wisdom, your Word brings life and hope.

By the power of your Spirit, open our minds to understanding, teach our hearts to love, and strengthen our wills to follow Jesus, your Living Word. Amen.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 7th Sunday after Epiphany. February 23, 2025. Year C.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear and believe the good news: anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.

The old life is gone, and new life has begun.

Trust that you are forgiven by God's generous love,
and have the courage to forgive one another for Christ's sake.

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Scripture Reading 1 Corinthians 15:35-50

³⁵⁻³⁸ Some skeptic is sure to ask, "Show me how resurrection works. Give me a diagram; draw me a picture. What does this 'resurrection body' look like?" If you look at this question closely, you realize how absurd it is. There are no diagrams for this kind of thing. We do have a parallel experience in gardening. You plant a "dead" seed; soon there is a flourishing plant. There is no visual likeness between seed and plant. You could never guess what a tomato would look like by looking at a tomato seed. What we plant in the soil and what grows out of it don't look anything alike. The dead body that we bury in the ground and the resurrection body that comes from it will be dramatically different.

⁴²⁻⁴⁴ This image of planting a dead seed and raising a live plant is a mere sketch at best, but perhaps it will help in approaching the mystery of the resurrection body—but only if you keep in mind that when we're raised, we're raised for *good*, alive forever! The corpse that's planted is no beauty, but when it's raised, it's glorious. Put in the ground weak, it comes up powerful. The seed sown is natural; the seed grown is

supernatural—same seed, same body, but what a difference from when it goes down in physical mortality to when it is raised up in spiritual immortality!

⁴⁵⁻⁴⁹ We follow this sequence in Scripture: The First Adam received life, the Last Adam is a life-giving Spirit. Physical life comes first, then spiritual—a firm base shaped from the earth, a final completion coming out of heaven. The First Man was made out of earth, and people since then are earthy; the Second Man was made out of heaven, and people now can be heavenly. In the same way that we've worked from our earthy origins, let's embrace our heavenly ends.

⁵⁰ I need to emphasize, friends, that our natural, earthy lives don't in themselves lead us by their very nature into the kingdom of God. Their very "nature" is to die, so how could they "naturally" end up in the Life kingdom?

[The Message \(MSG\)](#) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

Message Dead Seed and Flourishing Plant

If you have been to my home, you may have noticed that there is not an abundance of live plants there. As well, there is a garden in the backyard, but it is Ken who basically seeds everything, with a little help from me, and he is the one who keeps it alive and growing. I basically do the harvesting and that is about it, and even then, Ken is always in there as well. All this to say that I have very basic knowledge about growing anything and I am really bad at keeping anything alive.

What I do know is that what appears to be a dead seed, when sown and nurtured, becomes something entirely different. I have on a few occasions received a packet of mixed seed as a gift and other than the picture on the front of the package not had a clue what I was getting. I had no idea what seed matched which flower in the picture. Now I realize that there are many others who would have a clue, still, and regardless, what is planted is not like that which grows.

And this is pretty much the basis of the whole diatribe that the Apostle Paul launches into in this part of chapter 15 in the first letter to the Corinthians. And a reminder, this is part of a whole letter. In worship we carve out pieces of scripture to learn and ponder, but we cannot forget that there is a whole background upon which this part of the letter is built. One of the things we also tend to forget is that the reason for writing the letter in the first place was because the church family in Corinth was not getting along. There were people playing games of one-up-man-ship around who had been given the more important spiritual gifts and there were divisions around all kinds of teaching. There were even lawsuits among them and it seemed that taking care of one another had taken a back seat to seeing who could have control and power. It was as if they had lost the understanding of what Paul had taught them about Christ and being the grace-filled loving people they were called to be.

And Paul's writing in this letter seems to hit on a lot of issues, the one being dealt with at this point in the letter is the resurrection of the body. It may not seem like a big issue for us at this time, but it certainly was back then. And though we may wonder what the

big deal was, there is something to be learned as we look at how this curiosity and understanding of resurrection could and can impact how we live our lives today.

For starters a little background. In Paul's time, there were people with differing thoughts about resurrection. For Paul, because of Jesus' own resurrection, he connected Jesus' resurrection with our resurrection bodies. Paul says the physical, or maybe a better word would be "natural" body has continuity with our spiritual bodies. This also comes from his understanding of resurrection as a pharisee, a part of a Jewish sect which believed in resurrection in some form, but Paul here is speaking to many who are of a Greek upbringing who have learned what they know about Jesus and faith through Paul and other teachers. They do not come from the same theological background as Paul.

Those new Christians carried a lot of their own life experience and understanding with them, as we all do. And for them the thought of resurrection was more like zombie apocalypse than beautiful resurrection bodies filled with spirit. For them it would be like saying to Paul, "Yuck!" And if you read from another translation of scripture than what we heard today you would hear Paul say, "But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" and Paul responds with "Fool!" (v35-36a NRSV) That's not how it works. And then he goes into the piece around seeds. It is an analogy, and as with all things, the analogy cannot fit perfectly, but it does help with understanding. As Eugene Peterson writes in *The Message*, "⁴²⁻⁴⁴ This image of planting a dead seed and raising a live plant is a mere sketch at best, but perhaps it will help in approaching the mystery of the resurrection body—but only if you keep in mind that when we're raised, we're raised for *good*, alive forever!"¹

Another translation, called the Jerusalem Bible, writes of the mortal body and resurrection body in this way. "When it is sown it embodies the soul, when it is raised it embodies the spirit. If the soul has its own embodiment, so does the spirit have its own embodiment."

Another point Paul is trying to make in this part of his letter is that our physical bodies matter as there were some in his time who also thought a few different ways about our bodies. One was that the body was evil and so not of value it was only the spiritual that mattered. Another group thought they could do whatever they wanted with their bodies because they were saved by grace. However, bodies did and do matter. It was into a physical body of a child that God came to earth through the son Jesus. On top of that, Jesus cared for physical bodies, cared for people in his healing, feeding, and teaching. It was Jesus' fleshly presence that was nailed to a cross and left to die.

It was also after resurrection that Jesus appeared to many witnesses, he prepared breakfast, he ate with them, he could be touched. Yet his body was different, it was now his spiritual body. Both matter...our natural bodies and our spiritual bodies. Our natural bodies are what we have to work with now. Our natural bodies carry our soul, embodies

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our souls. We are to live in a way that embraces these wonderful bodies as earthen vessels of God's presence among us. God working in, with, and through us as we live day to day caring for ourselves and one another. In verse 50 Paul writes, "I need to emphasize, friends, that our natural, earthly lives don't in themselves lead us by their very nature into the kingdom of God."

Our very nature is to turn to things that really do not bring us life. Somehow it is much easier to be more concerned for ourselves than others, making sure that our needs are met while ignoring the fact that each person is made in the image of God and requires our attention, especially when forgiveness, justice, mercy, and grace are in short supply.

Paul is talking about how our natural bodies, which embody our souls, are really important but that in life after death we do not lose everything of who we are, there is continuity, but we end up in a new kind of body, one that holds our spirits. Of course we cannot know what that will look like. Still, we can trust that the two are connected because in Jesus' resurrection body the two were connected, earthly, physical body and his spiritual body. As Jesus was the first fruit of the resurrection, so too will we be raised.

How we live in this body is connected to everything about us. We cannot separate what we do from our soul or our spirit. How we live out our faith in this body is connected to our spirit. This has been a basic tenant of our faith for centuries as the scriptures have been expounded upon and studied.

Resurrection is not just a future concept, it is lived out each day in our lives based in the choices we make about how to live, how to treat others, how to care for communities of faith and communities of people. Particularly in a time when the world is holding so much tension and when we are being given opportunities to make choices from how to share our money, time, and resources, to who to vote for, know that our choices reflect our dying to that which no longer serves us in our faith and rising to life in each choice we make.

I cannot tell you how to do this as each of us faces our own choices, struggles, challenges, and have our own journey. But you do have choices about how you will live. We as a church community can walk with each other and support one another as we live into the resurrection of our bodies now and in a time to come. The promise of new life, flourishing plants, that come from what appears to be dead seed. That is what we live for and why we do this together, nurturing one another as each day we strive to flourish and grow.

I invite you to share along with me in the ancient words of the Apostles Creed. May they affirm your faith and give you hope as you hear the words about resurrection.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. AMEN

Prayers of the People

God of all life and each life:
you created us and set us in relationship with each other in families and
neighbourhoods, in communities and countries, in cultures and nations.
Today we give you thanks for all the gifts of home life and community celebration
that bring meaning and encouragement to our lives.
Thank you for the blessings we know
through the contributions of those who have gone before us.
Help us offer what we can to sustain the wellbeing of our community and country,
so that all who make it their home will find security and dignity.

God of our faith and our future,
there are so many pressures we face today,
so many problems without simple solutions.
Draw near to anyone who is struggling in economic difficulty,
and all those burdened by challenges to their health and happiness.
Ease any conflict in homes and workplaces
and inspire solutions that express mutual respect and deeper understanding.
Help us share with others the hope we find in your presence.

God of mercy and forgiveness,
You call us to live together in peace and unity.
We pray for our neighbourhoods and the nations of this world.
Where people are divided and bitterness turns into resentment,
show us how to work for reconciliation.
Where violence and fear turn neighbour against neighbour, or nation against nation.
equip leaders to work for justice that will bring peace.

Help us build a world where children enjoy a future filled with good health and happiness.

God, our hope and our help,
send your Spirit to equip our congregation with skill and resilience to weather whatever challenges and opportunities lie before us.
Strengthen friendships, new and old,
and make us a source of encouragement and connection to each other.
Help each one find a place and a purpose in our mission and ministry,
for it is as your children that we pray together in the words Jesus taught us:

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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

God is the source of all goodness. Through our offering, we express our thanks for every good thing we enjoy, and we share good things with those in need.

Be generous, as God is generous, so that the world may know that God is good.

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We give thanks for the support we receive for the ministry here at St. Andrew's in Thunder Bay. Head to our website at <https://standrewspres-tbay.ca/>

Hymn

In the Bulb There is A Flower

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1. In the bulb there is a flower,
in the seed, an apple tree,
in cocoons, a hidden promise:
butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter
there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.
2. There's a song in every silence,
seeking word and melody;
there's a dawn in every darkness,
bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future;
what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.
3. In our end is our beginning,
in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing,
in our life, eternity,
in our death, a resurrection,
at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

"In the bulb there is a flower," words and music by Natalie Sleeth. ©1986 Hope Publishing Co.

Benediction

Go in peace, filled with God grace,
to be the church through the power of the Holy Spirit
and the promise of resurrection, in this life and in the life to come. Amen.

Joyce Yanishewski written for the 7th Sunday after Epiphany, Year C. February 23, 2025.

Postlude