

May 25, 2025

## Call to Worship

Here, those who wander find a home, those who wonder discover words of hope.  
**We gather because we have heard God's whispers of grace.**

Here, we discover promises are kept, that shattered hearts are made whole.  
**We gather because we are invited by Jesus to come and receive a welcome.**

Here, those who are afraid to step into living waters  
are filled with the courage to jump in feet first.  
**We gather because the Spirit pulls us to our feet,  
meeting us in words, at the table, in community.**

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## Hymn

*Come, let us sing to the Lord our song*

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1. Come, let us sing to the Lord our song:  
we have stood silently too long;  
surely the Lord deserves our praise,  
so joyfully thank God for our days.
2. O thirsty soul, come drink at the well;  
God's living waters will never fail.  
Surely the Lord will help you to stand,  
strengthened and comforted by God's hand.
3. You dwell among us and cause us to pray,  
and walk with each other following your way;  
our precious brothers and sisters will grow  
in the fulfilling love they know.
4. Deserts shall bloom and mountains shall sing  
to the desire of all living things.  
Come, all you creatures, high and low;  
let your praises endlessly flow.

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## Prayers of Adoration and Confession

God of promise and purpose,  
we greet you this day with thankful hearts.  
As flowers unfurl and buds open,  
the beauty of your world lifts our spirits in praise.  
As children grow and students prepare to graduate,  
their energy and enthusiasm encourage us toward your future.  
Your world is full of such variety and detail,

we stand in awe of your creative imagination.  
Draw close to us in this hour of worship  
and show us the promise and purpose in our own lives.  
May we unfurl with your gift of new life,  
and move into the future, renewed by the energy of your Holy Spirit.

**God of diversity and detail, the wonders of your creation amaze us.  
Yet we confess we often fail to honour its beauty and variety  
in the details of our lives.**

**When voices differ in opinion, we listen to those we agree with.**

**We fail to honour experience different than our own.**

**We resist calls to honour the earth as if it were ours for the taking.**

**Forgive our narrow perspectives.**

**Open our eyes and our hearts to the pain and perspectives of others,  
and renew us all with your healing grace.**

**We ask this in the loving name of Jesus. Amen.**

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## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

The Word which can transform us is not some idle gossip, but good news for us. It fills us with forgiveness, equips us for service, and sends us forth to love others as God loves us.

**In our midst, the Holy Spirit teaches us all we need to know, gives us what we need in order to be faithful, and fills us with peace. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

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## **Scripture Reading Acts 16:1-15**

<sup>1-3</sup> Paul came first to Derbe, then Lystra. He found a disciple there by the name of Timothy, son of a devout Jewish mother and Greek father. Friends in Lystra and Iconium all said what a fine young man he was. Paul wanted to recruit him for their mission, but first took him aside and circumcised him so he wouldn't offend the Jews who lived in those parts. They all knew that his father was Greek.

<sup>4-5</sup> As they traveled from town to town, they presented the simple guidelines the Jerusalem apostles and leaders had come up with. That turned out to be most helpful. Day after day the congregations became stronger in faith and larger in size.

<sup>6-8</sup> They went to Phrygia, and then on through the region of Galatia. Their plan was to turn west into Asia province, but the Holy Spirit blocked that route. So they went to Mysia and tried to go north to Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus wouldn't let them go there either. Proceeding on through Mysia, they went down to the seaport Troas.

<sup>9-10</sup> That night Paul had a dream: A Macedonian stood on the far shore and called across the sea, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" The dream gave Paul his map. We went to work at once getting things ready to cross over to Macedonia. All the

pieces had come together. We knew now for sure that God had called us to preach the good news to the Europeans.

<sup>11-12</sup> Putting out from the harbor at Troas, we made a straight run for Samothrace. The next day we tied up at New City and walked from there to Philippi, the main city in that part of Macedonia and, even more importantly, a Roman colony. We lingered there several days.

<sup>13-14</sup> On the Sabbath, we left the city and went down along the river where we had heard there was to be a prayer meeting. We took our place with the women who had gathered there and talked with them. One woman, Lydia, was from Thyatira and a dealer in expensive textiles, known to be a God-fearing woman. As she listened with intensity to what was being said, the Master gave her a trusting heart—and she believed!

<sup>15</sup> After she was baptized, along with everyone in her household, she said in a surge of hospitality, “If you’re confident that I’m in this with you and believe in the Master truly, come home with me and be my guests.” We hesitated, but she wouldn’t take no for an answer.

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The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### **Message** When the Holy Spirit Leads

June 28, 2023. Ken and I had a plan. We were both tired. There had been a lot going on particularly for me with work and many responsibilities between three churches and other commitments, and Ken had been really busy with jobs as well. But that day we were leaving it all behind for a five-week vacation. The first time in all our years together that we were going to take that much time at once in order to rest. We had a brand-new 5<sup>th</sup> wheel recreational vehicle behind us and most of our camping spots booked along the route that would take us to family, but also provide much needed down time beside water and campfires. Every mile that took us further out of Thunder Bay I could feel myself shedding some of the weight of the last months, breathing even seemed to become easier.

Then five hours into our five-week vacation suddenly everything changed as a small car that had been in front of us pulled over onto the shoulder of the highway. Ken slowed down as he planned to go around them. We watched in horror as the driver did a U-turn just as we were passing. Ken was able to swerve enough to save the truck but the car caught the front of the trailer and destroyed the entire undercarriage.

Though it still can make our blood boil a little, okay, maybe a lot, we were thankful that no one was injured in the crash. However, our plans for the summer were destroyed. The map of our journey would not unfold as we had arranged. We were resilient and managed to salvage the vacation to an extent, but it was more, figure it out day by day, than the well laid out plans that we started with.

I will tell you, that struggle can lead one to more intentional prayer than when things are going smoothly. I did a lot of praying through that vacation. The prayer was often just that God would provide whatever we needed, even when we were unsure what that was in any given moment. Sometimes it was provision for actual things, others times it was for peace.

Now I don't believe it was God's will that we should find ourselves in an accident, but God did use that experience to show us goodness, provision, and grace. At times that came directly from God. It would have been difficult to say that it was coincidence because we experienced provision way too many times in those five weeks. I knew that the Holy Spirit was directing our path. Many times, the grace of God was shown to us through the generosity of people. They just did what was needed in the moment we needed them.

Which brings me to the story of Paul and his companions as they traveled, sharing the Gospel of Good News that was Jesus Christ. The story of what God has done for us in sending Jesus into the world, but Jesus also dying on a cross, rising to life, and ascending into heaven. It is a promise of abundant life right now, but also life eternally.

It is also a story of Jesus and God sending the active Holy Spirit to come along side us as we strive to live out our lives in sync with what God is up to in us and in the world. The Holy Spirit can seem rather elusive so let's take a look at that before we go further.

Some of you may recall a dictionary of theological terms that I often refer to as edited by Rolf Jacobson, a professor at Luther Seminary in Minneapolis. I use it as it put things rather humorously and in plain language. Here is some of what it says about the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit: The third person of the Trinity; sort of like Ringo [Starr of the Beatles], the Spirit is so active and vital that people either forget it's there or unhealthily fixate on it. The Holy Spirit is the active presence of God in Creation. It is the drumbeat that lays down the rhythm that provides the drive for the music, the dance, and the lyrics. Since it's also called the Holy Ghost, the Spirit often gets sidelined as being too strange, elusive, or creepy for regular conversation and use...the Spirit is simply the active presence of God here and now and for all eternity, but apparently that's hard to grasp.

The Holy Spirit can be hard to understand and pin down, because the Holy Spirit doesn't get as many headlines as the other two persons of the Trinity. While God the Father stars in creation and throughout the Old Testament, and God the Son got the lead role in all four Gospels, God the Spirit is like the musical score of a movie – you don't notice it unless it's not there. It's time to get over our heebie-jeebies about a holy ghost-thing with a sheet over its head

and realize that the Spirit is well-documented biblically and essential doctrinally. Brace yourself.<sup>1</sup>

In this story about Paul and company's travels, and Lydia and her family, the Holy Spirit is named and active. It starts with how Paul and friends ended up in Macedonia and Philippi when that wasn't where they were headed. Their plans had them heading to completely different regions, but we are told that the Holy Spirit blocked their route, not just once, but twice. We have no idea what happened to signal to them that those were not the routes that they were to take, but once Paul had the dream about the Macedonian who stood on the far shore and called across the sea, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" Paul knew exactly where they were headed next and those with him must have been convinced as everything fell into place and they headed in the new direction.

Once again, I remind you that these words are not play by play of the events. Luke, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, was present as he uses the pronoun "we" to share the stories and this one in particular. He may have made notes along the way, but these stories are told with the advantage of reflection. Luke was likely looking back on what had happened as he wrote this book. The group seemed to understand in the moment that God's hand, through the work of the Holy Spirit was leading them, but the fullness of that experience would have come in times of reflection and discernment of what was going on with them and those they encountered along the way.

The Holy Spirit was also at work in leading them to the river to pray and as they talked with the women who were gathered there. We know that the Holy Spirit was at work here as well with Lydia as we are told that "As she listened with intensity to what was being said, the Master gave her a trusting heart – and she believed!" She was so moved by the experience that she would not take no for an answer to her offer of hospitality.

This story is important for us now, particularly as a congregation as we continue to seek out where God is leading us in our own time. We know God is at work here as God is bringing us others to use the building without us seeking them out. There has been renewed energy and focus through our teams for fund raising for our work and to help others in their ministries, as well as a newly formed group that is focused on welcome and fellowship not only between people in our congregation, but also for those who use this place in various capacities.

God is at work in bringing that energy, and also new people in our midst or moving those who have been a part of this congregation for a lifetime, to participate in the ministry in ways they have not done so before.

One more thing that we are looking at, that comes out of the work we have done in the last four years is finding ways to create a place where other organizations or individuals can do their work from this building. This building is our biggest asset and it is a gift that

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<sup>1</sup> Jacobson, Rolf A., Editor. *Crazy Talk: A Not-So-Stuffy Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Augsburg Books. Minneapolis. 2008. P. 86-87.

we desire to share with others in ways that build community and strengthen community, both that of our congregation, but just as importantly the community that surrounds this place.

This is where we call on the Holy Spirit to come along side us, to guide, lead, inspire, and grant us courage. I will tell you that I don't know where this leads, but I do know that as a community of faith we have the power through Christ to make a difference. We may feel small and underrated. We may feel overwhelmed and unsure what comes next, but God is not done with us and through the Holy Spirit leading us this ministry can figure out what God is asking of us.

Though the Holy Spirit is also present to be our advocate, guide, comforter, and so much more as individuals, today, in this message, it is about how our community of faith can be led by the Holy Spirit to places and people, to ways of being people of God that we have not even been able to imagine yet. May we be prayerful, attentive, watchful, and listening, even feeling, what the Spirit is up to with us. Each of us is part of that work. Not one of you is unimportant as we seek to do God's work in the world.

May we seek to be image – bearers of God, bringing a word of hope to those who hunger and thirst for new life in Christ, and in the amazing, unpredictable power of the Holy Spirit that is the drumbeat that lays down the rhythm that provides the drive for the music, the dance, and the lyrics of our life together. Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

Lord, our God,  
The earth and all its peoples belong to you.  
As we come before you in prayer,  
we are painfully aware that the earth itself is at risk,  
from the ways your people live on it,  
and the conflicts we provoke among each other.  
We seek your healing and hope this day  
for the earth and all its creatures, and for your people of every nation.

God of healing and hope,  
we pray for peace with justice to emerge in war torn lands,  
and in every place of conflict where power struggles put innocents at risk.  
We name before you the people and places on our hearts today...

Send your Spirit of wisdom and compassion  
to break open the hearts of leaders to work with each other  
to protect the innocent and restore order for the wellbeing of all.  
May your ways of truth and justice prevail  
In every heart and in every land.

God of healing and hope,  
We pray for Presbyterian World Service and Development and its partners,

and all groups offering aid and renewal in places  
where disaster and conflict have left people at risk.  
Support those who have lost homes, families and livelihoods  
to find courage to go on  
and open hearts of those in safety to share with those in need.

God of healing and hope,  
we know that this land we call home faces conflict and pain,  
and that communities are divided by deep disagreements.  
We pray for healing and understanding to deepen  
between Indigenous people and those who settled this land  
with no thought for those who already called it home.  
Protect those who face racist attitudes and actions in daily life,  
and restore dignity and hope to those who have suffered injustice  
in a system that benefitted others.  
Open our eyes to the creativity and courage in communities  
that feel unfamiliar to us,  
and open our hearts to build new relationships with each other  
and grow closer as neighbours and friends.

God of healing and hope,  
We pray for the renewal of your creation and for the protection of species at risk.  
By your Spirit, teach us to change our ways when they are harmful to the earth,  
and inspire our ingenuity to find solutions to problems that seem so vast.

God of healing and hope,  
We pray for those who know sickness or pain,  
for all who live in grief, loneliness or anxiety,  
and all who find these uncertain times overwhelming in any way.  
In silence, we remember before you those for whom we have special concern this day.  
By your Spirit, surround each one with strength and love,  
and equip us to offer support for those whose lives are woven into ours.

God of healing and hope,  
Jesus walks with us day by day to see us through every challenge,  
and so we claim the healing and hope he offers in the words he taught us to pray:

### **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 has created a world of great diversity, full of wonder and potential. Let us honour God's gifts to us in Christ and in each other as we present our offering in support of God's purposes in the world.

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There are various ways that people give to this congregation for our work as God's people, through signing up for a monthly donation, or sending an e-transfer.

Check out the opportunities to support St. Andrew's ministry at our website, [St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay, ON – Part of the PCCWeb network of churches](#)

## Hymn

Draw the circle wide

### *Refrain*

*Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still,  
Let this be our song: no one stands alone  
Standing side by side. draw the circle wide.*

1. God the still-point of the circle  
Round whom all creation turns  
Nothing lost, but held together  
in God's gracious arms.

### *Refrain*

2. Let our hearts touch far horizons,  
so encompass great and small;  
Let our loving know no borders,  
faithful to God's call.

### *Refrain*

3. Let the dreams we dream be larger  
than we've ever dreamed before;  
Let the dream of Christ be in us,  
open every door.

### *Refrain*

## Benediction

Go forth with the spirit of wisdom and hope, with eyes enlightened and minds aroused by the power of Christ.

Be assured that wherever you go, Christ is with you.

Be kind to all who are sent your way because of the Holy Spirit who gives you the power.

Now may the One who gives you all that you are, strengthen you in faith and hope, this day and forevermore.

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