

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

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

Third Sunday of Easter - May 4, 2025

### Call to Worship

Sing praises to our Lord:

**who heals us and makes us whole.**

Sing praises to our Lord, faithful children of God:

**whose joy rises in our lives each and every day.**

Sing praises to our Lord, faithful children of God;

give thanks to God's holy name:

**God's Kingdom is near to us;**

**God's peace resides in our hearts.**

~ written by Thom Shuman, and posted on **Lectinary Liturgies**. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.ca/>

### Hymn

*There's a spirit in the air*

764

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. There's a Spirit in the air,<br>telling Christians everywhere,<br>"Praise the love that Christ revealed,<br>living, working, in our world!" | 2. Lose your shyness, find your tongue,<br>tell the world what God has done:<br>God in Christ has come to stay.<br>Live tomorrow's life today!  |
| 3. When believers break the bread,<br>when a hungry child is fed,<br>praise the love that Christ revealed,<br>living, working in our world.    | 4. Still the Spirit gives us light,<br>seeing wrong and setting right:<br>God in Christ has come to stay.<br>Live tomorrow's life today!        |
| 5. When a stranger's not alone,<br>where the homeless find a home,<br>praise the love that Christ revealed,<br>living, working in our world.   | 6. May the Spirit fill our praise,<br>guide our thoughts and change our ways.<br>God in Christ has come to stay.<br>Live tomorrow's life today! |
| 7. There's a Spirit in the air,<br>calling people everywhere;<br>praise the love that Christ revealed,<br>living, working in our world.        |   |

"There's a spirit in the air." Words by Brian A. Wren. © 1969, 1995 Hope Publishing Company. All rights reserved. Reprinted under OneLicense.net A-723877

### Prayer of Adoration and Confession

You break in, O God,

**on the road**

you break in, O God,

**exactly the way we do not believe**

you break in, O God,

**and change everything**

Why are your stories never mundane  
Why can you not just leave us alone  
and go and transform somewhere else  
that is not as certain and sure of you  
You just disrupt us and cause anxiety  
We are not people of change  
You break in, O God

**with a call**

you break in, O God

**with an invitation**

you break in, O God

**with the truth**

Why do you wait for us to respond and never give up?  
Why do you speak into our souls the truth of how we live?  
Why do you keep goading us, provoking us disturbing us with the truth?

You break in, O God

**with a new realm**

You break in, O God

**with a new world**

You break in, O God

**with your intent for the future**

You always are a challenge to us  
and we dream of that realm of yours we speak of so often  
but what disturbs us most is how you want to get there  
through us, your partners and companions,  
with space enough for everyone  
even those who persecute you  
by doing nothing

God, break in again

**and call us to be your workers**

God, break in again

**and use the gifts we are to build your realm**

God, break in again

**and change our world once more.**

So be it Amen

~ written by Rev. Roddy Hamilton, Minister of New Kilpatrick Church. Posted on the Church of Scotland's **Starters for Sunday** website. [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/starters\\_for\\_sunday/](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/starters_for_sunday/)

## **Assurance of Forgiveness (Acts 9, Psalm 30)**

God's anger lasts but a moment, but God's favor lasts a lifetime.  
The Lord forgives our shortcomings and sends deliverance through Christ,

just as the Lord forgave Saul and used him to spread the gospel.

Thanks be to God!

[Ministry Matters™ | Worship Elements: May 1, 2022](#)

## **Scripture Reading Acts 9:1-20**

<sup>1-9</sup> Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

<sup>10-20</sup> Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias as come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up, and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

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## **Message Open Eyes**

"Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem." (Acts 9:1)

We forget how dangerous Paul was. I say Paul because, though it doesn't happen in the passage we just read, later in Acts chapter 13 we learn that Saul becomes known as

Paul and it is this very Paul that has given us the powerful and teaching filled letters to the Romans, the Corinthian, and others in the New Testament. The very Saul/Paul that was still breathing threats and murder...they very one who watched as Stephen was stoned for his faith and teaching, the Saul who approved of such a heinous act (Acts 8:1) ...this is the one in which this scene opens up to tell us about.

This guy was dangerous and he was on a mission, with letters of power to act from temple authorities. Saul was on a mission to destroy anyone who was teaching that Jesus was the Messiah. He was going to put an end to this teaching and to what people were calling "The Way". Saul was on a mission. Young, determined, and thinking that anything...anyone...that threatened the traditional understanding of the Messiah was to be snuffed out, Saul was going to be the one to bring things right and put an end to this wrong and harmful teaching. Or at least what was in his mind and that of those who gave him the authority to act in such a way, would enable Saul to put an end to this fringe group that was enough of a threat to the status quo to warrant such a deathly plot to eliminate them.

But then every thing changes in a heartbeat. The only person who experienced this life changing transformation in the group that was traveling together was Saul. Others heard the voice, which in itself is pretty crazy, and it may have had an effect on them, but the focus for this story stays on Saul and he not only hears the voice, but see a flash of light and from that moment everything changes. It will take him from being a man with power and authority given to him by human beings, to be a man led by others, deeply humbled because he cannot see and weakened as he neither ate or drank for three days. Mostly however, he was at first vulnerable because he had encountered the real power of the risen God. We tend to think that Jesus kind of went away at some point, as the risen and ascended one, but this story and countless others, remind us that the risen Lord continued to show up in powerful ways, and still does today. We just need to open our eyes and hearts to those encounters, but we will get back to that.

Right now, we are sitting with a man, Saul, in the process of transformation and the story turns out is not just about him but about another person named Ananias who was having his own crisis as God asks him to be the one to recognize what God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit was doing in this man Saul, *and it is terrifying*. Ananias was well aware of Saul and the murderous and torturous things that Saul was doing to people like him. He had reasons to be afraid. Saul's reputation preceded him and Ananias was fearful. No one really wants to die especially at the hands of someone so intent to put fear and trembling into an entire group of vulnerable people. Yet God says to Ananias, "Go, for he [Saul] is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." (9:15-16).

I have to admit, I wondered whether or not Ananias relished just a little the words that God said about bringing Saul down a notch or two and that Saul might get a taste of his own medicine. Regardless, the fear still would have been real and yet Ananias does as

God has asked and because of Ananias' obedience to the request he also gets to witness the transformation of Saul for after Ananias places his hands on Saul, Saul regains his sight, was baptized and then ate something to regain his strength. Saul also spent time with the disciples in Damascus. Those conversations must have been pretty incredible as Saul had been deeply immersed in the teachings of the Torah throughout his life and what he thought he knew has been turned upside down. He understanding of the scriptures of the Messiah doing a 180 degree turn about.

One simply must try to get the depth of this change in thinking of not only Saul, but everyone who had lived in fear of him up until this time. With only days in between, the one who was hunting down others is now going to become a persecuted one. This story of Saul know as Paul will continue throughout much of the New Testament, but this is the moment of change. Still, where this story is placed is also of interest as it is but one of a number of stories of transformation. It sits between the story of Philip and an Ethiopian Eunuch and the work that Peter was doing as he brought the gospel to others. It is important to note, as these stories demonstrate that God transforms lives in many ways. Sometimes it is with a flash of light that jolts us to an awakening, and sometimes it is through years of faithful service or just hanging in there as small changes occur in who we are and how we interact with the world.

And though there are numerous points to glean from a story such of that of Saul and Ananias, what we are looking at today is how eyes were opened, not just Saul as "something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored" (9:18) but how Ananias saw things differently. How the eyes of hearts were also opened to what God was doing.

And maybe that is the focus...what is seen and to be seen. God was at work in both men. Both believed in God's love and hope for the world but they were going at it from different perspectives. One thought that violence and power was the way to protect the status quo, reasoning that continues to be used for people to protect institutions that people like to build and defend. Though things change continually, we people like to think we can stop change, but God is in the work of change, of transformation, and that work has not stopped. God is transforming the church, our church and churches around the globe. As much as people want to halt or stall that, because it doesn't match what they think is God's way, God continues the work of transformation. Our church and others are going to look different in the future. None of us can predict how that will look or happen, but the church will change...is changing. Every time someone new comes into our midst or leave us our church changes. This can scare us or inspire us.

What is for sure is that God is asking us to be mindful and attentive, opening our hearts and minds to see how God is at work in us, in others, and in the world. Sometimes we will be witnesses to amazing transformations that are hard to grasp, even scary. Many times the stories will be less threatening, stories in which people are transformed a little day by day as we walk together to become image bearing people of God. Stories where people can change, life can be, well, more life-giving, even in times of challenge. One

thing is for sure, God is at work in you and in me and we are invited into this relationship of transforming love and bringing that story, that message to our families, friends, community and beyond. We are not alone, we do this together, in community, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ, and the love of God who goes with us today and everyday. Go and witness, go with eyes wide open, go and be the people of God with open hearts. Amen.

### Invitation to the offering

Our lives overflow with God's blessings in Christ and in creation.  
With gratitude for all that we have received, let us present our offering to God,  
trusting that God can do a new thing with our gifts – and with our lives!

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Third Sunday of Easter. May 4, 2025. Year C.

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 etransfer.

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](#)

### Prayers of the People

God of care,  
we draw near to you in prayer, trusting that your love changes lives  
and your resurrection brings renewal and redemption into the world God loves.  
As we lay before you the concerns on our hearts, we pray that you will draw near to  
the people and situations we name and bring each one the gift that is needed:  
In your great mercy, **Hear our prayers.**

We lay before you, Lord, the concerns we share from the news headlines and the many world situations where hope and change are desperately needed. Continued challenges in how governments care for the most vulnerable and the economic impacts of decisions that are affecting even the price of food in grocery stores. We remember those who live in fear because of their faith and the persecution they face and those whose enemies live right in their homes as people face abuse or where crime makes neighbourhoods unsafe. May those who perpetuate the fear have their eyes opened to see the harm and be changed. Open the eyes of those who live in fear. Give them courage to see where the Holy Spirit is at work changing lives and healing relationships.

In your great mercy, **Hear our prayers.**

We lay before you, O God, those who are in hospital or care and all those who struggle with illness, pain or health burdens of any sort; and we remember those facing grief and loss, bearing burdens of sorrow and worry.

In your great mercy, **Hear our prayers.**

We lay before you, God of peace,  
families under stress, relationships that are strained, friends and neighbours in need  
of reconciliation, and we pray for the healing of divisions in our country, between  
countries, and around the world.

In your great mercy, **Hear our prayers.**

We lay before you, Creator,  
the earth itself, struggling in so many places to maintain its fruitfulness, and we pray  
for all the vulnerable creatures and communities who are finding it harder and harder  
to live on land, sea or sky.

In your great mercy, **Hear our prayers.**

Lord Jesus,  
we believe that you hear our prayers and will be faithful to our requests and  
concerns. Use us in every opportunity that presents itself to serve you by serving  
our neighbours near and far. And so we pray together the words you gave us:

### 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**

### Hymn

*Will you come and follow me*

**634**

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|--|---|
| 1. Will you come and follow me<br>if I but call your name?<br>Will you go where you don't know<br>and never be the same?<br>Will you let my love be shown;<br>will you let me name be known:<br>will you let my life be grown<br>in you and you in me? | 2. Will you leave yourself behind<br>if I but call your name?<br>Will you care for cruel and kind<br>and never be the same?<br>Will you risk the hostile stare<br>should your life attract or scare?<br>Will you let me answer prayer<br>in you and you in me?      |
| 3. Will you let the blinded see<br>if I but call your name?<br>Will you set the prisoners free<br>and never be the same?<br>Will you kiss the leper clean,<br>and do such as this unseen,<br>and admit to what I mean<br>in you and you in me?         | 4. Will you love the "you" you hide<br>if I but call your name?<br>Will you quell the fear inside<br>and never be the same?<br>Will you use the faith you've found<br>to reshape the world around,<br>through my sight and touch and sound<br>in you and you in me? |

5. Lord, your summons echoes true  
when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you  
and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go  
where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow  
in you and you in me.

"Will you come and follow me." Words by Iona Community (Scotland)  
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## **Benediction**

Go now and follow the risen Christ.  
Love God and nourish the faith of God's little ones.  
Make Christ known to all people  
for God has chosen you as an instrument  
to lead others into the way of mercy and love.

And may God change your anguish into a joyful dance;  
May Christ Jesus lead you from betrayal to mission;  
And may the Holy Spirit fill you  
...with light and love and purpose.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,  
...In the name of Christ. Amen.

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## **Postlude**