

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost - July 6, 2025

Call to Worship

We are called together this day to praise God.

We ask that God will put us in pathways to service to others.

The Lord will walk with us as we faithfully witness to Christ's love.

Open our hearts, Lord, to receive your words and will.

Come, let us worship God!

Let us sing our praises to God our Redeemer and Healer.

[Worship Connection: Proper 9 C](#)

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

God of majesty and mercy,
in creation you gave us all that we need to live and all that we can cherish.
You came to us in Jesus Christ to show us the face of your love.
You walk into our lives to meet us in the midst of joy and pain.
Through the Holy Spirit,
you speak words of wisdom to help us find our way.
God in our midst, speak to us today in this time of worship.
Speak the words we need to hear
so that we know you still walk with us in Jesus Christ.
For we honour you, Source, Saviour and Spirit of Life, one God.

Loving God,
you send us into the world as ambassadors of your love and peace,
yet too often we create discord and division.
We serve our own interests first, ignoring those in need.
We value our understanding of the world you love,
and fail to listen to the stories of others.
Forgive us for such self-centredness.
Help us to be more faithful disciples of Jesus,
eager to serve, willing to listen, glad to be of service in his name. Amen.

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Assurance of Forgiveness

When we offer our love to the one God and to all neighbours we do as Christ bids,
and we are graced with a feeling of true faithfulness.
This is a powerful blessing we receive. All thanks and glory be to God.

© Glen E. Rainsley. *Hear Our Prayer: Resource for Worship and Devotions*. United Church Press. Cleveland, Ohio. 1996. P101.

Scripture Reading Galatians 6:1-16

My brothers and sisters, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that

you yourselves are not tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. ⁴ All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. ⁵ For all must carry their own loads.

⁶ Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

⁷ Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. ⁸ If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh, but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. ⁹ So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all and especially for those of the family of faith.

¹¹ See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! ¹² It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who try to compel you to be circumcised—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³ Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. ¹⁴ May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation is everything! ¹⁶ As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

[New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition \(NRSVUE\)](#) New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition.

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Message For the Good of All

I would hazard to guess that you have been super angry at one point or another. Strong, maybe even harsh words were spoken. You just wanted to get your point across to someone you felt had it so wrong. Now I am not going to judge whether or not you were justified in your frustration and anger. I only want to get you to understand the tone of this letter written by Paul and shared with the churches of Galatia. Paul is pissed off, to put it right out there. He has heard that the churches in the area have been led down a garden path that for Paul only leads to perversion of the Good News of the Gospel.

You might imagine Paul pacing the floor as someone writes down what Paul is dictating to them. He is worked up because people have come along in the time that Paul has been away, after Paul established the churches, and have been telling them that they must be circumcised.

Now, that might not seem like a big thing to us, but for Paul it meant that someone was telling the people that in order to be the best kind of Jewish Christian you needed to do one more thing...you had to be circumcised, and Paul is like "NO! Did you not understand that Christ did for you all that was needed when he died on the cross and rose again?"

Once again, you might be thinking, "What is the big deal?" But for Paul it was all about people being led astray and into situations and understandings that could separate people from the love of God in Christ Jesus. He started out in the first chapter of

Galatians with “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.” (Gal 1:6-7) ¹

For Paul, who himself was a circumcised Jewish teacher, he profoundly understood that you didn't need to be circumcised to be a follower of Christ. That would just be one more regulation to fulfill and Paul was all about breaking barriers. Today circumcision is done for other purposes so it does not really play into this scenario for most males, this conversation is about a first century problem that speaks to other situations today.

Actually, Paul would teach that Jesus was all about breaking barriers that came between people and between people and God. In chapter 3:28 Paul wrote, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” This is also the part in this letter that talks about the fruit of the Spirit. This is one of the most recognizable scriptures in all of the Bible and Paul has written it after talking about all the ways we judge people to be acceptable or not acceptable. “By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” (Gal 5:23) These lines follow what Paul has also written about the nature of Christian freedom, in which we are to become slaves to one another, “For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’” (Gal 5:14).

Being a Christian is about responding to other's needs. In our scripture reading today you heard about bearing one another's burdens...helping each other out when we go astray or when we don't understand, responding to people in love and humility, because we too don't get it all right. We mess up, we have our own burdens to bear, but there are people who can help us carry our loads. That is what Christian community is about...responding to the needs we see around us, whether in and around this building or your home, your work place, your family circle or friend circle. Christian community is about responding to needs and that we do in community. It is why you being part of a church is so important. Yes, you can be a Christian and be a hermit, but truly we are called to love others, restore others to wholeness as community.

Trying to do this work on one's own would be exhausting. Besides it takes all the gifts of the Spirit to do the work we are called to do as Christians. Paul writes, “So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.” (Gal 5:9-10)

To really get a grasp of all that Paul is saying you cannot look at only one part of this letter, the whole thing is together joined. Then you can see that this whole letter is about

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God's grace. This is a radical thought. A gracious God. Think about any ancient mythological god story of the Romans, Greeks and others, those god's demanded some sacrifice. For Christians, the sacrifice was made by God's self. There is a demand, that is to love God and love others. It is not about what we can do for God to earn our salvation or God's favour. We already have that. Any barrier we put up for ourselves or others in order to "fit in" or make us more fit for God is a farce and dangerous. When we put up walls, when we demand that people conform to the way we do it, whatever that may be, we need to ask ourselves why. Why do we think this is necessary? It has been as simple for some people as thinking that to come to church one had to dress a certain way. What difference does it make to God how you are dressed? God brought you into the world naked. You are acceptable to God just as you are. Dressing and covering parts of us is for the sake of others, it is about our concern for others, but it is not about how well dressed you are. It is the heart that matters.

And to go back to that word "grace". Theologian Charles Cousar writes, "[Grace] describes the manner in which God gives himself, the personal relationship he establishes with his people. The word depicts the unmerited and unconditional way in which God has made and continues to make his move toward sinful humanity."² The people Paul was writing to in Galatians were as Cousar says, "... working at the wrong end of the relationship with God – [they were thinking about] what *they* can do to assure inclusion in God's family, what *they* can do to cope with power of the flesh; what *they* can do to fulfill the law" when "the answer lies at the other end – what *God* has done in Christ and how he has done it."³

Grace is what God gives us and grace is what we then give to others. We do our best to not put up barriers for others and ourselves to God. It does not mean that there are no bad behaviours, or no best practices, but it has to do with faith and love. I cannot go into the depth of that in this message, but trusting God's grace for us and others is a good start. Not demanding that people approach God, "our way" is helpful as long as what others are doing is grace filled, faithful, and loving. If people's expectations cause harm to body, mind, and/or spirit, then those expectations are not of God.

God is grace. God is faithful. God is love. If we are image bearers of God then we too will strive to be people of grace, faith, and above all else...love. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13, "And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. (v13)

The purpose of all of this is to reshape us and the world into a new creation, one where all are free of the burdens that take away God's promises of joy, hope, forgiveness and grace. Will we ever attain it? I don't think that is possible until God's kingdom is fully on earth, but we are called to be a part of bringing God's grace to the world one moment at

² Cousar, Charles B. *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching – Galatians*. Series Editor, James L. Mays. New Testament Editor Paul J. Achtemeier. John Knox Press. Louisville. 1982. P9.

³ Ibid.

a time, one person at a time. We are called to transform the world, to “not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.” (Gal 6:9-10)

One last comment, because of the part that says, “especially for those of the family of faith.” This is not meant to exclude others from grace, still taking care of the family of faith enables us to continue to work for grace in the world. It is in the church that we find our strength, that we lift one another up so that each day, each week, we can take that strength out into the world. We do not walk our faith alone. We do it in community to transform community. We do each through responding, restoring, and with rejoicing in the small and big ways we bring healing and hope, faith and grace. We do it because of love and for the love that comes from the heart of God.

We do it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Creator God, source of all life and each life,
we come to you in prayer this day,
grateful that your world is full of wonder and possibility,
but also in desperate need of your reconciling love.
We pray for the many different peoples of this world,
divided as we are into many nations, clans, cultures, and spiritual traditions.
Help us understand those differences more fully,
and honour the good things that bind us together despite differences.
Bless both our diversity and our unity as those who belong to you.

Loving God, source of truth and wisdom,
in the world we are confronted by powers and authorities.
Help us recognize their potential for both good and evil,
and act wisely and faithfully to discern whom to trust and when to act.
When we see injustice or recognize falsehood,
give us the courage to speak up in Christ's name.
Open our eyes to our own weakness and bias,
and speak to us through the example of Jesus, our Lord.

Compassionate God,
the world is filled with violence and hatred, costing innocent lives.
We sometimes feel powerless to do anything about it.
Today our hearts ache for those who live amid brutal conflict,
for those who have died through violence,
and for those who suffer the many effects of trauma.

We pray for those who have lost their homes through conflict
and fled their countries just to survive.

Open hearts and homes to welcome those who flee
and protect those who stay amid conflict to offer care.

All-knowing God,
you see into our hearts and know the heartaches we carry.
We pray for those living with illness and pain,
for those who mourn the loss of someone or something dear,
and for all those struggling with anxiety or despair in these challenging times.

Wise and welcoming God,
give us the grace to live out our faith among family and friends,
with acquaintances and strangers.
Help us to trust your guidance in all situations
as we pray 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

The Apostle Paul urges us not to grow weary in doing what is right.
Through our gifts to God, we participate in God's goodness at work in the world.
So take heart. Whatever you give, give with confidence that God will use our gifts for the good purposes of the Gospel.

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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 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](#)

Offering

Organist's Gift of Music

Doxology

In loving partnership (v.1)

759

In loving partnership we come,
seeking, O God, your will to do.
Our prayers and actions now receive;
we freely offer them to you.

"In loving partnership." Words by Jim Strathdee. © 1983 Desert Flower Music.
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Prayer of Dedication

Compassionate God, who strengthens us for the journey of faith, we bring these gifts in response to your call to sow seeds of love and justice. May our offerings build up the family of faith and extend your grace to the world beyond. Help us not to grow weary in doing good but to serve with joy and perseverance, trusting that the harvest of your Spirit will bear fruit in due season. Unite us as your new creation, made whole through Christ's love and empowered by your Spirit. In gratitude, we dedicate all that we have and all that we are. Amen.

[Discipleship Ministries | Fourth Sunday after Pentecost, Year C -...](#)

Benediction

The Apostle Paul gives us these words of challenge and encouragement:

“Let us not grow weary in doing what is right,
for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up.

So then, whenever we have an opportunity,
let us work for the good of all.”

Go out into the world in the strength and grace of God,
challenged and encouraged by one another,
and know that God is with you! Amen.

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