

## **St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay**

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

16<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost - September 28, 2025

Orange Shirt Sunday

### **Words of Welcome**

Today's worship is one that will highlight the day coming up on Tuesday which in Canada is known as Truth and Reconciliation Day or another title, Orange Shirt Day. It is hoped that all Canadians are aware of the harm done through colonization and the residential school system. The Christian Church as a whole, and not just in Canada, played a major role in many countries in the harm that was done to Indigenous People worldwide over the centuries. As we take this time together, we hold this space in reverence to honour those who have suffered and continue to suffer under oppression's weight.

We begin with a land acknowledgment.

### **Land Acknowledgment**

We respectfully acknowledge that St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church is built on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe people of Fort William First Nation, signatory to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850. The footsteps of their ancestors have walked these lands for millennia, and we are grateful for their stewardship, strength, resistance, and resilience. We also acknowledge this place as an historic Métis settlement.

While a territorial acknowledgment is important, we recognize that this is only one small step towards reconciliation. Far more must be done to address the ongoing impacts of colonization, and structural violence, including systemic racism. May we all strive for respectful relationships as we search for collective healing, truth, reconciliation and together, honour the ancestors, Elders, knowledge keepers, the land and water, and all beings to build a common future.

### **We Worship God**

So much harm has been done in the name of God and Christianity, but that was never God's plan. It was never the way of Jesus who came as one who cared for the most vulnerable in our midst. In worship today, may we celebrate and rejoice in the name of the one who came to restore all people to wholeness.

We turn now to the call to worship as printed in the bulletin. I will begin and have you respond with the words printed in bold.

### **Call to Worship** (inspired by Psalm 146 and Luke 1:46-56)

Our souls proclaim your greatness, O God.

**And our spirits rejoice in you.**

We will praise you as long as we live.

**We will sing praises to you our whole lives long.**

We will not trust in the powerful of this world,

**But will trust in you—Creator of heaven and earth,**

the One who gives food to the hungry,

**the One who enacts justice for the oppressed.**

As we worship you in this place.

**Our souls proclaim your greatness, O God.**

[re:Worship: Call to Worship & Prayer for Advent](#)

It is our way in worship, and understanding of God and of ourselves, that we take time to pray. Our prayers are spoken for different reasons and in different ways. This opening prayer is one that speaks our praises to the God who created us and all life, it also confesses how we have failed to live lives that fully express God's desire for all people. I will begin the prayer and have you join me with the words printed in bold.

Let us pray.

### **Prayer of Adoration and Confession**

Creating God, beauty and harmony mark your creation.

As the seasons change, we see you are still at work in the world,  
transforming hearts and situations.

We praise you for all you do to repair injustice,  
to bring peace to places of war, working for goodness to prevail in all nations.

You offer us new possibilities day by day,  
and so we place our trust in your redeeming power.

Renew our energy for mission this autumn  
and open our eyes to new opportunities to reach out in Jesus' name.

Through the power of the Spirit, make us participants in your work,  
bringing justice and joy into the world you love.

**Compassionate God,**

**you open your heart to those in need, and to your aching creation.**

**We confess we often turn away so that we do not have to see pain,  
suffering, or injustice, right before our eyes.**

**We don't like to feel uncomfortable or pressed into service.**

**Forgive us, and give us courage to love others as you love us**

**and reach out with the care we have witnessed in Jesus. Amen.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 16th Sunday after Pentecost. September 28, 2025. Year C. Orange Shirt Sunday. Presbyterians Sharing Sunday.

### **Assurance of Forgiveness**

The prophet Micah declared that God requires of us three things: to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God. To all who repent, who act for justice and seek to serve God and neighbour in kindness, God offers forgiveness and peace. The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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## We Listen for God's Word

### Scripture Reading Psalm 146

<sup>1-2</sup> Hallelujah!

O my soul, praise GOD!

All my life long I'll praise GOD,  
singing songs to my God as long as I live.

<sup>3-9</sup> Don't put your life in the hands of experts  
who know nothing of life, of *salvation* life.

Mere humans don't have what it takes;  
when they die, their projects die with them.

Instead, get help from the God of Jacob,  
put your hope in GOD and know real blessing!

GOD made sky and soil,  
sea and all the fish in it.

He always does what he says—  
he defends the wronged,  
he feeds the hungry.

GOD frees prisoners—  
he gives sight to the blind,  
he lifts up the fallen.

GOD loves good people, protects strangers,  
takes the side of orphans and widows,  
but makes short work of the wicked.

<sup>10</sup> GOD's in charge—*always*.  
Zion's God is God for good!  
Hallelujah!

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

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. **Thanks be to God.**

### Message Complicity

It was a call one day in the spring of 2024. On the line was a person from the PCC church office in Toronto. "Hi Joyce, we know you are to be a commissioner at the General Assembly in June. As you are aware there is going to be a time during the assembly where the apology for the PCC's complicity in colonization and the residential school system will be given. We are wondering if you would consider being one of a group of people who will be in the room designated as a support person and a person to whom people can go to if they need support and prayer during or after the apology is given."

I said yes, and then wondered if I was up for the task. I thought, what the heck have I just agreed to? I did not feel adequate for the responsibility, but I also knew that I wanted to be present for this moment in the church's history.

I know so little. I spend time here at the church speaking to our community members who come to the door looking for bus fare. Our congregation supports the work of other organizations in the community that do the hands-on work of caring for the vulnerable population to feed, house, and clothe those in need. Just this summer a sixty-day project took place called “I was thirsty” whereby members of this congregation and community supported the purchase of bottles of water and the delivery of the water to encampments in the city. I know it impacted those who participated in this work and those who were shown care and compassion most of whom in this city happen to be Indigenous.

I have availed myself to learning opportunities hosted by our church including the Blanket Exercise that tells the story of Indigenous People in Canada in a profound way, and we hosted an indigenous speaker and professor for an evening event inviting the community to share in learning with us about relationships and the generational harm that has come out of the residential school system in particular. I have attended webinars and read documents.

I was grateful to be asked and I prayed that I would be enough should anyone come my way for support. I am deeply thankful for the group who, along with me, were asked to do the same. We prayed together before and after the apology. During the time the apology was read we stood around the gymnasium where the Assembly was meeting, holding, enveloping everyone in our prayers. The Assembly was prepared through drum and prayer to hear the apology. Normally the Assembly proceedings are live streamed for people to watch, but at this point the cameras were turned off. The live stream ended in order to protect those in the room and in order that anyone who might inadvertently be listening in without support would not have to endure a trigger or trauma alone.

It was impactful. I have read about our history as a church. I have read and learned about the history of colonization and the Doctrine of Discovery. There are many resources and documents on that website. There is a brief outline of what the Doctrine of Discovery was and is, as is taken from the PCC...

“The **Doctrine of Discovery** is a set of concepts developed from a series of papal bulls (decrees) issued around the 15th century. It goes hand in hand with the concept known as *terra nullius*, Latin for “empty land.” The bulls that developed and supported these concepts provided theological justification and legal backing to European monarchs to invade and seize non-Christian lands, enslave non-Christian people “in perpetuity” and take their property. The sinful idea that European colonial powers had a right to appropriate lands and possessions and treat non-Christians as undeserving of rights flows from this doctrine and these concepts, and heavily influenced the legislation that eventually governed Indigenous-Crown relations. This doctrine and these concepts also profoundly

shaped the system of residential and day schools in which the church was complicit.<sup>1</sup>

This history has shaped our relationships with Indigenous People for centuries. Here we are, far removed from those decisions of the early church, but in countries around the globe and in our case, Canada, the church has a history to deal with that has proven to be harmful. I could show you a timeline of the work the PCC has done in regard to the work of healing and reconciliation, but the apology itself will give you some understanding. Though I cannot attest to the work of all denominations, there have been statements coming from Lutherans, The United Church, the Anglican Church, and others all in the spirit of healing and reconciliation.

The Truth & Reconciliation Commission with its 94 calls to action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples have also shaped how many denominations are now approaching the work of healing and reconciliation.

Today, as Orange Shirt Sunday anticipates the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation here in Canada, we are doing our part to remember the children of residential schools and to learn how our own words and actions can harm or heal and how the church has been a part of that history.

In the scripture reading from Psalm 146 we hear of a Creator God whose care is focused on those who are at risk, those in need of special attention because they are vulnerable.

God made sky and soil,  
sea and all the fish in it.

He always does what he says—  
he defends the wronged,  
he feeds the hungry.

God frees prisoners—  
he gives sight to the blind,  
he lifts up the fallen.

God loves good people, protects strangers,  
takes the side of orphans and widows,  
but makes short work of the wicked.

This is the God who shapes our understanding of what is important and who is important. Our words and actions are ways of putting our faith into action demonstrated in the way we care for others just as God cares for and has compassion for those who are in need.

I understand that at times all of us can feel vulnerable and are in need of God's care and compassion, but today we are focused on those who are marginalized, suffering, and at risk, in particular the Indigenous People who share this land with us. Today we think about how we continue to be complicit in harm, whether it be by judging those who we think

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<sup>1</sup> [Doctrine of Discovery - The Presbyterian Church in Canada](#)

should just quit drinking and doing drugs, pick themselves up and get off the streets, or by voting for those who have no concern for those who are struggling.

As Christians, we are called to care, to have compassion. This is not about us. It is about responding to the needs around us in whatever way we are able as individuals and as a church. It is about restoring people to wholeness and then rejoicing with them and each other when the pieces all come together. And though this doesn't feel like it happens very often it does happen. When it does, we give thanks to God that in some small way we were part of something bigger, something meaningful, something that makes a difference.

When I think of that day in June last year at the Assembly I am humbled because someone did trust me enough to come and share their story and to have me pray with them. Others in the room tasked with the responsibility to listen and prayer experienced the same. What I learned in that moment was that I can listen. I can hold another's pain and I can love them. I think that most of us have the capacity to hear another person's story without judgement, without having to feel like we need to fix it, because in this case we can't. But we can be present. We can show up. We can listen and be humbled that God would trust us to be image bearers of God in those moments.

Today you can read the Apology of the Presbyterian Church in Canada for its complicity in colonization and the residential school system in link provided. I ask that you put your story aside to hear the story of the Indigenous People of our country. Do not judge or question. We know that some people experienced good things in these schools and went on to have promising and good lives and experiences, but many did not. Many were harmed and that harm continues because we don't know their story or we judge or dismiss it as not our problem because it is history. Know that how we respond now will continue the legacy of harm or a legacy of healing.

### **We Respond to God's Word**

#### **The Apology of the Presbyterian Church in Canada for the Complicity in Colonization and the Residential School System**

##### **Prayers of the People**

God of mystery and wonder,  
we look around at the beauty of this world  
and the worlds beyond us,  
and sense that you have given each precious thing its place  
and a way to sustain itself.  
Thank you for the care you hold for your whole creation.  
We also look around at the aching of the world  
and sense that many precious things are under threat.  
Too many pieces of your creation have fallen out of balance with each other.

Show us how we can help restore that balance  
and protect what is at risk for the health of your whole creation.

God of all creatures great and small,  
**Make us stewards of what is precious to you.**

God of energy and life,  
We look around at the peoples of this world  
and see your image and dignity in every variety of face and culture.  
Thank you for the care you hold for all humankind.  
Yet we look around at the people of this world  
and see the aching of the hungry and hurting;  
we hear the groans of parents whose children die in their arms  
and feel the tears of children whose parents die too soon.  
We know neighbours who are suffering  
and hear of strangers who can't imagine how to make it through tomorrow.  
Awaken our generosity to offer what healing and hope we can  
to the lives you cherish in every neighbourhood and nation.

God of all creatures great and small,  
**Make us stewards of what is precious to you.**

God of promise and possibility,  
We look around at places where people collide with each other  
We hear the grumbling of nations locked into old rivalries and grievances.  
We watch the jousting of leaders impressed more by polls than effective policies.  
We worry about the future of our communities and our children.  
We hear your call to do justice and live generously.  
Guide us as citizens to act for justice that brings peace and well being  
to communities near and far.  
Bless the ministries supported by Presbyterians Sharing  
across Canada and around the world,  
and grow in us the interest and intention to contribute to this outreach .

God of all creatures great and small,  
**Make us stewards of what is precious to you.**

God of faithfulness and surprise,  
We look at ourselves  
and sometimes doubt we can make a difference or have an impact.  
Challenge us to recognise the kinds of power we do have:  
The love and compassion,  
The courage and commitment,  
The laughter and friendship,  
The generosity and mercy  
You inspire within us.

In all these gifts we know your power.  
Through all these gifts, our lives have been changed.  
Using these gifts in our lives,  
bring Christ's love and mercy to the world you love.  
And so we pray the words he 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**

In scripture we are often reminded to share our wealth with those living on the margins. Your contributions to the life and mission of this congregation help to bring God's love to others. Our gifts will have an impact. Let us bless God with our offering.

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](#)

## **Benediction**

Go from our gathering with confidence in your hearts,  
for God's Spirit goes with you to give you strength,  
God's Son walks beside you to see you through each day,  
and God's holy presence will bless you with grace and mercy  
now and evermore. Amen.

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