

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

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

1st Sunday after Christmas – December 28, 2025

Call to Worship

Praise the Lord from the heavens and in the heights;

Praise God, sun and moon!

God's name alone is exalted;

God is above the earth and heaven.

*Hymn

Hail to the Lord's Anointed

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1. Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
great David's greater Son;
hail, in the time appointed,
his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
to set the captive free,
to take away transgression,
and rule in equity.
2. He brings salvation speedy
to those who suffer wrong;
he saves the poor and needy,
and helps the weak be strong;
they sing who once were sighing,
their darkness turned to light,
for they, who once were dying,
are precious in his sight.
3. He shall come down like showers
upon the fruitful earth,
and love, joy, hope, like flowers,
spring in his path to birth.
Before him on the mountains
shall peace, the herald, go,
and righteousness, in fountains,
from hill to valley flow.
4. All powers shall bow before him,
and gold and incense bring;
all nations shall adore him,
his praise all people sing,
for he shall have domination
o'er river, sea and shore,
far as the eagle's pinion
or dove's light wing can soar.
5. O'er every foe victorious,
Christ on his throne shall rest,
from age to age more glorious,
all-blessing and all blest:
the tide of time shall never
his covenant remove;
his name shall stand forever—
that name to us is Love.

"Hail to the Lord's Anointed." Words by James Montgomery. Public domain

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of glory, angels called to shepherds with songs of your good news.
Mary pondered the mystery of your goodness in the tumult of new birth.
Your splendour shines from a manger where the Light of the world was born.

In the fragility of flesh you are revealed to us face to face.
And so we gather in worship and praise of you who are
Creator, Redeemer, and Guide; perfect and eternal, now and forever.

Recalling who you are and what you have done,
we recall who we are and what we have done.

And so, to begin again with you and one another, we confess our sins:

God of compassion, you promise new life, but we confess that we are in love with our old ways; with hurts that we nourish, hatreds that hold us hostage, and fantasies that restrict our faithful living. You offer to us unconditional love, but we reject our neighbours and live apart from you and one another in many ways. Recreate us in the image of your son, and for your glory's sake, forgive us. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Here is the good news of the Gospel; Jesus Christ is chosen for our salvation. In him we are made acceptable to God. Let us give thanks to God and be at peace with ourselves and with one another.

Prayer for Understanding

Almighty God, in the beginning was the Word;

And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

On this day of discovery and light; we long to hear your holy Word.

Open our ears to the call of your voice.

Open our eyes to the dawning of a new day.

Fill us with anticipation for your future. Amen.

Scripture Reading Luke 2:22–40

²²⁻²⁴ Then when the days stipulated by Moses for purification were complete, they took him up to Jerusalem to offer him to God as commanded in God's Law: "Every male who opens the womb shall be a holy offering to God," and also to sacrifice the "pair of doves or two young pigeons" prescribed in God's Law.

²⁵⁻³² In Jerusalem at the time, there was a man, Simeon by name, a good man, a man who lived in the prayerful expectancy of help for Israel. And the Holy Spirit was on him. The Holy Spirit had shown him that he would see the Messiah of God before he died. Led by the Spirit, he entered the Temple. As the parents of the child Jesus brought him in to carry out the rituals of the Law, Simeon took him into his arms and blessed God:

God, you can now release your servant;

release me in peace as you promised.

With my own eyes I've seen your salvation;

it's now out in the open for everyone to see:

A God-revealing light to the non-Jewish nations,
and of glory for your people Israel.

³³⁻³⁵ Jesus' father and mother were speechless with surprise at these words.

Simeon went on to bless them, and said to Mary his mother,

This child marks both the failure and
the recovery of many in Israel,
A figure misunderstood and contradicted—
the pain of a sword-thrust through you—
But the rejection will force honesty,
as God reveals who they really are.

³⁶⁻³⁸ Anna the prophetess was also there, a daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher. She was by now a very old woman. She had been married seven years and a widow for eighty-four. She never left the Temple area, worshiping night and day with her fastings and prayers. At the very time Simeon was praying, she showed up, broke into an anthem of praise to God, and talked about the child to all who were waiting expectantly for the freeing of Jerusalem.

³⁹⁻⁴⁰ When they finished everything required by God in the Law, they returned to Galilee and their own town, Nazareth. There the child grew strong in body and wise in spirit. And the grace of God was on him.

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

Message Generational Praise

Steadfast devotion, extraordinary faithfulness, enduring hope, a beautifully godly person. These words describe a woman in the Bible who we almost never pay attention to. Her counterpart, Simeon, almost always gets the air play as he shares the words in a song with Jesus' parents that describe who their child is and what will be accomplished through Jesus. Of course, Simeon's words are profound and stop Mary and Joseph in their tracks.

They were likely surprised and yet not, as this child had already brought angels and messengers to their lives. Yet, how Simeon would know this child held a promise would still have taken them aback. One part of Simeon's song speaking about Jesus as God's salvation and a God' revealing light to non-Jewish nation and then another part about how they will experience the pain of a sword thrust through them. Sit with those words as parents of a newborn.

However, take a moment to listen again to the story of Anna. It is literally two verses long.

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and day with her fastings and prayers. At the very time Simeon was praying, she showed up, broke into an anthem of praise to God, and talked about the child to all who were waiting expectantly for the freeing of Jerusalem.¹

It is interesting how many details we are given about this woman. It signals something about paying attention to who she is as seldom are we given so much information in scripture about a woman in such a short passage. We learn that she is a prophet. That is a rare title given a woman in the Old or New Testaments. We know her father's name along with her tribe. We know that she has been married and widowed, now over the age eighty-four. She was known to have never left the Temple area and worshipped God devotedly.

The only time we hear about Anna at all in worship is when this particular scripture is chosen for the Sunday after Christmas and that does not happen often. She just slides by us without much fanfare, which is interesting in that we do know considerably more about her than so many others.

So, what does Anna do that brings her recognition in that moment? Well, she shows up! She is present at the same time as Simeon. Where as Simeon speaks to Mary and Joseph about their child, Anna "broke into an anthem of praise to God and talked about the child to all who were waiting expectantly for the freeing of Jerusalem."²

Anna lived in a time of Roman occupation. It was a time of hardship for the majority of the people, personally, financially, spiritually. The powers that be were keeping the people oppressed through forced obedience to laws and government. Those who had power kept the peace through coercion, subjugation, and intimidation. Into this came Simeon with his song about who this child is and then Anna proclaiming to any one who is the vicinity that the child that people were expecting and we could add, waiting for, the deliver of Jerusalem was born... was there in their presence.

Anna had spent years in prayer and fasting. She had been steadfast in her devotion and now this woman, who would have been a familiar face to many in the Temple, was most certainly drawing attention to herself in this moment for all to see and hear. And though her words were not recorded for us to read, we are told that her words, her joy, her praise, are what is noteworthy.

She does not come onto the scene meek and mild. She bursts onto the scene, breaking into an anthem of praise to God. You can imagine her going from person to person, group to group, talking to any and all about the child. This child she has never met before, but has hoped for, the child that she understands will be significant...life-changing...for the world as they knew it.

So at this time of year...after all the hurriedness and frantic schedule for so many of the weeks before Christmas, when the presents are unwrapped and the contents put away,

¹ [The Message \(MSG\)](#) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

² Ibid.

the parties and feast are past, our homes become quiet, the Christmas music no longer fills the air and people and places are considering when to take down the Christmas decorations, the store shelves are ravaged and empty after the Boxing Day sales, and exhaustion fills the air...this is when Anna's story brings new life to us.

Anna sings songs of praise. This is the time of year to continue singing and to praise. It sets the tone for what has been, all the waiting, the preparations, and now it is our response to praise God. The praising prepares us for what is ahead of us as we anticipate the new year. Whether your past year or years have been difficult or not, and whatever comes before us in the new year, we can praise God.

What is striking is that Anna praises God and looks to the future with anticipation even though she has known hardship and oppression and is now in old age. And maybe that is what makes her a wonderful example. She is a generational example of praise. She has seen the difficult parts of life; she has lived it and still praises God.

This story shows life in all of its stages...a baby to be dedicated to God, parents, the people of all ages who may have been present at the Temple, and then Simeon and Anna, seasoned, experienced, knowing the toll life can take and yet giving praise to God. They had to have been observant, in tune with the Holy Spirit, paying attention, wise, and have courage.

Today at St. Andrew's in Thunder Bay we are witnessing the baptism of two preschool age girls and our scripture is about elderly people. We get to see and hear about the praise of all the generations. Old and young, wise and just learning. Psalm 148 is a song of praise, in it we hear, "Hallelujah! Praise God from heaven, praise him from the mountaintops ... Praise God from earth ... Robust men and women in their prime, and yes, graybeards and little children."³

At this time of year, in whatever period of your life that you are in or what you are experiencing, you can never go wrong in praising God. Praise God for the good in your life. Praise God for being steadfast in the difficult times. Praise God when you have a hard time believing God is present and yet you trust God's presence. Praising God is always in season and appropriate.

And don't be mistaken, you can praise God and question God all at the same time. You can be happy, angry, frustrated, joy-filled, scared, and praise God. You can be sick, healthy, poor or stable, housed or unhoused and praise God. To praise God does not mean that you have everything together and in order. To praise God means that you trust, understand, and know that, even when you cannot understand the whys, you are able to trust God with your life. You can be young or old and anything in between and praise God.

³ Ibid.

Praising God is like gratitude in that it can transform every circumstance. It is not that what is happening changes, but we change. From the core of our being praising God, finding ways to give thanks that can bring hope, it can change how we process our situations, maybe even bring solace or solutions.

Today we give thanks for the baby that was recognized by Simeon and Anna as the one who would change the world and the lives of those who would believe. May we be people like Anna who learn steadfast devotion, extraordinary faithfulness, enduring hope, becoming beautifully godly persons in the process. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of love, we give thanks for the many blessings you have given to us during our lives. We are grateful for opportunities to celebrate life and the birth of our Saviour Jesus with family and friends.

We are aware of those whose hearts this Christmas season are filled with pain and suffering, or fear. For some, we know that Christmas will be linked with loss or anguish for years to come.

We remember before you, O God, those who do not have enough to eat or who eat alone; those who do not have adequate shelter or who lack human contact and comfort; those who have had their hearts and lives broken by some trauma or loss.

Help them to find solace in you, God. Bring peace to all heavy hearts. We pray specifically for family members and friends who are struggling with hardship and pain. Hear our prayers in the silence of our hearts....

We pray for all your children, known and unknown to us; stir in their minds, protect their bodies, strengthen their characters, and protect their joy.

As the year draws to a close, help us to look back with gratitude for all that has been, and to look forward with eager anticipation for new opportunities to grow closer to you and to each other in love.

We pray as Jesus teaches all his followers saying,

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 God's constant love our lives are nurtured with God's richness. God's love for us is always abundant so we learn to share joyfully what we have received from God. We share what we have so that God's bountiful, supportive love may reach those in need through what we do and say in Jesus Christ the Lord.

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

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming

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1. Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung,
of Jesse's lineage coming,
as prophets long have sung.
It came, a floweret bright,
amid the cold of winter,
when halfspent was the night.
2. Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
the Rose I have in mind;
with Mary we behold it,
the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright,
she bore to us a Saviour,
when halfspent was the night.
3. This flower, whose fragrance tender
with sweetness fills the air,
dispels with glorious splendour
our darkness everywhere.
True flesh, yet very God,
from sin and death he saves us
and shares our every load.
4. O Saviour, child of Mary,
who felt our human woe,
O Saviour, King of glory,
who dost our weakness know,
bring us at length, we pray,
to the bright courts of heaven
and to the endless day.

"Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming." Words (German) by Anonymous. Translation by Theodore Baker (v.1,2), Harriet R. Krauth (v.3), and John Caspar Mattes (v.4). Public domain.

Benediction

Like the prophet, Anna, may we see that every moment of our life is another moment when we can turn to You in prayer. With our own eyes, may we see the greatness of Your love. May we find the listening ears of those who want to hear the story of what we've seen. Amen.

[Warriors, Prophets, Apostles, and More: Anna](#)

Words for this liturgy are from *The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner.*
1st Sunday after Christmas, December 28, 2025. Year A.