

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay
Liturgy Communion Worship**

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

The First Sunday in Lent - February 22, 2026

Call to Worship

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

The Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness.

The Spirit calls us to follow.

The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God has come near.

We come to repent, believe, and walk with Christ.

Hymn

O love, how deep, how broad, how high

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| 1. O love, how deep, how broad, how high,
how passing thought and fantasy,
that God, the Son of God, should take
our mortal form for mortals' sake. | 2. For us baptized, for us he bore
his holy fast and hungered sore;
for us temptations sharp he knew,
for us the tempter overthrew. |
| 3. For us he prayed; for us he taught;
for us his daily works he wrought:
by words and signs and actions, thus
still seeking not himself, but us. | 4. For us to wicked hands betrayed,
scourged, mocked, in purple robe arrayed,
he bore the shameful cross and death,
for us gave up his dying breath. |
| 5. For us he rose from death again;
for us he went on high to reign;
for us he sent his Spirit here
to guide, to strengthen and to cheer. | 6. All glory to our Lord and God
for love so deep, so high, so broad,
the Trinity whom we adore
forever and forevermore. |

"O love, how deep, how broad, how high." Latin, 15th Century. English translation: Anonymous. Public domain.

Prayer of Adoration

Holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

You became one of us in Jesus Christ, sharing our joy and sorrow,

manifesting your greatness in the child of the manger,

revealing your power in the service of washing the disciples' feet,

showing your glory in the shame of the cross.

And so, we praise you for your love

which is great enough to embrace the universe,

yet close enough to enter our hearts.

During our worship, surprise us with your grace

that we, with the rest of the church

and the whole creation, may praise and adore you, as Creator, Christ and Spirit.

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Call to Confession

We come before God with our sorrow and our sin,
with the burdens we carry and the burdens we have helped create.
Trusting in God's steadfast love, let us pray.

Prayer of Confession

**Creating and Creator God,
We have trusted our own strength more than your grace.
We have chosen comfort over calling.
We have been silent when we should have spoken,
and cautious when we should have loved boldly.
We confess the sins we know,
the sins we excuse,
and the sins we barely notice.**

Silence is kept.

**Forgive us, O Lord.
Turn us again toward life.
Teach us to walk in the way of Christ.
May we be rooted in Christ and find nourishment. Amen.**

Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear the good news: "The time is fulfilled.
The kingdom of God has come near.
Turn, and believe in the good news."
In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.
In Christ, all things are made new.
Thanks be to God.

Prayer for Understanding

Gracious God, plant your word in our hearts.
Give us ears to hear, minds to understand, and lives ready to respond.
Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

Scripture Reading

❖ Genesis 9:8-17

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹ "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." ¹² God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future

generations: ¹³ I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷ God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

❖ **Mark 1:9-15 The Baptism of Jesus**

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

The Temptation of Jesus

¹² And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

❖ **1 Peter 3:18-22**

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. ²¹ And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

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Message Grounded in the Baptismal Covenant—Called into the Wilderness

Well, this morning is of particular note. The Canadian Men’s Hockey team started playing in the Olympic gold medal game at 8:10 EST and even those of us who managed to get to church today, given the pull to watch the game, are anxiously wanting to know the score. This is the last day of the Olympics, which has brought the country together in heartache and jubilation. I would hazard to guess that most every Canadian has at least

paid some attention to the Olympics, while others have been immersed in all of it or, in particular sports.

For the athletics themselves, as well as their families, these moments have been years in the making. Dutifully dedicating time, energy, and money in order to even have a chance to attend the games let alone medal in them. Their lives are dictated by the rituals, the practices, the obedience it takes to excel in their sport. And for a time, we all come along side them to watch and to wait in anticipation of the promise that all of this is worth it, come what may.

The Christian faith has some correlations with the same spirit of relentless dedication, obedience, and hard work of an athlete with both sports, at that caliber, and faith, requiring discipline, perseverance, and focus. And both hold promise. However, unlike the athlete who has to put in the work ahead of time in order to achieve their goals, for those who believe in God, the heavy lifting has already been done for us in the work of Christ.

Now if you hadn't realized it yet, today is the first Sunday of Lent. This is a particular season in the church's calendar that marks the 40 days that come before Easter. The beginning of Lent started with Ash Wednesday, which has the purpose of reminding us of our humanity in all its frailty and uncertainty. This is not to make us feel badly about ourselves, but rather is intended to help us put our trust firmly in the soil of God's love and provision, in other words - God's grace.

You may have heard me share the definition of grace before as Professor Rolf Jacobson explains it, grace is, "The free gift in which God gives all – eternal life, forgiveness, purpose, meaning – to human beings, who respond by trying to earn it."

Grace is a gift. It is what we call covenant.

Covenants are basically the ways God maintains a relationship with humanity. Again, using Rolf Jacobsen's words,

"To have a covenant (which means a sacred contract or deal), you have to have these things:

- Two parties (not as in celebrations, but as in two people or peoples, hello!)
- A set of Promises
- A sign (that is, some sign so that you know you are a party to the covenant.

[And this is important,] "Because covenant is one of the major ways of understanding how God interacts and maintains relationship with people."¹

¹ Ibid. Page 46.

There are four covenants in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament. In the scripture reading from Genesis (9:8-17) we heard about the very first covenant God made with people, and “the people” being Noah and his family. Actually, the covenant is with God and all flesh, so this includes animals as well. No less than six times in ten verses it is written in some way or another that the covenant is with Noah and every living creature that is with Noah. On top of that, it is a promise for all future generations. This came after the flood that wiped out every living thing on earth, other than what was on the arc, and God promises to never again destroy the earth with a flood and the sign of that promise was the rainbow.

There were three more covenants in the Old Testament given to each of Abraham, Moses, and David. Then there is the one in the New Testament and it is called the New Covenant. You actually hear me say these words when sharing in communion... “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Each time we take communion we are reminded of the covenant made for us and with us since the time of Jesus, however the promise comes in our baptism. Let’s take a look at the next scripture readings (Mark 1:9-15 and 1 Peter 3:18-22) as they are the ones that speak to the new covenant between God and humanity. In the gospel of Mark we get the story of Jesus’ own baptism with water and as the scripture says, “as [Jesus] was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.

Ron Reinstra, the writer of this sermon series puts it this way, “Before Jesus ever recruits disciples, before he preaches a sermon or heals a single soul, he steps down into the waters of baptism and plants himself squarely in our garden, insisting on taking on our estrangement from God.”²

When we are baptised, it is a reminder of the covenant that God made with any who would believe that this mystery, this covenant of grace, is God’s promise for humanity. And what is the promise? It is the promise of forgiveness of sins, eternal life, meaning and purpose, God’s guidance, blessings, and so much more. It is grace, the gift freely given.

And Peter reminds us that just as Noah and his family were saved through water, now the waters of baptism symbolize our own cleansing. We are baptised in the name of the

² By **Ron Rienstra**. [Grounded and Growing—Journeying from Lent to Easter: A Year of Grounded and Growing | Reformed Worship](#). Accessed January 26, 2026.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our baptism is the promise of God with us in what is called a covenant of grace.

Now a side note, God is still working in and through you even if you haven't been baptized. Baptism is an outward sign of an invisible grace or gift. We have to live into it, internalize it. There are some people who live into that grace filled life even though they have never been baptized. Yet to be baptised is to recognize, celebrate, and respond to the free gift of grace.

Here is the challenge. We have the gift. We don't have to earn it. We don't have to put in hours to prove that we are worthy or fit enough, however if we want to understand grace, experience grace more fully, then, in some respects like an athlete, we need to put in the hours, the discipline, the obedience, in order to internalize the outward sign of grace we have received. We can be baptized and do nothing with that, or we can spend the time in the reading of scripture, mediating on the word, study, and prayer and deepen our understanding and in so doing deepen our awareness of what God is doing in, with, and through us.

And though these are practices we benefit from at all times, the season of Lent can be a reset, a reintroduction, or a deepening of our faith and our trust in God to be with us.

Once again, I take from Ron Rienstra, as he writes, "Lent is not a proving ground for spiritual stamina. It is not a contest of willpower or a crash diet for the soul. It is a season of trust—trust that the God who set a rainbow in the sky, who saves through water, and who names Jesus as 'beloved Son' is the same God who meets us in dry places, thin places, and hungry places."³

You will note that immediately after Jesus was baptized, and before going out to minister to others, Jesus went into the wilderness. You might also note the correlation between the 40 days that Jesus was in the wilderness and the 40 days of Lent and even the 40 days and nights of rain that flooded the earth in the story of Noah. These 40 days in the wilderness were a time of preparation for the ministry that would come next. This experience paved the ways for Jesus to trust in God's provision. It can be a time of formation for us as well. To learn to trust God fully to provide and be present for us.

Let me close with words from this series, "Lent is a season of being grounded and growing. Grounded in God's covenant love, in the promises spoken over us in baptism, and in the mercy that meets us even in our sin. And we are growing – growing in repentance, trust, obedience, and hope."⁴

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

May you take this time, these days from now until Easter to prepare. See it as a time of wilderness wandering. A way to remember who you are as a child of God, and image bearer of God, and then to discover your purpose in and with the community of other people seeking to do the same.

Prayers of the People

God of all life and each life,
we offer you thanks for all the ways we meet you in our daily lives:
in a word of encouragement,
in an insight into truth,
in an answer to prayer.

Thank you for a breath of calm in the midst of stress,
and an offer of support when we need it.

Thank you for a sense of accomplishment that our work matters
and for moments of rest and relaxation to renew us.

Thank you for all these signs that you love us,
understand us and walk with us, Loving God.

Our gratitude for your love reminds us of the need for your mercy in the world.
And so, in times of silence, we pray for:

The world and the people and places in the news this week

Leaders facing difficult decisions and balancing different needs in complex situations

Your church and congregations, facing new challenges and opportunities for mission

Our workplaces and our community, facing many needs and pressures

Our family, friends and neighbours, especially those facing hard choices these days

And for ourselves, we offer to you our own concerns

Thank you for your grace that embraces all for whom we pray, O God. In the week ahead, help us notice your hand at work in our lives and in this troubled world. We offer our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who taught us to pray together:

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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

God has given us so many gifts in Christ and in creation.
We offer our gifts in gratitude for the possibilities we enjoy,
trusting God to multiply what we bring for goodness' sake.

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Hymn

Who made the earth and the heaven

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|---|---|
| 1. Who made the earth and the heaven?
- Mighty hands!
Who made the man and the woman?
- Awesome hands!
Who made the tree and the garden?
- Loving hands!
Who's got the world in mighty hands? | 2. Who made the stars and the children?
- Mighty hands!
Who made the stream and the salmon?
- Awesome hands!
Who made the lamb and the lion?
- Loving hands!
Who's got the world in mighty hands? |
| 3. Who made the swan and the swallow?
- Mighty hands!
Who made the wind and the willow?
- Awesome hands!
Who makes today and tomorrow?
- Loving hands!
Who's got the world in mighty hands? | 4. Who sent the storm and the thunder?
- Mighty hands!
Who sent the flood and the fire?
- Awesome hands!
Who sent the dove and the rainbow?
- Loving hands!
Who's got the world in mighty hands? |
| 5. Who loves the man and the woman?
- Mighty hands!
Who sent the Lamb and the Lion?
- Awesome hands!
Who makes a new earth and heaven?
- Loving hands!
Who's got the world in mighty hands? | 6. You've got the whole world
- Mighty God!
You've got the whole world
- Awesome God!
You've got the whole world
- Loving God!
You've got the who world in your hands! |

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Benediction

May the God of covenant keep you.
May the Christ of the wilderness walk with you.
May the Spirit who descended like a dove lead you in the way of life.
Go in peace. Walk in hope. Amen.

Postlude

Grounded and Growing—Journeying from Lent to Easter A - Year of Grounded and Growing
by Ron Rienstra. As Published on the Reformed Worship website January 2026