

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

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

The Second Sunday in Lent - March 1, 2026

## We Prepare for Worship

### Call to Worship

Lent calls us to journey, this and every day,  
following Jesus wherever he leads us.

**Lent calls us to journey:  
to the place where God covenants with us,  
to receive the new names we are given.**

Lent calls us to worship together,  
to tell future generations the good news.

**Lent calls us to practice justice,  
to bring God's hope to all people.**

Lent calls us to faithful living,  
to trust the One who gives us life.

**Lent calls each of us to take up our cross,  
to trust the One who bears it with us.**

Lent calls us to journey with God.  
**Let us worship God, who walks with us,  
this and every day.**

[Lectionary Liturgies: Liturgy w/communion for February 25, 2024 \(Lent 2 - B\)](#)

### Hymn

### *Take up your cross*

211

1. Take up your cross, the Saviour said,  
if my disciple you would be;  
deny yourself, the world forsake,  
and humbly follow after me.
2. Take up your cross; let not its weight  
fill frightened spirit with alarm;  
his strength shall bear your spirit up,  
and brace your heart, and nerve your arm.
3. Take up your cross, nor heed the shame,  
nor let your foolish pride rebel:  
for you the Saviour bore the cross,  
to save your soul from death and hell.
4. Take up your cross, then, in Christ's strength  
and every danger calmly brave;

'twill guide you to a heavenly home,  
and lead to victory o'er the grave.

5. Take up your cross and follow Christ,  
nor think till death to lay it down,  
for only those who bear the cross  
may hope to wear the glorious crown.

"Take up your cross." Words by Charles William Everest. Public domain.

## **Prayer of Adoration and Confession**

God of majesty and mercy,  
Christ, both Lord and Servant,  
Spirit of new life,  
your mystery embraces the vast reaches of the universe  
and yet you are present with us in the course of our daily lives.  
Even the tiniest spark of your wisdom illuminates the greatest complexities.  
With the smallest gesture of your love, you renew our hope.  
Deepen our sense of your holy presence this day.  
Assure us that your love will never let us go.  
We offer our praise and our prayers this day to you,  
Holy God, Holy One and Holy Three,  
with humble hearts and faith that seeks understanding.

**God of mystery and mercy,  
we confess that we prefer simple certainty to seeking deeper understanding.  
We settle for what we know, ignoring our doubts and questions.  
Forgive us when our faith falters because what we think no longer satisfies.  
Open our eyes to the truth you hold out to us in Christ,  
and give us courage to rethink what we have assumed about you  
and your love for the world.  
We ask this in the name of Christ, Amen.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. The Second Sunday in Lent. March 1, 2026. Year A.

## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

In Jesus Christ, God has come near—  
not to condemn, but to redeem;  
not to shame, but to restore;  
not to discard, but to make new.

Friends, believe this good news:  
in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.  
Thanks be to God.

## Prayer for Understanding

God of Wisdom, we turn to Scripture to listen and learn. Send your Holy Spirit to help us listen carefully so that we hear what we have not heard before and learn to follow Christ with deeper understanding and renewed commitment. Amen

## Scripture Readings

### ❖ Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

<sup>1</sup> When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. <sup>2</sup> And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” <sup>3</sup> Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, <sup>4</sup> “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>5</sup> No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. <sup>7</sup> I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”

<sup>15</sup> God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. <sup>16</sup> I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

### ❖ Romans 4:13-25 God’s Promise Realized Through Faith

<sup>13</sup> For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. <sup>14</sup> If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. <sup>15</sup> For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

<sup>16</sup> For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, <sup>17</sup> as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. <sup>18</sup> Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations”, according to what was said, “So numerous shall your descendants be.” <sup>19</sup> He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. <sup>20</sup> No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup> being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. <sup>22</sup> Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.” <sup>23</sup> Now the words, “it was reckoned to him”, were written not for his sake alone, <sup>24</sup> but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who

raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,<sup>25</sup> who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

### ❖ **Mark 8:31-38 Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection**

<sup>31</sup> Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup> But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

<sup>34</sup> He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. <sup>36</sup> For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup> Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <sup>38</sup> Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

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The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### **Message** Trusting the Costly Way

Saturday February 28<sup>th</sup>, the world woke up to the news that the US and Israel had gone to war against Iran. Of those paying attention, and even if you didn't, would not or did not wonder, what does this mean for the world? With all of the instability that has been felt around the world with the current president at the helm many people are feeling the weight of the unknown. What will this cost us? What will be the cause and effect? Will this bring stability or more instability?

For most of us, we have no idea. We conjecture. We ponder. We have conversations over the dinner table. Yet, I would hazard that most of us listening today have not experienced war directly. We see the images flash across tv screens and devices, but this still feels like someone else's problem. Or at the very least one that we have no influence over. So, we continue about our day. For what else are we to do?

I am certainly the least qualified to speak for or against these actions of aggression. I know little about world power, domination, nuclear weapons, or politics. Yet there is something that today's scripture readings would have us consider. As Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem and what will certainly be his death, what are we to make of his words and actions as we live out our own lives personally and as part of a global community?

So far there are more questions than answers in both our understanding of Jesus and what is going on in the world now. And maybe that is what life really is like...always more questions than answers. That does not mean that we throw up our arms in despair, anger, retaliation, or judgement. It does mean that we look to the example of who Jesus cared about, who Jesus protected, healed, taught, and what he spoke out against.

We know that Jesus spent time with those we refer to as “the least of these”. Jesus healed the sick, spent time with those who were broken hearted and grieving. He did not deny healing to those who would have appeared to be beyond the boundaries of his concern, such as the daughter of a Syrophenician woman. (Mark 7:24-30). He fed hungry bodies with bread and fish while feeding hungry souls with words of acceptance, forgiveness, love, justice, and grace. And when you hear the word, justice, remember for Jesus, justice was about making sure the most vulnerable were considered, remembered, and lifted up.

The reading from the Gospel of Mark chapter eight is one that really can use a little more context. Early on in the chapter as Jesus and his disciples are traveling through villages, he asks the question, “Who do people say I am?” And after getting a few responses, he says to his disciples, “What about you? ... Who do you say I am?” And Peter’s answer is remembered, “You are the Christ.”

It was so apparent to them at that moment. This man with the power to have them leave their homes and families to spend time with him, to follow him, the one who they watched feed a multitude of people with food left over, the one who taught with an perception of scriptures that was beyond their understanding, who looked at the scriptures with a different lens, this had to be the Messiah. The one who would fulfil their scriptures and finally take back their rights, lead them to victory over oppressors, who they would crown king in power and might, this was Jesus.

Then he tells them, “...the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” (Mark 8:31-33).

We are so used to power being right or taking control through aggression that when we are faced with a different kind of power, the power of love, justice for those with no voice or power, the power of grace, we don’t understand how that can work. It feels like looking at the world through rose-coloured glasses. It seems unimaginable that the world can be different or operate within different parameters than that of power and might taking control in ways that devalue human life or think it acceptable that life be taken.

And let's not be naïve, Jesus' own life was taken on a cross by those who wanted to control the narrative and quiet the masses through fear and coercion. And Jesus hits the nail on the head when he says about those who operate in the world that way, "For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?" (8:36) The New International version says it another way, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?"

You can have everything, all the power, all the wealth, but if it sucks you of your humanity, your compassion, your understanding that there is or will be suffering because of your decisions, then you have lost your life. It is our common humanity, compassion, our seeking to understand those we do not understand, speaking for those who have no voice, those things and more which demonstrate that each person is of value, this is what brings life.

It is the more difficult way. It is the way of the cross. It means trusting what cannot be seen. It is not blind trust. It is trust built on the tradition and words of scripture, the story of humanity's experience of God. And God is faithful, loving, just, and compassionate. If God were not compassionate than Jesus would never have come to live among us, die to save us, and rise again that we might have life.

The story of Abram and Sarai is one of God's promise and compassion. It is a story of blessing of covenant, but the story is that Abraham and Sarah are now changed, their names are changed, and their future is changed. Those who were beyond hope in having a child blessed with a child and through them nations will be blessed. Their story undergirds the story of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. We share a common story. We are all part of the same human story. We are part of the many nations promised to share the faith of Abraham, the faith he had in one God who made a promise, a covenant with both Abraham and Sarah. Both the man and the woman are promised that they will give rise to nations and kings of peoples shall come to them.

God asked of them faith before proof, trust before understanding. They did not know what all of this meant for them, God just said start walking. Start living in the knowledge that God goes with you. They were not promised smooth roads. They encountered many challenges. And Jesus spoke of the same. Jesus did not run around suffering, challenges, and grief. He did not and does not promise that if you believe you will not suffer, in fact he says the opposite. Faith will be costly. It will include suffering because the human condition, human life, includes it. But we are not to avoid it. Jesus did not avoid the cross. Jesus said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (8:38)

Maybe the reading is best understood through the words of The Message,

“Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You’re not in the driver’s seat; I am. Don’t run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I’ll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to saving yourself, your true self. What good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, the real you? What could you ever trade your soul for?”<sup>1</sup>

And that is the answer we are given about faith, change, leadership, suffering and love. It is not the answer we want, just as it was not the answer Peter wanted, but it is the costly way of the cross and we are asked to trust that costly way will bring us life. It will bring us life that values the lives of others, see the image of God in each person, and asks us to give of ourselves. It is life shaped by both sacrifice and hope. It is life that understands that God’s promises may not be comfortable but they are always faithful.

As you go from this place and time, I invite you to take up your cross, be disciples of Christ, knowing that Christ was willing to die for you, and now sits at the right hand of God...God who loves you, walks with you, and will transform your life with an abundance of hope, faith, grace, and love. And as God walks with you, walk with others in their despair, grief, suffering so that the light of Christ that you carry can be the flicker of hope that the world so desperately needs. Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

O Lord, we give you thanks for the example of Abraham and for all the saints who have gone before us - for those who waited in patience for your promises to come to pass - for those who lived in hope while around them it seemed to be only darkness, for those who witnessed to you when it was not considered the proper thing to do, for those who forgot their own selves in their desire to obey your commands and respond to your call upon their lives. Help us today, O God, to examine the level of our faith - to look seriously at our resistance to talk about the cross and about sacrifice; and to consider in prayer our reluctance to give up the things of this world - to risk our reputations, our comfort, and our security for the sake of following you - for the sake of witnessing to you - for the sake of obeying you ...

Lord, hear our prayer, and in your love, answer.

We pray, O Lord, that you would make us bold in our faith. By our self-forgetting, our self-denial, help us make visible to all people the reality of your power and care - that power and care that is so often made evident when we confess our weakness - and so often concealed from others when we are strong....

Lord, hear our prayer, and in your love, answer.

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<sup>1</sup> Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#).

We pray, O Lord, for those people whose names, or faces, or needs are resting upon our hearts – for the members of our church whose health is failing as they age – for those believers whose families are struggling to deal with teenage rebellion and adult confusion and uncertainty – for those who have little or no faith and who seem to be lost even though your light shines around them and your word is close to hand....

Lord, hear our prayer, **and in your love, answer.**

We pray, O Lord, in silence for those in our family, our church, our community and our world that you bring to our hearts and minds at this time...

All these things we pray through your Son Jesus, who taught us to pray...

— written by Rev. Richard J. Fairchild, and posted on his Kir-shalom website. <http://www.rockies.net/>

## 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

What will it profit us to gain the whole world and forfeit our life?

With humbleness let us make our offering to God,

trusting not in worldly gain, but in God's sustaining grace.

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## Hymn

### *God of grace and God of glory*

490

1. God of grace and God of glory,  
on thy people pour thy power;  
crown thine ancient church's story;  
bring its bud to glorious flower.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage  
for the facing of this hour,  
for the facing of this hour.

2. Lo! The hosts of evil round us,  
scorn thy Christ, assail his ways!  
From the fears that long have bound us,  
free our hearts to love and praise.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage  
for the living of these days,  
for the living of these days.

3. Cure thy children's warring madness,  
bend our pride to they control;  
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,  
rich in things and poor in soul.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal,  
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.

4. Set our feet on lofty places;  
gird our lives that they may be  
armoured with all Christ-like graces,  
pledged to set all captives free.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
that we fail not them nor thee,  
that we fail not them nor thee!

5. Save us from weak resignation  
to the evils we deplore;  
let the search for thy salvation  
be our glory evermore.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
serving thee whom we adore,  
serving thee whom we adore.

"God of grace and God of glory." Words by Harry Emerson Fosdick. Public Domain.

## **Benediction**

May the God who called Abraham and Sarah into a wide and wondrous future  
give you courage for the road ahead.

May the Christ who walked the way of the cross before you  
go with you in love and faithfulness.

May the Spirit who brings life out of barren places  
shape you for God's coming kingdom.

Go in peace. Walk in hope. Amen

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