

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

The Third Sunday in Lent - March 8, 2026

Call to Worship

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.

The word of the Lord is a light for our path.

God's house is a place of prayer and mercy.

We come to worship the living God.

Hymn

I sing the almighty power of God

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1. I sing the almighty power of God
that made the mountains rise,
that spread the flowing seas abroad
and built the lofty skies.
I sing the wisdom that ordained
the sun to rule the day;
the moon shines full at God's command,
and all the stars obey.
2. I sing the goodness of the Lord,
that filled the earth with food;
God formed the creatures with a word,
and then pronounced them good.
Lord, how thy wonders are displayed,
where'er I turn my eyes,
if I survey the ground I tread,
or gaze upon the skies!
3. There's not a plant or flower below
but makes thy glories known,
and clouds arise and tempests blow
by order from thy throne,
while all that borrows life from thee
is ever in thy care,
and everywhere that I could be,
thou, God, art present there.

Words by Isaac Watts. Arrangement by Ralph Vaughan Williams. Public Domain.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Creator, Christ and Spirit

you provide what we need to live, from the bounty of creation.

God of mercy, you know us through and through and you love us.

God of hope, you have an everlasting purpose for us.

God of wisdom, you open our minds and teach and guide us.

So we come to worship you, Source of Wisdom, Son of Mercy, Spirit of Hope,

offering you our prayers and our praise,

trusting you to offer us the gifts we need to thrive

and to serve you in the world you love this day and always.

**Creator and law giving God,
We are not proud of all you hear in our thoughts and prayers.
We complain when we want things to change but don't know what to do.
We justify ourselves when you call us to change but we don't want to.
We blame others when things change and upset our expectations.
Forgive us, God, when we are not listening for you.
Clear out of our hearts, minds, and lives that which leads to decay
and fill us with your Spirit of truth, love, and wisdom.
We ask this in the life-giving name of Christ. Amen.**

Adapted from The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. The Third Sunday in Lent. March 8, 2026. Year A.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear the good news:

The God who spoke from Sinai and set a people free
is the same God who still speaks life into our confusion.

The Christ who cleansed the temple and made room for prayer and praise
is the Christ who cleanses our hearts and makes room for mercy and hope.

Friends, believe this good news: in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Prayer for Understanding

Jesus Christ, we turn to you this day to be refreshed by God's living Word in the Scriptures. Let the Holy Spirit open our eyes to your truth and shine truth on the way you set before us. Amen.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. The Third Sunday in Lent. March 8, 2026. Year A

Scripture Readings

❖ Exodus 20:1-17 *The Ten Commandments*

¹ Then God spoke all these words:

² I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³ you shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷ You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

⁸ Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹ For six days you shall labour and do all your work. ¹⁰ But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven

and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

¹² Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

¹³ You shall not murder.

¹⁴ You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ You shall not steal.

¹⁶ You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

¹⁷ You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

❖ **1 Corinthians 1:18-25 *Christ the Power and Wisdom of God***

¹⁸ For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³ but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

❖ **John 2:13-22 *Jesus Cleanses the Temple***

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵ Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!” ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” ¹⁸ The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” ²⁰ The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” ²¹ But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Message Cleansed and Reclaimed

There are familiar verses in scripture that most everyone has heard, but may not recognize where they come from. It starts, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.”¹ (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8) The second point in the list says there is “a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot.” If you are someone who farms or gardens, you know very well about planting and uprooting. These things need to be done in their proper time and order in order for there to be anything to harvest. Weeding or spraying for weeds is necessary in order that the garden, flower beds, or fields can grow without being taken over by plants that destroy. We uproot anything that will take away from the value or beauty of what we are trying to grow.

The scriptures today all speak to a type of uprooting in order to allow healthy growth, this growth however is about humans, our relationship with God, and our relationship with each other. And think of this as broadly as you can. It is not just about our individual relationships but also about how we live in community with one another in the church, in our area, and in the world.

These three scriptures might not appear to have much in common and through I could have created a sermon about each one of the scriptures from Exodus, 1 Corinthians, or Gospel of John, today we are looking at a common thread among them and that is how each can be used for correction, and by correction I mean, giving us direction or correcting our course of living, as well as the reclaiming of our lives as followers of Christ. Let's start with the John. This is wild Jesus. Or at least that is what it feels like. This is not the Jesus we talk about very often. We like our baby Jesus and our grown-up Jesus to be meek and mild. This temper tantrum Jesus is not the one we expect. This Jesus is filled with emotion. On the surface one might wonder what is going on. Jesus' anger though is about access to God and what was going on in the temple limited people's access. It was not that the business going on there was unholy in the sense that people were truly trying to honour the expectations of worship at the temple, but the trading and exchanging was happening in the area where those who were not Jewish were allowed to worship. And very likely it had become a place of some corruption. Jesus' clearing of the temple was an act of making room, reclaiming God's house for prayer and holiness. Moving on to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, this place too was filled with temptations and corruption. The city was metropolitan in flavour and boasted temples that were filled with all kinds of unsavory behaviours, but Paul's letter is addressed to those who were part of the Christian church. It was their behaviour that was being called into question. It seems that there were divisions and cracks appearing in the fabric of the community of faith starting with those who thought that they were wiser or more powerful than others. It may have been divisions of class, of those who were more prosperous and those who were more learned. Whatever was happening, Paul is writing in a not so happy tone. In

¹ All scripture quotations taken from *New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition*. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

this particular part of his letter, he seems to be addressing those who think themselves wiser than others, and Paul simply says, you think you are wise, but you are foolish. For “God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.” (1 Corinthians 1:25) Those who have power are those who believe in the power of the cross which was the power of God to transform life.

The other reading today focused on what we have come to know as the Ten Commandments. So often these words have been used in ways that seem to limit us. They are handed down to us as rules that feel stifling, even when something like, thou shalt not murder, is a pretty standard rule of thumb. However, what these words are giving us are words that talk about relationship. The first of them talk about our relationship with God and the rest about how to be in relationship with one another. As Jesus summed them up, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-39)

Sometimes we forget that Jesus was Jewish and so he held all of the what we call Old Testament scriptures as valuable. With Jesus we have come to understand how God’s love permeates all of the scriptures, both Old and New Testaments. We also forget that these “laws” given to us in the Commandments are about freedom and life for all.

So why in this time of Lent are we stringing these readings together? Well, it is because they are all about living in relationship, they are about letting God do God’s work in us. Just as Jesus cleansed the temple of all that was not life giving, so Jesus comes to us to say, what in your life needs to be cleansed? What is in your heart, your mind, and in your body, that keeps you from living a transformed life? A life that honours God, yourself, and others? A life filled with love for God, yourself, and others?

Paul in his letter, reminds us to get out of our own way and that of others so that we can really see the sacrifice made on our behalf by Jesus and allow the wisdom and power of God to direct our days, our thinking, and our behaviours. And really that is what the Ten Commandments are about, how to live our lives in ways that connect us to God and other another.

These scriptures are all about becoming people of light, love, and life. The Christian life is not meant to be burdensome, but rather life giving! It is about opening ourselves up to Jesus, letting our hearts, minds, and bodies be bound to the love, value, and compassion that is ours to claim as image bearers of God. And though we experience hardship and struggle, when it is lived with the knowledge that we are loved and worthy of love it guides us through the challenging parts, knowing that God goes with us and if we are living out our calling to be image bearers of God, then we go with others in their struggle. We are present and prepared to walk along side those who have yet to figure out that they are valuable and worthy of love, kindness, and justice. Justice born out of God’s love for the most vulnerable in our society and for each of us.

In this season of Lent, we are invited to look at our lives, reflect on our lives, to see what needs to be weeded out, plucked up, cleared out of hearts and minds, responding to the work of the Holy Spirit in us that bears witness to Jesus and God’s love, care, and

compassion for us...us as individuals and us as humanity. Allowing Jesus to reclaim a space in our hearts meant for prayer and praise, healing and hope.

Sometimes this looks and feels like chaos, maybe even anger, yet the disruption can be devotion allowing love to make room in our entire being. As Ron Rienstra puts it, "Invite the Spirit to look at the garden and ask what needs to be pulled up by the roots, what needs to be cut back, and what needs room to breathe and bear fruit. Lent is a season for holy demolition and careful cultivation so that God's presence may take up residence again and bring new life."²

May you know, this day and in the days to come, the Spirit at work in the garden of your life and our life together as community. In Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

The house of God is not a marketplace for buying and selling.

It is a house of prayer, a place of healing and restoration,

a place where we bring before God our provisions to be used for present needs.

Let us bring our tithes and offerings to God presenting them as an offering of

gratitude and praise. Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 1 © 2014 Westminster John Knox Press. Page 144.

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Prayers of the People

Revealing God,

we seek to offer you our prayers in spirit and in truth.

We thank you for the truth of your love

which welcomes us as we are, not as the world tells us we should be.

Thank you for the truth of your mercy

which embraces us even when you recognize our mistakes and failures.

Thank you for the truth of your purpose

which gives us meaning and direction for our lives.

And thank you for the truth of your vision

which gives us hope for our future even in challenging times.

Revealing God, Guide us in spirit and in truth.

Revealing God,

we seek from you truth for our times.

We are surrounded by claims of truth and much that misleads.

We pray for those who feel overwhelmed by so much information:

Grant us all the ability to discern fact from fabrication,

And to recognize self-interest disguised as sincerity.

² Ron Rienstra. Grounded and Growing—Journeying from Lent to Easter A - Year of Grounded and Growing
As Published on the Reformed Worship website January 2026

Revealing God, Guide us in spirit and in truth.

Revealing God,

we seek from you truth in our history.

We know that most history has been written by the winners,
so give us the willingness to hear the stories that have been silenced.

We pray for those who have stories that are difficult to tell.

Grant us both the courage to speak and to listen,

and the wisdom to recognize truth even when it makes us uncomfortable.

Revealing God, Guide us in spirit and in truth.

Revealing God,

we seek from you truth in our characters and shared humanity.

We hear voices that are fearful, critical and cynical,

so help us listen for voices of respect, generosity and filled with hope.

Show us the potential we have to work together,

to find common cause even among those with different perspectives,

and accomplish more than we can imagine right now,

because, together, we have been created in your image.

Awaken in us and among us the potential to serve you

in serving one another,

for this is the way you revealed to us in Jesus Christ, both Friend and Saviour,

who taught us to pray together: The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. The Third Sunday in Lent. March 8, 2026. Year A

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

Hymn

O Lord my God! / How great thou art

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1. O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder
consider all the worlds thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
thy power throughout the universe displayed,

Refrain

then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,

How great thou art! how great thou art!

Then sings my soul! My Saviour God, to thee,

How great thou art! how great thou art

2. When though the woods and forest glades I wander
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze,

Refrain

3. And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
he bled and died to take away my sin,

Refrain

4. When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration,
and there proclaim, my God, how great thou art!

Refrain

"O Lord my God!/How great thou art." Words by Carl Gustav Boberg. Translation by Stuart K. Hine. ©1949, 1953 Hope Publishing Company. All rights reserved. Reprinted under OneLicense.net A-723877.

Benediction

May the God who spoke from the mountain
set your feet on the path that leads to life.
May the Christ who overturned the tables
make room in you for prayer, mercy, and joy.
May the Spirit who writes wisdom on the heart
teach you how to live what you believe.
Go in peace.
Walk in hope.

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