

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

6th Sunday of Easter - Christian Family Sunday - May 10, 2026

Call to Worship

How shall we love the Lord our God who has poured out such love upon us?

We shall love God with all our hearts, minds, souls, and spirit.

How shall we demonstrate that love.

We shall live that love in all that we do, think, and say.

Let our love be genuine and holy.

Praise be to God who has loved us totally.

[Worship Connection: May 14, 2023](#)

Hymn

For the beauty of the earth

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1. For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies.
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.
2. For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of light,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.
3. For the joy of ear and eye,
for the heart and mind's delight,
for the mystic harmony
linking sense to sound and sight,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.
4. For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth and friends above,
for all gentle thoughts and mild,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.
5. For each perfect gift of thine,
to the earth so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flowers of earth and buds of heaven,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.

"For the beauty of the earth." Words by Folliot Sandford Pierpoint.
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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of all time and space,
you initiated the relationship of love and generosity with creation
at a time before and beyond all knowing.

Through the Word and the Spirit, you continue in eternal love for all beings.

Fill us with a deep and abiding awareness of your presence,
your call, and your grace in our lives and in our world.

Shape us into the people you have made us to be –
poured out in creative mercy for the sake of Jesus Christ in all creation.

[Discipleship Ministries | Week 5 – Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year A...](#)

**Lord of mercy, there are so many times in our lives when we feel alone.
We wonder where you are. We cry out to you in our confusion, pain, and hurt.
And when you do not immediately grant the prayers of our cries,
we begin to doubt that you even care or exist.
Stop us from going down this path of self-destruction.
Help us look around and find the many ways
in which you have blessed our lives.
Forgive us when we are so quick to doubt
and so arrogant in our demands of your responses.
Give us a spirit of patience and willingness to be ready to hear your voice.
Strengthen us for the ministries of love and hope
that you have placed before us;
for we ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.**

[Worship Connection: May 14, 2023](#)

Assurance of Forgiveness

Even in the midst of doubt and darkness,
the light of God is shining in you, on you, and through you.
Out of God's great love, you have been redeemed and made whole.
Rejoice, beloved of God!

[Worship Connection: May 14, 2023](#)

Prayer for Understanding

Spirit of Truth and Love, move in us and among us as we listen to the Scriptures read and proclaimed. Open our minds and hearts to God's Living Word so that we may know it more fully and follow it more faithfully, day by day. Amen.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 6th Sunday of Easter. Christian Family Sunday. May 10, 2026. Year A.

Scripture Reading John 14:15-31

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

¹⁸ "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" ²³ Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with

them. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words, and the word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me.

²⁵ “I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. ²⁸ You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur you may believe. ³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me, ³¹ but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.

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Message Love in Action

Let's set the stage as you picture the story in your mind. There is a meal and people are gathered, but before the meal begins the host starts by removing his outer robe and ties a towel around himself. Then pours water into a basin and begins to wash the feet of those he is about to dine with. He wipes their feet with the towel. After doing that he says to those gathered you should do as I have done.

Together they eat a meal. It is a special time of the year. A special meal has been prepared and they partake of it with reverence but also, as any who would be gathered over a meal, the conversation is going on back and forth between the guests. Then, as can happen at a meal, the conversation boils over, a word is spoken that changes the trajectory and tone of the rest of the evening. There is an accusation of betrayal and then one person walks out. Now what?

It has already been an evening of unexpected actions, but so far, the actions were about showing others how to serve, how to love, but not this. The words of betrayal and knowing that something in the room has shifted cannot be ignored.

Now, for us, Easter has passed, and in case you didn't catch on, we already had this story a few weeks ago as we went through the days of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Why return to this scene, this story, so soon after Easter? The answer, this Thursday May 14th, the church worldwide celebrates what is known as Ascension Day and it is part of the whole Easter story. This story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection does not come to its fullness until Jesus ascends to once again be fully with God.

There are some Christian traditions in which the day is so important all work stops. It is a celebration day, just like Easter. Yet for so many of us the day, which comes forty days after Easter, and marks the day Jesus ascended to heaven as the disciples watched, well this day is most often overlooked. However, it is filled with significance for those who are followers of Christ.

As is written in one of my reference books, “Christ’s ascension means that in heaven there is one who, knowing first hand the experience of suffering and temptation, prays for us and perfects our prayers. The ascension is a witness and guarantee of our own bodily resurrection, as well as an invitation for us to set our hearts and minds ‘on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God’ (Col. 3:1-2) to rule over all things in heaven and throughout the universe (Eph. 1:10, 20-23). Finally, the ascension of Jesus serves as the prelude to Pentecost, when the power of the risen Christ came upon all believers through the Holy Spirit.”¹

I share all of this so that we come to this particular passage with the context needed to understand Jesus statement that was first read to us today, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”² This whole reading drops us into the conversation that took place over that Passover meal after Jesus had washed the disciples feet and after Judas walked out the door. Judas’ actions from that point on will trigger the events that lead to the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. And because we are reading this after the fact, we know that Jesus knows where all this will lead even as he joins those he loves for a final meal.

So Jesus starts into a conversation that they will not fully understand in the moment, but in the days after his death and resurrection, in those days of appearances, and later on when the promise and power of the Holy Spirit come to fruition, then they will begin to reflect on the events and remember these words spoken over a final meal. They will understand them in a new way. These words will give them courage and direction when confusion, grief, and fear are very real to them.

So rather than thinking of Jesus’ words read today as a stand alone, think of the words in the context of the whole Easter story. In fact, think of it in the context of Jesus life, a life where Jesus responded to needs, restored people to wholeness, and rejoiced with them. A life where Jesus loved using words and actions to make the point that God is love.

And if you were to look at this passage and underline the phrases or even just the word love, you would see just how important love is. It is central to all of this passage. It basically boils down to, loving Jesus means loving God and others. And loving Jesus is shown in how we love God and others.

And please do not confuse this kind of love, one that is shown in both word and deed, as what you need to do to be loved by God. God has always loved us first; it is why Jesus came into the world in the flesh and blood of a human being in the first place. It was God’s love that brought this about. Our actions of love are our response to God’s love. Our actions do not earn God’s love.

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² 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, unless otherwise indicated.

All of this is about love and how the relationship between God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and us is so intricately and beautifully woven together that it cannot be separated one from another. The word the Bible uses is abiding. You and I know God because God abides with us and is in us. Eugene Peterson writes clearly about this in *The Message*, “If you love me, show it by doing what I’ve told you. I will talk to the Father, and he’ll provide you another Friend so that you will always have someone with you. This Friend is the Spirit of Truth. The godless world can’t take him in because it doesn’t have eyes to see him, doesn’t know what to look for. But you know him already because he has been staying with you, and will even be *in you!*”³

If you love me, show it by doing what I’ve told you. Love it not just a feeling. Love is an action. Love is making the choice to let others know about this love that comes from God and we do this by loving others. Each time we speak words of love, compassion and grace should flow from us. We were taught in school about Newton’s laws of motion, that with each action comes a reaction, and not to get technical about it or push this thought too far, let’s just say that if our actions are actions of love, the reaction may also be that people feel loved and will share that love with others. The more pain and suffering one has felt the more difficult it may be for another to really trust that God loves them, has always loved them, and will always love them.

For those living in the harshest of conditions it may be near impossible for them to think that God abides in them and will be in them. It may take our example of compassion, grace, and love, for others to experience God’s love. Our love can change the trajectory of family history, the laws or ordinances that oversee our communities, and even the course of conflict in the world. Our love and compassion are demonstrated in the simple act of offering water to those who need it, or taking a census that shows where the areas of need are greatest when it comes to hospitals and schools being built, or the funding for health care and education and other civic priorities. How about paying attention to who you vote for, making sure your candidate has a political agenda that has a priority of care for the most vulnerable in our midst.

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. Do you remember what the greatest commandment was and what followed from that? In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus was asked, ³⁶ “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷ He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

When Jesus says, if you love me, you will keep my commandments, or show it by doing what I’ve told you, it is based in the command to love God and love you neighbour. When the passage from John you heard today is taken out of context it seems like judgement

³ [The Message](#) (MSG). Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

rather than love, but it is part of a whole discourse, what is known as Jesus' farewell discourse, of things that Jesus wanted his disciples, his followers to know and understand about what it means to love and be loved.

But Jesus does not expect us to be able to live this out on our own. Up until this point Jesus had been with his followers, but for them and for us, after the crucifixion, Jesus' resurrection and ascension, that would not longer be the case. At least not as it has been, which is why we are promised another Advocate to be with us forever. This is the Spirit of truth who abides with us and will be in us. We get the power and promise of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit that is hard to nail down or explain but is as real to our lived experience as anything else. The very breath of life, a comforter and counselor, a Spirit of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and so much more.

We are not orphaned, left with Jesus' words with no power to act on them. We have the Holy Spirit in and with us, blowing through the pews of this church and moving in the world. The Spirit is with us as we are moved to words of kindness and actions of love. As this particular scripture ends, "but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father", we to do as Jesus commanded and love one another so that the world may know that we love the God. Remember the washing of feet? Of that act of kindness, humility, and love? This is what it means to do as Jesus has done and the kind of love Jesus spoke about.

So go and love. Go and love God and others through your words and your actions. Through your compassion and your decisions. Go out with love in your hearts and love on your minds for each and every person you encounter and for the world. For God so loved the world...Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of homes and families,
this Sunday we give you thanks for our families,
especially remembering mothers, grandmothers, great grandmothers.
We are grateful for their love and attention,
their hard work and the deep hope they have cherished for each one of us.
We honour before you each one who has mothered us
and now lives with you in your eternal care.
And we ask your blessing on each one in our family
who continues to care for us, cook for us and worry about us.
God with a loving heart, hear our prayer.

God of connections and compassion,
today we thank you for our friends and relations,
for the neighbours and fellow citizens who help to make our lives complete.
We thank you for glad times shared, helping hands offered, commitments honoured.
And we pray for those around us facing particular challenges this day.

God with a loving heart, hear our prayer.

God of courage and new possibility,
today we pray for all those who feel life or love slipping through their fingers,
for those who face the loss of good health,
and for those who face the loss of good times.

We pray for communities facing upheaval through natural disaster and human misjudgement, and for countries facing economic turbulence and environmental collapse.

God with a loving heart, hear our prayer.

God of forgiveness and renewal,
today we pray for those caught up in relationships in need of repair
and for all who seek peace and seek to make peace.

We pray for families, churches, communities, and countries caught up in division.

Send your Spirit to bring peace to troubled lives.

God with a loving heart, hear our prayer.

As those who seek peace in Jesus' name, we pray together 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

For those of us who live (or lived) with the love and care of a parent, and for those who experience (or experienced) the love of other adults who nurtured and cared for us when our parents could not, Jesus' words in John 14 come as a refreshing declaration: "I will not leave you orphaned."

We are not left without One who loves us!

Because of Jesus' declaration, we can be assured we are not without God's Spirit, even in the toughest of times.

In grateful appreciation for that reality,
our innate response is to find ways to express our gratitude.

How do you say thank you for the assurance of God's Spirit with you/with us?

One way is to make an offering of our finances.

We recognize we trade our time and skills for money, and then are able to share money as one way of helping create God's Realm on earth.

Today we give our finances to help support the ministry of this congregation.

Let's be generous with our offering because of God with us! [May 10, 2026 - Center for Faith and Giving](#)

May you be encouraged to visit our website at [St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay, ON – Part of the PCCWeb network of churches](#) and give a financial gift to support the work of this ministry.

Hymn

I'm gonna live so God can use me

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1. I'm gonna live so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna live so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
2. I'm gonna work so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna work so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
3. I'm gonna pray so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna pray so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
4. I'm gonna sing so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna sing so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
5. I'm gonna love so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna love so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

"I'm gonna live so God can use me." Words: African-American spiritual. Public domain.

Benediction

May you see Jesus, the one who does not leave you.
May you know the Father who loves you.
May you be filled with the Holy Spirit, who is with you for ever.
And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Spirit,
be upon you and those you love
this day and always.
Go in God's strength
to live in love and peace.

[Hares of God + Psalm 66 – The Reflectionary](#)