

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

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

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost - May 31, 2026

**Call to Worship**

We come, for God gathers us here,  
with that community called faith:  
**where the hungry are served first,  
where the thirsty drink life's water.**

We come, for God welcomes us here  
into that home called grace:  
**where the naked are clothed in robes of hope;  
where the stranger is embraced as the long-lost prodigal.**

We come, for God reunites us here,  
sisters and brothers in that family called love:  
**where the imprisoned model justice,  
where the sick are cradled in God's peace.**

~ written by Thom Shuman, and posted on Lectionary Liturgies website.  
<http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/2008/11/reign-of-christ.html>

**Hymn**

*Christ's is the world*

**758**

1. Christ's is the world in which we move;  
Christ's are the folk we're summoned to love;  
Christ's is the voice which calls us to care,  
and Christ is the one who meets us here.

*Refrain*

*To the lost, Christ shows his face;  
to the unloved, he gives his embrace;  
to those who cry in pain or disgrace,  
Christ makes, with his friends, a touching place.*

2. Feel for the people we most avoid –  
strange or bereaved or never employed.  
Feel for the women and feel for the men  
who fear that their living is all in vain.

*Refrain*

3. Feel for the parents who've lost their child,  
feel for the women whom men have defiled,  
feel for the baby for whom there's no breast,  
and feel for the weary who find no rest.

*Refrain*

4. Feel for the lives by life confused,  
riddled with doubt, in loving abused;  
feel for the lonely heart, conscious of sin,  
which longs to be pure but fears to begin.

*Refrain*

"Christ's is the world (Dream Angus)." Words by John L. Bell and Graham Maule. ©1989, WGRG, c/o Iona Community, Glasgow, Scotland (Admin. by Wild Goose Resource Group). Used By Permission. CCLI License #11276509 + Streaming License #21035127.

## **Prayer of Approach**

God of unconditional love, give us ears to hear the countless ways you reach out to us with mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Help us to listen for the countless ways you uphold us in times of sorrow and despair. Open our eyes to the beauty of your forgiveness reaching out to us when we think we are unforgivable. Help us see your face in the lives of the folks you have placed in our paths. And, help us to embrace the peace that you are constantly offering us with the gift of your Holy presence—through the one who has come, is coming, and will come again.

### **Gracious God,**

**Search deeply within our lives and see our "hoped for" faith.**

**We want to be led by Holy-Spirit's power,  
to serve your purpose and glorify you.**

**We know our good intentions fall short,  
our outreach is overshadowed by our own needs,  
and our fear of people who are different from us  
shortens our perspective of who you are and who you call us to be.**

**God, move us toward wholeness,  
as we partner with you in building the kingdom to come.**

**Renew our lives with your mercy we pray. Amen.**

—Victor Hassell. —Laurie Sharpe. [Christian Service Recognition – Ministry Council of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church](#)

## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

Listen... and feel God's cleansing presence reaching out with forgiveness and love—promising that whatever is broken in our lives can be restored.

Know and live in the blessing of God's forgiveness.

—Drew Gray [Christian Service Recognition – Ministry Council of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church](#)

## Prayer for Understanding

Creator God,

You mold us, equip us, inspire us, and call us for holy purposes to be your partners in the world. Strengthen our faith as we resolve to become all you intend us to be, and transform our lives through the use of our gifts and talents.

Thank you for the skills and abilities uniquely gifted to each person, and for equipping and calling us to live like our brother, your son, Jesus Christ. Amen

—Laurie Sharpe. [Christian Service Recognition – Ministry Council of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church](#)

## Scripture Reading Matthew 25:34-46 The Sheep and the Goats

<sup>31-33</sup> “When he finally arrives, blazing in beauty and all his angels with him, the Son of Man will take his place on his glorious throne. Then all the nations will be arranged before him and he will sort the people out, much as a shepherd sorts out sheep and goats, putting sheep to his right and goats to his left.

<sup>34-36</sup> “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what’s coming to you in this kingdom. It’s been ready for you since the world’s foundation. And here’s why:

I was hungry and you fed me,  
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,  
I was homeless and you gave me a room,  
I was shivering and you gave me clothes,  
I was sick and you stopped to visit,  
I was in prison and you came to me.’

<sup>37-40</sup> “Then those ‘sheep’ are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?’ Then the King will say, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.’

<sup>41-43</sup> “Then he will turn to the ‘goats,’ the ones on his left, and say, ‘Get out, worthless goats! You’re good for nothing but the fires of hell. And why? Because—

I was hungry and you gave me no meal,  
I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,  
I was homeless and you gave me no bed,  
I was shivering and you gave me no clothes,  
Sick and in prison, and you never visited.’

<sup>44</sup> “Then those ‘goats’ are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or homeless or shivering or sick or in prison and didn’t help?’

<sup>45</sup> “He will answer them, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you failed to do one of these things to someone who was being overlooked or ignored, that was me—you failed to do it to me.’

<sup>46</sup> “Then those ‘goats’ will be herded to their eternal doom, but the ‘sheep’ to their eternal reward.”

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

### **Message** What are you talking about?

There are times that scripture feels really harsh and judgmental and this scripture from Matthew 25:31-46, where Jesus sits on his throne in judgment, separating the sheep from the goats, and saying to the sheep you are good and goats you are bad, well that might be enough for some to close the pages and move on. How are any of us to live up to the expectation when pretty much every day in this city, and really any community around the globe, we are confronted by the knowledge of someone who is hungry, thirsty, homeless, shivering, sick or in prison.

Now often I give an example or a story to set the stage for the sermon, but in worship today we were given the opportunity to watch a locally filmed and produced documentary called “*I Was Thirsty*”. It follows the work of the *I Was Thirsty* organization here in Thunder Bay. “This grassroots initiative provided clean drinking water, human dignity, and compassionate connection to people experiencing homelessness and water insecurity. With the support of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, dedicated volunteers, and local partners, the project delivered over 616 cases of bottled water (that’s nearly 15,000 bottles weighing 18,500 pounds) directly to encampments and shelters across the city. Volunteers drove over 2,400 kilometers to ensure no one was left behind.”<sup>1</sup>

So, we did not need to hear examples, we witnessed on the screen the deep need, as well as the compassion of the group and those who have volunteered to drive the miles and deliver water. Quite literally, it is only a drop of water in the bucket of need, but it is something. This year they are aiming to do this, not just two months but, from June through to the end of August. You can check out their website at [I was thirsty](#)

Back to the scripture itself...I am not sure how any of us can measure up to such expectations. Thing is, when you read this scripture, you see that both those who provided for those in need and those who did not provide were surprised. Both asked, “What are you talking about?” Neither realized that this taking care of the vulnerable was important, one group just did it and the other did not. What surprised both those described as sheep and those described as goats was that whatever they did or did not do meant that they had done it for Jesus or had not.

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<sup>1</sup> St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay, Annual Report 2025.

Now I will tell you that in the few words that I share with you today there is no way we can flesh out all the meaning or even the challenges that biblical scholars have had trying to figure out this whole passage. And it most certainly cannot be lifted from the pages of scripture and interpreted on its own. I am as much at a loss to tell you what is going on in this story as you yourselves might be. However, I don't believe that means we ignore it either.

First off, we know that God is a God of love, compassionate and slow to anger. But we also believe in a God for whom justice is a priority, where care for the vulnerable is a must, and grace abounds. When looking at a passage of scripture such as this, we hold all of this in tension. So, you might see why this is challenging. And we, as individuals and a church, are granted the same grace that everyone receives from God. We at times are vulnerable in different ways. It might be addiction to power, money, food, shopping, sex, drugs or alcohol. It might be that you are abused. It might be that those no one can imagine that you are struggling to pay the bills, feed yourself and your family. You may be lonely, hurting, grieving and feeling powerless.

It may be that at times you are like the sheep. You have seen a need and addressed it. Maybe it was the spare change you had in your pocket that you dropped in a cup, or that you brought food or drink to someone in need. It may be that you make sure your donations of money, clothing and household items goes to those organizations that you trust are helping the most challenged in our community.

Other days we are like goats. We buy our food, but don't buy anything extra for the food bank. We keep our car windows closed and avert any eye contact with those standing on the meridian with their make shift handwritten sign saying "anything helps". We continue to purchase for ourselves without any thought of the need around us or giving it just a passing thought.

Now this is not for me to judge you. I too am both a sheep some days and a goat other days. And this is why this passage is difficult. We are all both sheep and goat. There is no way we can take on all the need in the world by ourselves. It feels impossible to live this out.

So, a couple of things that may be helpful. One is that we are saved by grace not by our works. This is why we cannot hold this scripture separate from the rest of what Jesus taught and did. Still, maybe it is our intentions coupled with our actions that enable us to strive to live out our lives in response to the grace of God in our own lives.

We know that every life is precious. Every person, you and I included, every person is a child of God. We know that every person's life is of value. So, when you encounter need, see Jesus in that person. As we heard in the scripture that whatever you do or do not do, whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, or did not

do it, that was Jesus you either helped or didn't help. At the very least, even if you do not have means to help someone in that moment, look at them. See their humanity. See the face of Christ in them and the image of God in them. Speak gently, smile, give something of yourself to them. In that way you honour their dignity. See them.

When you can give of your time, your money, your influence, your abundance. Do it from a place of grace. Do not try to earn your place in heaven. This is not what this kind of giving is about. It is about love, dignity, value, kindness, goodness. As followers of Christ, we are always trying to become more and more shaped in the likeness of the one who gave his life for our redemption. We give from a place of joy and love.

Years ago, a friend said, we should give until it feels good. This giving of ourselves is not supposed to be painful. Sacrificial for sure. If nothing else, what Jesus was talking about in this scripture is giving of ourselves and our resources just simply to make the world a better, kinder, place. And it is what is required. Will we do it perfectly? Absolutely not. But that does not mean that we just give up. We give, we serve, we love, because that is what Jesus did and as followers of Christ hopefully, we desire to do the same, not out of fear of judgement, but because of grace.

In our actions, not only do we see the face of Christ in another, but just maybe others will see Christ in us. Maybe we will be the face of hope, joy, justice, kindness, goodness and above all else, love.

I speak to you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

Lord Jesus Christ, you proclaimed God's kingdom among us and within us.  
In the power of the Spirit, your love is always at work,  
bringing good out of evil and life out of death.  
We thank you that your love never lets us go,  
for you have known the good times and the hard times of this life before us.

You came as one who was hungry and thirsty.  
Where people live on the streets today, suffer from hunger, or beg for a meal:  
Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

You came as a stranger in need of welcome.  
Where people live lonely lives or feel like strangers in a strange land; where love is  
lacking and people face rejection for the colour of their skin or the language they  
speak:  
Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

You came as one who was naked.

Where people lack enough clothing, shelter or life's basic resources; where people live without dignity, exposed to every kind of pain and hardship:

Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

You came as one who was broken.

Where people feel pain in body, mind or spirit;

where someone grieves the loss of a beloved or the future they planned; in places where the pandemic has done its worst and desperation has moved in:

Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

You came as a Shepherd.

Where people are led astray or nations are ruled by corrupt or greedy leaders and there is no peace in the land:

Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

You came as one who was in prison.

Where people are treated unfairly, targeted or tortured;

where justice has failed and people are punished with cruelty:

Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

You came as one proclaiming the kingdom of God.

And so we lift up these prayers in your name, Lord Jesus,

knowing that your kingdom is drawing near

and that we meet you in the face of those who cry out to us.

Hasten the day when God will wipe away our tears

and death will be no more as we pray the words you 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

Jesus reminds us in Matthew 25 that whenever we care for someone who's hungry, lonely, sick, or struggling, we're caring for Him. Our everyday kindness becomes holy work.

As we give today—whether it's money, time, or compassion—we're joining Jesus in meeting real needs. What we offer makes a difference. It becomes food, welcome, hope, and love in His name.

Let's give with open hands and open hearts, trusting that God uses even small gifts to bless "the least of these."

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**

Whose gonna tell the story

**761**

**Benediction**

Go now, and be who Christ has called and created you to be—

Go and feed and give and visit and care and serve—

Go and be blessed—

For surely whatever you do to the least of these is a blessing to all  
—including yourself.

And the blessing which you have received from God the Creator,  
Redeemer, and Sustainer be with you always. Amen

—Victor Hassell. [Christian Service Recognition – Ministry Council of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church](#)