

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

Creation Sunday – September 6, 2026

Call to Worship

In the beginning, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters.

And God called them good.

Come Holy Spirit and cleanse the waters.

The prophet saw a river flowing from the Temple,
and wherever the river flowed, everything lived.

Come Holy Spirit and renew the face of the Earth.

Jesus cried out,

“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...

Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.”

Come, Holy Spirit and heal your people.

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Hymn

Before the world began

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|---|---|
| 1. Before the world began
one Word was there;
grounded in God he was,
rooted in care;
by him all things were made;
in him was love displayed;
through him God spoke, and said,
“I am for you.” | 2. Life found in him its source;
death found its end;
light found in him its course,
darkness its friend,
for neither death nor doubt
nor darkness can put out
the glow of God, the shout:
“I am for you.” |
| 3. The Word was in the world
which from him came;
unrecognized he was,
unknown by name;
one with all humankind,
with the unloved aligned,
convincing sight and mind,
“I am for you.” | 4. All who received the Word
by God were blessed;
sisters and brothers they
of earth's fond guest.
So did the Word of Grace
proclaim in time and space
and with a human face,
“I am for you.” |

“Before the world began (I am for you).” Words from John 1:1-13; paraphrased by Iona Community (Scotland). © 1987 The Iona Community (Scotland)/WGRG (North America). All rights reserved. Reprinted under OneLicense.net A-723877. Annual license with podcasting.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of grace and glory,

your creative power is beyond imagining,
your love is wider than the whole universe,
your mercy is beyond the highest heavens,
your wisdom is deeper than the seas.
Maker of all things,
you became one of us in Jesus Christ,
walking the roads we take each day,
experiencing the joys and frustrations of life in your world,
and preaching your reign in word and action.
Through your Spirit,
you are present with us in every time and place
to comfort and challenge us.
For all that you have been, are and will be,
we worship you as Creator, Christ, and Spirit, now and always.
In recalling all that you have done and all that you are,
we recall what we have done and who we are,
and we confess to you and one another our sins:

**God of majesty and mercy,
although Christ offers us peace,
we confess we are a people divided;
we harbour fears and jealousy which set neighbour against neighbour,
group against group and nation against nation.
We pursue profit and pleasures which harm creation
and the wellbeing of all people.
Have mercy upon us, O God. Set us free from our old ways
to serve you as agents of your reconciling love in Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. September 6, 2026. Year A.

Assurance of Forgiveness

The One who, in the beginning, was with God, and who was God,
and through whom all things came into being,
wraps you in loving kindness,
forgives your sins,
and gives you the strength to turn your life around,
that you might add to the light in the darkness,
and not be overpowered by sin.
Thanks be to God for such love and grace.

[Creation in Christ - United Reformed Church - Worship Notes.docx.pdf](#)

Prayer for Understanding

God of Word and Wisdom, send us your Holy Spirit, so that by your light, we may see clearly what you call us to be and to do. Engage us by your truth so we know how best to follow Christ Jesus, your living Word. Amen.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. September 6, 2026. Year A.

Scripture Readings

❖ Psalm 104: 1-4, 14-24

¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul.

O Lord my God, you are very great.

You are clothed with honour and majesty,

² **wrapped in light as with a garment.**

You stretch out the heavens like a tent,

³ **you set the beams of your chambers on the waters,**

you make the clouds your chariot,

you ride on the wings of the wind,

⁴ you make the winds your messengers,

fire and flame your ministers.

¹⁴ You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,

And plants for people to use,

to bring forth food from the earth,

¹⁵ **and wine to gladden the human heart,**

oil to make the face shine,

and bread to strengthen the human heart.

¹⁶ The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly,

the cedars of Lebanon that God planted.

¹⁷ **In them the birds build their nests;**

the stork has its home in the fir trees.

¹⁸ **The high mountains are for the wild goats;**

the rocks are a refuge for the coneys.

¹⁹ You have made the moon to mark the seasons;

the sun knows its time for setting.

²⁰ You make darkness, and it is night,

when all the animals of the forest come creeping out.

²¹ **The young lions roar for their prey,**

seeking their food from God.

²² **When the sun rises, they withdraw**

and lie down in their dens.

**²³ People go out to their work
and to their labour until the evening.**

**²⁴ O Lord,
how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.**

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❖ **Ezekiel 47: 1-12 *Water Flowing from the Temple***

¹ Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple; there water was flowing from below the entryway of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east), and the water was flowing down from below the south side of the temple, south of the altar. ² Then he brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east, and the water was trickling out on the south side.

³ Going on eastward with a cord in his hand, the man measured one thousand cubits and then led me through the water, and it was ankle-deep. ⁴ Again he measured one thousand and led me through the water, and it was knee-deep. Again he measured one thousand and led me through the water, and it was up to the waist. ⁵ Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be crossed. ⁶ He said to me, "Mortal, have you seen this?"

Then he led me back along the bank of the river. ⁷ As I came back, I saw on the bank of the river a great many trees on the one side and on the other. ⁸ He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and when it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water will become fresh. ⁹ Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish once these waters reach there. It will become fresh, and everything will live where the river goes. ¹⁰ People will stand fishing beside the sea from En-gedi to En-eglain; it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of a great many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. ¹¹ But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. ¹² On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing."

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

Message Living Water

If you are like me you have waded into water, whether a stream, river, lake or ocean, letting it inch up your body as you adjust to the temperature. You start by getting your feet wet, then get up to your knees, as it inches closer to your bottom you start to take short little breathes in order to possibly stave off the inevitable coolness. Then you are waist high, chest high, and finally it is either swim or stand on tippy toes. At some point you fully emerge in the water or turn around and go back to shore. All this to say that maybe you can relate to this scripture from Ezekiel 47:1-12 about wading into the water as it gets deeper and deeper, until the water was deep enough to swim in.

A little background for this scripture. This story is not an actual event but rather a vision. This vision was given to the prophet Ezekiel. The whole book of Ezekiel is about numerous visions that Ezekiel received as God used him as a spokesperson in a time of great devastation for the nation of Isreal. You see, Israel had been overthrown, the temple destroyed, and the people brought to a place of exile, known as the Babylonian Exile. And for about 22 years Ezekiel was giving warnings and judgements against the people that God had told him to speak or act out. He doesn't seem to have any good news until the news that Jerusalem has fallen. Then the tone changes.

From that point forward God gives Ezekiel a message of hope. A message of restoration and transformation. It signals a change in the relationship between God and God's people. A vision of a new temple is the given to Ezekiel. This is also the Old Testament book in which we hear of the valley of dry bones that are given life as God's breath is breathed into the bones (chapter 37). There are words about God's Spirit put within people, as in chapter 36:26-26 we read, "A new heart I will give you, and a new sprit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you..." There are words given to Ezekiel by God that speak of Isreal being restored to the land (39:21-29), and then there is this vision of a New Temple the story of which begins at chapter 40. It is important to understand that the Temple in Jerusalem was central to the faith of the Israelites. It was where they believed God resided. Of course, Ezekiel understood differently when he received the visions. God could obviously act outside of the temple and of the nation.

Now at no time was this temple ever built, even though, if you were to read chapter 40-46, you would find all the measurements for it and the details for the temple and the people. As the story closes, we hear God speaking through Ezekiel giving the people a gift of hope and some work to do.

I would like you to hear my paraphrase of the passage again. As you hear the words, imagine the vision of the temple and the water. At the entrance of the temple; there water was flowing from below the entryway of the temple toward the east and the water was

flowing down from below the south side of the temple, south of the altar. Around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east the water was trickling out on the south side.

Going on eastward the man in Ezekiel's vision measured the water and it was ankle-deep. Going further it was knee-deep. Further on yet, it was up to the waist. And finally, at the last stop, it was a river that could not be crossed, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in. Back along the bank of the river, there were a great many trees on the one side and on the other. The water flows toward the eastern region and when it enters the sea of stagnant waters, what we know as the Dead Sea, a sea of salt where nothing can live, the water is transformed and becomes fresh. Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live. There will be very many fish once these waters reach there. This Dead Sea, this salt water becomes fresh, and everything...everything...will live where the river goes. The swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt for some salt is still needed, but on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. They will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing.¹

This is God's vision for the world. One in which water moves and brings life. It is not some vision for a far-off future only, but one that can be lived today. One that we are called to live into today. This is not only about metaphorical water, this is about actual water, it is about the Holy Spirit's life-giving water and about people and nature brought together for the healing of our world with God the agent that brings about this transformation.

Looking at this passage one sees just how much movement is going on with the water, flowing water, trickling water, being led through the water, water rising, a river flowing, bringing life, growth, and even complete transformation to all that it touches.

This is living water.

Today is celebrated by many churches as Creation Sunday. It is a part of a longer Season of Creation recognized in the church worldwide. It is an opportunity to think about how all of creation is God's creation. Genesis... "In the beginning" ...we hear the story of all that was created. Now whether you think of this literally or as a creation story, it is about God's connectedness with all that was and is, human, flora and fauna, the sun, moon, sky, sea, and land and all that inhabits it. Today in particular, and the world-wide

¹ Paraphrased from Ezekiel 47:1-12. 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.

theme for this year's season of creation, is *Living Water* and the particular image of being immersed in water.

Water is life giving. Water is cleansing. It is why it is the symbol of baptism. Water is at the center of many biblical stories, from creation in Genesis, to Jesus changing water into wine, to the woman at the well in the New Testament. A woman who had come to the well to get water and finding Jesus there is taught about living water and Jesus as the source of that living water. And let us not forget that the Gospel of John starts out by telling us that Jesus was there when the world was created.

This theme of life-giving water flows throughout scripture. If water is that important to life, both physically and spiritually, maybe we need to pay attention to water in our world. Water is critical to our survival on so many levels.

The United Nations just published a paper in January of this year with the title, "World Enters "Era of Global Water Bankruptcy": UN Scientists Formally Define New Post-Crisis Reality for Billions."² It declares that there are places in the world where the water has been used up and there is no way to bring it back. It is part of the reason there are refugees as drought hits particular areas of the world. And, as always, it is the most vulnerable who are most directly impacted by this change. If you have a chance to go online and read the report it is enlightening. And it is not that long of a report so it is certainly a doable read. Basically, the report calls for a fundamental reset of the global water agenda as irreversible damage pushes many basins beyond recovery.³

So one might ask, what is it that you or I can do to make a difference. Well, begin by taking small steps that might make a difference to those most at risk. This congregation has been doing this already. For years we have supported *LifeWater Canada* which has a mission of "Help and hope through safe and accessible water, sanitation, and hygiene."⁴ This organization has an international impact, but was started right here in Thunder Bay. It bears the name *LifeWater* for a reason. For many years this nonprofit group has been drilling water wells and teaching people to maintain the wells in places like Nigeria and Haiti, a couple of the most vulnerable and dangerous places to do that kind of work.

And for the second year "I was thirsty"⁵ a grass roots program of delivering water to the most vulnerable in encampments in our city had twenty-seven volunteers out delivering bottles of water by the case load over 95 days this summer. For our own part, there are

² [World Enters "Era of Global Water Bankruptcy": UN Scientists Formally Define New Post-Crisis Reality for Billions | United Nations University](#) Accessed September 6, 2026.

³ Ibid.

⁴ [Home - Lifewater](#)

⁵ [I was thirsty](#)

bottles of water available to those who come to our church door at anytime of the year who need safe, fresh, water.

Each of these ways of getting safe water out to those do not have access to water, which by the way is a human right, and should never be accepted as a privilege, each of these efforts lets people know that they are seen, that their lives matter, and that someone cares. You might even choose to carry bottles of water in your vehicle to hand out, starting a trickle of water, and when more and more people join in the effort, we may even start to see the water flow with more energy.

We can also advocate for governments to make sure that people have access to water and push for housing and supports. We can advocate for governments to pay attention to climate change and water deficits. The weather of this past summer continues to demonstrate how precarious nature is with fire, torrential downpours and flooding. Find something that works for you, support it, and commit to helping for that change whether it be providing directly of oneself or giving money toward projects that aid the most vulnerable locally and globally. Get educated about climate change and climate action, housing initiatives, and in an election year in Ontario, make sure you do your homework and know where people stand on taking care of our cities, our municipalities, the people, and the environment.

There is so much that can be said about the interconnectedness of water, creation, with one another, and with God. Be encouraged. Pay attention to those around you in need of life-giving hope. Let God's love flow through you as you wade into living waters so that what is done for and in God's creation will have a ripple effect, will bear fruit, and bring healing to this world.

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

Prayers of the People

God of love,
Creator of heaven and earth,
we are filled with gratitude for the blessings of this life:
for making us in your image to love and care for one another;
for the gift of Christ, who redeems and guides us,
and gives us a pattern for everyday living;
and for the work of the Spirit, who works in us, through us and beyond us.

In your loving kindness,
hear us now as we pray for situations
where your love and grace are needed:

We pray for the church in this place and around the world,

facing so many new challenges to respond to so many enduring needs...

We pray for this beautiful planet, the fragile home we share with all living things...

For children and youth who worry about the future of the planet and their place in that future...

For those who govern in this city/town/area and the nations of the world,
that they may find the wisdom and courage to do justice for all in the decisions they make...

For the homeless and the hungry,
those who thirst for hope, love, justice, and actual water,
for the unemployed and the uncertain,
and for all who struggle with daily decisions for their families and their future...

For those who mourn, for those who face illness or isolation,
and for all whose situations we carry in our hearts this day...

God with us, we thank you for your all-embracing love that touches all life and each life, and keeps us in communion with those dear to us who now live with you. We join our voices to theirs in gratitude, praying the words Jesus 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

Every amount of bounty and all creation is a gift from God.

Every sacrifice of life that sustains ours is the sacrifice of the beloved.

In this moment in worship we return a small part of the blessings we have received from God. We return those blessings in giving of our time, energy, creativity, and our money, with hope and promise that it will be used to forge stronger connections among people and creation

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

Lord, the light of your love is shining

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1. Lord, the light of your love is shining
in the midst of the darkness, shining;
Jesus, Light of the World, shine upon us.
Set us free by the truth you now bring us.
Shine on me; shine on me.

Refrain

*Shine, Jesus, shine;
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow;
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word, Lord, and let there be light!*

2. Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
from the shadows into your radiance;
by your blood I may enter your brightness.
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness.
Shine on me; shine on me.

Refrain

3. As we gaze on your kingly brightness,
so our faces display your likeness,
ever changing from glory to glory;
mirrored here may our lives tell your story.
Shine on me; shine on me.

Refrain

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Benediction

May the One who created the heavens and the earth out of nothing,
the One who danced at Creation's dawn,
and the One who sustains and enlivens all that lives,
give you the wisdom to tend and care for Creation,
the joy to delight in all that has been made,
and the passion to change our world,
and the blessing of God
Eternal Majesty, Enfleshed Word, and Enlivening Spirit,
Be with you all, now and always, Amen.

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