

21st Sunday after Pentecost - October 18, 2026

Call to Worship

We gather here, hoping to catch a glimpse of God's face.

We gather here, longing for the fullness of God's grace.

Here God steps into our world and walks this way with us.

Here we join our voices in praise for our God who shows us all that we need.

Rev. Andy James, October 12, 2011 [call to worship: we gather here — LiturgyLink](#)

Hymn

Holy, holy, holy

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1. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty!
early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!
2. Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
who wert and art and evermore shalt be.
3. Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though our eyes in sinfulness thy glory may not see
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love and purity.
4. Holy, holy, holy. Lord God almighty!
all thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

"Holy, holy, holy." Words by Reginald Heber. Public domain.

Prayer of Adoration

Awesome and majestic God,
your creative power, your glory and holiness
were experienced by your people of old
as clouds and fire guiding them to freedom.
They believed that no one could see your face and live.
How blessed therefore are we,
for you have revealed your face to us in Jesus—
the human face of your love.
You also equip us for our journey through life and beyond,
by breathing new and everlasting life into our very beings,
through the gift of the Holy Spirit.
These people of old believed that it was your presence with them
which made them a chosen and special people.

We praise and adore you, O God, for making our lives so special,
by choosing to share your life with us in and through Jesus.
May this time of worship and the service of our lives
reveal our thanksgiving and our wonder that you should so care for us.

— written by Moira Laidlaw, and posted on her Liturgies Online website. Visit her site for many other lectionary-based resources for worship.

Prayer of Confession

**Patient God, we confess we need your mercy.
We claim to be your people, but we forget to love as you do.
We claim to seek your guidance, but we follow our own ways.
Forgive us, O God,
Amend who we are and direct who you would have us be
for the sake of Christ, our Saviour and Friend. Amen**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 21st Sunday after Pentecost. October 18, 2026. Year A.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear the good news: the One who created goodness and beauty is also the One
who shows no partiality, but offers grace and peace to all.

**God has heard our prayers and done the very thing we asked
- forgiven us, healed us, restored us. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

©2023 Thom M. Shuman. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com> October 22.

Prayer for Understanding

God of mercy, you promised never to break your covenant with us. Amid all the
changing words of our generation, speak your eternal Word that does not change.
Enable us to respond to your gracious promises with faithful and obedient lives.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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Scripture Reading Exodus 33:12-23

Moses's Intercession

¹² Moses said to the Lord, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' ¹³ Now if I have found favor in your sight, please show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider, too, that this nation is your people." ¹⁴ He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." ¹⁵ And he said to him, "If your presence will not go, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."

¹⁷ The Lord said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have asked, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." ¹⁸ Moses said, "Please show me your glory." ¹⁹ And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you the name, 'The Lord,' and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. ²⁰ But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one shall see me and live." ²¹ And the Lord continued, "See, there

is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, ²² and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; ²³ then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”

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

Message Courage in Conversation

If you have interacted with anyone today it would have been in the form of conversation. It might have been as simple as “Good morning! How are you?” with the other responding with some sort of answer. Many of our conversations each day are short and to the point. Some of our conversations are with people we may never meet again, others are with people we see week to week at church or some other regular gathering of mostly the same people. We catch up with each other, talk about the weather, and get work done.

Conversations allow us to be in relationship with one another. Most people are sure to talk to those who are unable to speak because we understand that there can be something soothing about being known to another and the means that we most regularly connect with others is through conversation, even if it seems one-sided. As I write my sermons, I like to think of them as conversations, again, just because of the form, they feel like one-sided conversations, but I hope that it feels like you are in a dialogue rather than a lecture hall.

There is overwhelming amount of research on conversations primarily because it is the most pervasive way us humans interact with one another. It is complex, layered with meaning, and a key way to understand and study human behaviour. It is the basis for relationships of all kinds. People talk to their plants, their pets, and even inanimate objects, but the most important conversations are those with other human beings. We function together in our world through our conversations and when talks break down around a negotiation table or a dinner table, there are feelings of hurt and harm. When conversations are deep and filled with trust, relationships blossom, families flourish, and love grows.

It can take courage to have deep, difficult, and challenging conversations, even when you care deeply for another, and sometimes *because* you care deeply for another. It can take courage to make ourselves vulnerable as we share of or about ourselves, or are choosing to advocate for others.

I could go on about conversations, the kinds of conversations we have, the reasons for conversations, the layers of meaning that one might glean in a conversation, what can be at stake, and whose lives might be either lifted up or damaged by conversation. And the means by which we have intimate and group conversations has drastically changes over the last number of years. Just open a social networking app and you can nearly instantly see how harm and hate are free for all conversations, but so too are conversations of connection and building of community.

As I reflected on the scripture reading from Exodus 33:12-23 I came to realize more so than before the conversation that was going on between Moses and God. Many times the focus on this passage has been around the last portion of this reading where God promises to show Godself to Moses, but gives the warning that Moses cannot see God's face for if he was to see God's face Moses would die. So instead, God hides Moses in the cleft of a rock and covers Moses with God's hand until God passes by, at which time God will take away his hand and Moses can then see the back of God. The intention is that Moses will see God's glory but will be safe in doing so.

What I noticed this time was all the times the scripture has the phrase, "Moses said to the Lord" or Moses repeats what the Lord has said, signalled with phrases like, "You have said..." There is a back and forth.

Now if you consider that in this passage God has said how dangerous it is to see God's face you realized that there are layers of trust, care, and respect woven into this back and forth conversation between Moses and God. Listen again to even those first few verses hear the conversation,

¹² *Moses said to the Lord, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you [God] have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.'*

¹³ Now if I have found favor in your sight, please show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. *Consider, too, that this nation is your people."* ¹⁴ *[God] said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."* ¹⁵ And [Moses] said to [God], "If your presence will not go, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."¹

The conversation continues. Just this little exercise has shown us that the two were in conversation, but more deeply we see that, for Moses' part anyway, there is vulnerability, trust, questions, concern for himself and others, and insight. Moses questioned who God planned to send with him as he brought people toward the promised land. He asks for God to show him God's ways so that he may know God more fully and find favour in God's sight. There is vulnerability as he wonders aloud how others will know that God is with the people unless there is a way to know that God's presence has gone with them on this journey and it is evident that they are distinctly the people of God.

Moses asked for God's consideration of the people. He is not in it for himself. This conversation comes just after God has told Moses to take the people to the land of milk and honey or as they called it The Promised Land, and God has said that he will not go with them because they are a stiff-necked people. Meaning they have not loved, glorified, or honoured God with their hearts, minds, and bodies. But it is from this declaration of

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. <http://nrsvbibles.org>

God that Moses goes before God in what was called the tent of meeting, and pleaded with God, to change God's mind about the people. Moses knew they were imperfect, but he trusted God and it seems God had a soft spot for Moses because when it was all said and done, God changed his mind about the situation and was now going to go with the people after all.

But this conversation didn't happen out of the blue. The relationship between Moses and God deepened over time and with experience. And it is not that God did not know Moses, he did. It was Moses that God called on to lead the people out of slavery to freedom. However, Moses spent time with God, in conversation, and it does not seem to be only prayer, it is like God is with Moses as an actual entity that is reachable and relational. God does not change, but God can change God's own mind about a situation.

Now let me assure you that there is no formula here about how to be in relationship with God or to get God to change God's mind, but the point is that God is not as unmoving as some might insist. God's greatest desire, as shown in the relationships with people in scripture, is to love and be loved. The overarching story of the Bible is God's love for humanity and all creation. Yes, there is frustration, anger, turning away, but that is only and always because of the way people rejected God first. Yet God never gave up on the people. Sometimes it took a Moses to do some mediation, but in the end, God provided his own mediator in Christ Jesus.

And that brings us to our hope and ability to be in relationship with God in ways that we can talk to God just as Moses did. We might not hear God speaking to us directly, though that in some ways can and does happen through the work of the Holy Spirit in us and others. I say this because of the promise of Jesus in the Gospel of John 14:15-31. This is where Jesus promises the Holy Spirit, saying we will not be left as orphans, rather Jesus will send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who God will send in Jesus name and teach us everything, and remind us of everything that Jesus said.

Why this is important is that just as Moses was the advocate for the chosen people of God that we read about in the Old Testament, Jesus, through the work of the Holy Spirit is still interceding for us with God. And through the Holy Spirit we can speak with God, trusting that God hears us.

Now it all seems pretty theoretical until one starts practicing being in relationship with God, that is when theory becomes lived experience. Over time we hear God speaking more clearly, not necessarily audibly, but through the words of others, through answers to prayers, through nature, and our own mind, body, and spirit. It takes deepening of relationship, the building of layers of trust, care, and respect woven into our lived experience of God.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Paul writes: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you"² I used to wonder what it meant to pray without ceasing, and I have come to understand that for me it means to talk with God throughout the day. Trusting that God walks with me in

² Ibid.

whatever circumstance I find myself. It can also be, and should include, times when I pause to spend time in prayer with God without distractions. We know that all good and healthy relationships are given time and attention. It is no different with God.

It also means having the courage to trust God with your life and your vulnerabilities, your fears, your hopes, your whole self and to use your relationship with God to respond to the needs of others, restoring them also to relationship with God, while we rejoice together that God goes with us and loves us. Thanks be to God for the gift of conversation that binds us to God and one another. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

We cannot calculate the measure of God's grace
or put a name to the extent of God's love.

We cannot picture the full majesty of God's power.

Yet we can respond to God with our gifts;

express gratitude born of the Spirit that moves in our midst.

We can give that we might offer the best of ourselves and these gifts to God.

Adapted from © Glen E. Rainsley. *Hear Our Prayer: Resource for Worship and Devotions*. United Church Press. Cleveland, Ohio. 1996. P150.

Prayers of the People

The following traditional prayer, based on Eastern Orthodox tradition, is often attributed to St. John Chrysostom.

Lord, because we trust that we can speak with you,
sharing our hearts and our thoughts, we ask that you hear our prayer.

For the peace from above, for the loving-kindness of God, and for our salvation.

For the peace of the world, for the unity of the church of God,

and for the well-being of all peoples.

For this gathering of the faithful, and for all who offer here their worship and praise.

For all the baptized, for all who serve in the church.

For our elected officials, for the leaders of the nations, and for all in authority.

For this city, for every city and community, and for those who live in them.

For seasonable weather, and for abundant harvests for all to share.

For the good earth that God has given us, and for the wisdom and will to conserve it.

For those who travel by land, water, or air.

For those who are aged and infirm,

for those who are widowed and orphaned,

and for those who are sick and suffering.

For those who are poor and oppressed,

for those who are unemployed and destitute,

for those who are imprisoned and captive,

and for all who remember and care for them.

For deliverance in times of affliction, strife, and need.

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord
to make our common supplication to you,
and you have promised through your well-beloved Son
that when two or three are gathered together in his name

you will be in the midst of them.

Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us,
granting us in this world knowledge of your truth,
and in the age to come life everlasting.

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We ask this in the name of the one who taught us to pray...

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

We cannot calculate the measure of God's grace
or put a name to the extent of God's love.

We cannot picture the full majesty of God's power.

Yet we can respond to God with our gifts;

express gratitude born of the Spirit that moves in our midst.

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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

Immortal, invisible, God only wise

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1. Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.
2. Unresting, unchanging, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
thy justice like mountains high soaring above
thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.
3. To all life thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish like leaves on the tree,
and wither, and perish, but naught changeth thee.
4. Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
all laud we would render: oh help us to see
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

"Immortal, invisible, God only wise." Words by Walter Chalmers Smith. Public domain.

Benediction

Go now as those who have found favour in the sight of God.
Be imitators of Jesus Christ
and an example to all of the life of faith.

To the world in which you live, give your love and service,
and to God, give all that you are and all that you shall be.

And may the glory of God's goodness be revealed to you;
May the grace and peace of Jesus Christ take root in you;
And may the inspiration of the Holy Spirit fill you with joy.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. [Proper 24 – Year A – LaughingBird](#)