

Truth and Reconciliation Sunday
September 27, 2026

Words of Welcome/Land Acknowledgment

Coming up on September 30 is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation also called Orange Shirt Day. It is a national day of memory for the generations of Indigenous children taken to residential schools: for people who are Survivors, intergenerational Survivors, their families and communities, and for the children who never made it home from the schools. The Presbyterian Church in Canada ran 12 residential schools. In the church's apology we make five fundamental commitments, including listening to and learning from Indigenous people and telling the truth about the past. As a church we honour this day on the Sunday before and also wear orange shirts as part of an act of reconciliation.

Today we also begin our worship with a land acknowledgement. This particular land acknowledgement is read at the beginning of each Session meeting. (Think leadership team). It is a reminder to us of the work that we as a church need to continue as we learn, lead, remember, and hope to bring healing in relationships with Indigenous People in this community in particular. I share with you the land acknowledgment adopted by the St. Andrew's Session.

We respectfully acknowledge that St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church is built on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe people of Fort William First Nation, signatory to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850. The footsteps of their ancestors have walked these lands for millennia, and we are grateful for their stewardship, strength, resistance, and resilience. We also acknowledge this place as an historic Métis settlement.

While a territorial acknowledgment is important, we recognize that this is only one small step towards reconciliation. Far more must be done to address the ongoing impacts of colonization, and structural violence, including systemic racism. May we all strive for respectful relationships as we search for collective healing, truth, reconciliation and together, honour the ancestors, Elders, knowledge keepers, the land and water, and all beings to build a common future.

Awakened to the knowledge of the land we now turn to God the Creator of all the earth with a call to worship.

Call to Worship

In the beginning God created all things,
and God saw that they were good.

At our beginning, God created us
**unique and irreplaceable, loved and wanted by God,
known and treasured by God even before He created us.**

In all our new beginnings, God creates something new
**so we will seek God in the freshness of this morning,
in the laughter of friends, in the colors of creation,
and in this beautiful place.**

**Lord of Creation,
open our eyes to see your presence,
our souls to sense your presence,
and our hearts to love your presence,
ever here in your creation, and ever beyond it in eternity.**

~ Adapted from *Liturgy of Creation* (<http://www.wellsprings.org.uk/liturgies/creation.htm>). Posted on *Third Space* blog. <http://third-space.org.uk/blog>

Hymn

Many and great, O God, are our works

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1. Many and great, O God, are your works, maker of earth and sky.
Your hands have set the heavens with stars,
your fingers spread the mountains and plains.
Lo, at your word the waters were formed: deep seas obey your voice.
2. Grant unto us communion with you, O star-abiding One.
Come unto us and dwell with us,
with you are found the gifts of life.
Bless us with life that has no end, eternal life with you.

"Many and great, O God, are your works." Words from Psalm 104:24-30, Jeremiah 10:12-13. Paraphrased by Joseph R. Renville.
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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Steadfast God,
as the seasons change, we see that you are still at work in the world,
transforming hearts and situations.
You have shown us the true face of love in Jesus Christ,
reaching out with healing and hope to those who are hurting, lost or alone.
We praise you for your love that works for respect, connection and peace
among neighbours and nations in this divided world.
May we see the face of Jesus in each person we meet.
Renew our hope by the gift of your Spirit at work among us,
so that we can live to praise you
with the whole Church that bears Jesus' name.

**All-embracing God,
In recalling all that you are and all that you have done,
we recall then who we are and what we have done or failed to do.
We confess that we have failed to comfort those in pain,
ignored the needs of others and failed to stand with our neighbours**

in their struggle for dignity and respect.

We confess the sins of your church in running residential schools that separated children from their families.

We repent of our past sins and pray for the wisdom

to walk in a new way with you and with one another. Amen.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 18th Sunday after Pentecost. National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. September 27, 2026. Year A.

Assurance of Forgiveness

The God of all creation cares passionately for each and every one of us.

God heals and forgives, order and restores,

all so we might experience the abundance of life.

Glory be to God.

© Glen E. Rainsley. *Hear Our Prayer: Resource for Worship and Devotions*. United Church Press. Cleveland, Ohio. 1996. P104.

Prayer for Understanding

Send us your Spirit of wisdom, O God, that we may hear your Word speaking through the Scriptures and understand what you are saying to the church today. Amen.

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Scripture Reading James 1:19-27

¹⁹⁻²¹ Post this at all the intersections, dear friends: Lead with your ears, follow up with your tongue, and let anger straggle along in the rear. God's righteousness doesn't grow from human anger. So throw all spoiled virtue and cancerous evil in the garbage. In simple humility, let our gardener, God, landscape you with the Word, making a salvation-garden of your life.

²²⁻²⁴ Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other. Act on what you hear! Those who hear and don't act are like those who glance in the mirror, walk away, and two minutes later have no idea who they are, what they look like.

²⁵ But whoever catches a glimpse of the revealed counsel of God—the free life!—even out of the corner of his eye, and sticks with it, is no distracted scatterbrain but a man or woman of action. That person will find delight and affirmation in the action.

²⁶⁻²⁷ Anyone who sets himself up as “religious” by talking a good game is self-deceived. This kind of religion is hot air and only hot air. Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world.

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Message Simple Humility

I am going to begin with a trigger warning. Today I am going to start out talking about residential schools, colonial policies and the experiences of Indigenous children. I will be moving into the scripture and how this all relates to our everyday living, but some listening today may find this material distressing. If you need support, help is available.¹

¹ National Indian Residential School Crisis Line: 1-866-925-4419 (24/7)

The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and many other churches across our country, mark today as Truth and Reconciliation Sunday. It always come the Sunday before *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation* which “was established in response to **Call to Action 80** of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which called on the federal government, in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, to create a statutory holiday recognizing Survivors, their families, and communities while ensuring the history and legacy of residential schools are publicly remembered.”²

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is jointly associated with Orange Shirt Day.

Now you may be aware of the story behind this, but it is worth repeating, Orange Shirt Day – Every Child Matters, began in Williams Lake, British Columbia, on September 30, 2013. Established to honour Residential School Survivors, their families, and those who never returned home, it serves as a powerful reminder of the lasting impacts of the Residential School system. What began as a grassroots initiative has since evolved into a nationally recognized movement, with individuals, organizations, and communities across Canada participating in acts of remembrance, reflection, and reconciliation each year.

The orange shirt symbolizes the loss of culture, freedom, and self-esteem that many Indigenous children experienced. This day reminds us that “**Every Child Matters**”.”³

The Presbyterian Church operated “within federal policies that sought to assimilate Indigenous children through government-funded, church-run institutions. These policies separated children from their families, languages and cultural identities and caused profound and lasting harm.”⁴

We can see the resulting intergenerational trauma in our community. Here at St. Andrew’s in Thunder Bay, we are faced with the impacts of residential schools and the intergenerational trauma each and every day as those who leave their own communities for various reasons find themselves trying to make their way in Thunder Bay. There are always those who end up sitting on the church steps, finding these steps a place of safety and refuge.

In many ways we too are impacted by the work done by our own denomination as it ran the schools. I simply cannot imagine what it would have been like as a child to be taken and not understand why I couldn’t see my parents, or why my hair had to be cut, and I couldn’t speak the only words I had ever been taught to speak. All that gibberish that

Hope for Wellness Help Line: 1-855-242-3310 or www.hopeforwellness.ca

² [National Day for Truth and Reconciliation - Canada.ca](http://NationalDayforTruthandReconciliation-Canada.ca). Accessed September 26, 2026.

³ Ibid.

⁴ [History of residential schools - Anglican Church of Canada](http://Historyofresidentialschools-AnglicanChurchofCanada). Accessed September 26, 2026.

these grown up were speaking to me. How does one figure it out? So, you comply. What else is there to do when not complying means being punished.

And as a parent, basically being told that you cannot see your child, that somehow these white people knew better how to take care of your children. Little did those parents know that their children were being taken with the intent to take the Indian out of the child.

There is so much more that could be said about the chapter in our country's history. I encourage you to learn, check out the webpages of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, as well as the Government of Canada. And I get that not everyone is interested in reading that stuff, so on September 30, get out and attend one event. Or turn on your device or tv and watch programming that can teach you more.

Now you may be wondering how does this fit in with the scripture reading for today. As the Word of God is a living word, it continues to speak into the contexts of today and the Book of James has a lot to say about how we live. In fact, it has often been a book that has been criticized for being too much about doing and not enough about grace, but that sells James short.

James is about doing, but it is in response to what God has first given us... love. God first loved us. God also gave us the gift of faith. Faith that God can transform us and the world through the power of the Holy Spirit and the saving grace found in Jesus. But just as Jesus spent most of his time around the most vulnerable wherever he traveled, so are we called on to be present to and for those whose lives are challenging, those who are downcast. James goes so far as to say, "Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world."⁵

This certainly seems to fly in the face of so much rhetoric we hear from a number of world leaders today. And in a time when we are in the throws of election campaigning for municipal governments, it would behoove us to pay attention to what candidates are saying about how they view and how they would handle the challenges facing our communities around encampments, unhoused, mental health, and access to supports.

Yes, infrastructure, fiscal responsibility, and community building are also very important topics, however be sure to listen to what candidates are saying about the people in our communities. All the people. James' instruction is to be heeded, "Post this at all the intersections, dear friends: Lead with your ears, follow up with your tongue, and let anger straggle along in the rear. God's righteousness doesn't grow from human anger."⁶

James is not saying to never speak or to never be angry. But take the time to lead with your ears. Always listen first. Don't half listen, waiting for the other to finish talking so that you can speak your mind, but listen with the intent to learn about others, to hear of

⁵ All scripture references are taken from [The Message \(MSG\)](#) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

⁶ Ibid.

their struggle, their lived experience, their hopes, fears, and concerns, even their ideas. Speak in order to ask questions that lead to more understanding and wisdom.

And you will note that James doesn't say, don't get angry, but rather let anger straggle along in the rear. There is a place for anger, but it is anger that comes from a place of justice for those who do not have a voice or power.

To make sure that we act from a place that is caring and loving in our listening, speaking, and even our anger, James says, we are to throw all spoiled virtue and cancerous evil in the garbage. And in simple humility, let our gardener God, landscape us with the Word, making a salvation-garden of our lives.

Take a moment and put that into a frame that you can get your mind around. Throw out all spoiled virtue. Think about the garbage that is in your kitchen garbage at this moment. All the stuff that is excess packaging, rotten, spoiled and dirty. That is what he is saying to throw out of your heart and mind.

James also says to throw out cancerous evil. With so many people fighting cancer and standing with family and friends fighting cancer, you know how insidious the disease can be. James is warning against having that kind of evil in our lives. It is to go into the garbage as well. It is not helpful, productive, or life-giving.

Now go to the second part of that thought, and in your imagination bring yourself into your garden if you have or have had one. Think about the beauty and bounty. Now expand that to the landscaping of your garden and yard, and from there think of the vistas that you have experienced in God's good earth that have been landscaped by God...the mountains, rivers, lakes, ocean, and forest. James says, let our gardener landscape us with the Word, making a salvation-garden of our lives. Amazing.

Much of this personal landscaping happens as we let go of the garbage and tend to the beauty. It happens as we read the scriptures, learn, and lean into their meaning for our lives. It is landscaping that happens in the gardens of our lives where in simple humility we acknowledge that all we have is a gift from God. All we experience in our healing journeys, in our ability to love ourselves and others, comes from God's gift of love overflowing into our lives.

And this landscaping happens as we act on what we hear! Remember that leading with our ears? We listen for God speaking to us through the scriptures, and we listen for God in the words of others, those we agree with and those we don't understand or agree with. But listening and words are followed up with action. Action that flows from compassion, care, and love.

It is easy to become desensitized to the plight of others here in our community and country, as well as those in places like Ukraine, Palestine, Gaza, Afghanistan, The Congo, and the list could go on. As Christians we don't get to ignore what is going on because, real religion, the kind that passes muster before God is this, to reach out to the

homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world.

Easy? Not on your life. Necessary? Remember the line in the Lord's prayer that says, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"? Well, our response to God's landscaping of love and compassion in our own lives is to do our utmost to be sure that God's love and compassion flow from us out into the world. We may well be the only way that others experience the love, grace, compassion, and justice of God. Not because God is not at work in the world already, but because God chooses to work through imperfect human beings. And we respond to that with simple humility. God trusts us to love because we are loved.

God's amazing and transforming love as found in the simple humility of the followers of Christ who know what it means to be loved by God. This is real religion. This is God at work. Thanks be to God.

Prayers of the People

God of grace,
together we turn to you in prayer, for it is you who unite us:
you are the one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – in whom we believe,
you alone empower us for good,
you send us out across the earth
in mission and service in the name of Christ.

We confess before you and all people:
We have been unworthy servants.
We have misused and abused the creation.
We have wounded one another by divisions everywhere.
We have often failed to take decisive action
against environmental destruction, poverty, racism,
caste-ism, war and genocide.
We are not only victims but also perpetrators of violence.

In all this, we have fallen short as disciples of Jesus Christ
who in his incarnation came to save us and teach us how to love.
Forgive us, God, and teach us to forgive one another.

God, in your grace, transform the world.

God, hear the cries of all creation,
the cries of the waters, the air, the land and all living things;
the cries of all who are exploited, marginalized, abused and victimized,
all who are dispossessed and silenced, their humanity ignored,
all who suffer from any form of disease, from war
and from the crimes of the arrogant who hide from the truth,
distort memory and deny the possibility of reconciliation.

God, guide all in seats of authority towards decisions of moral integrity.

God, in your grace, transform the world.

We give thanks for your blessings and signs of hope
that are already present in the world,
in people of all ages and in those who have gone before us in faith;
in movements to overcome violence in all its forms,
not just for a decade but for always;
in the deep and open dialogues that have begun
both within our own churches and with those of other faiths
in the search for mutual understanding and respect;
in all those working together for justice and peace –
both in exceptional circumstances and every day.
We thank you for the good news of Jesus Christ,
and the assurance of resurrection.

God, in your grace, transform the world.

By the power and guidance of your Holy Spirit, O God,
may our prayers never be empty words
but an urgent response to your living Word –
in non-violent direct action for positive change,
in bold, clear, specific acts of solidarity,
liberation, healing and compassion,
readily sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

Open our hearts to love and to see that all people are made in your image,
to care for creation and affirm life in all its wondrous diversity.

Transform us in the offering of ourselves
so that we may be your partners in transformation
to strive for the full, visible unity of the one Church of Jesus Christ,
to become neighbours to all, as we await with eager longing
the full revelation of your rule in the coming of a new heaven and a new earth.

God, in your grace, transform the world.

In the name of the Son who taught us to pray...

~ written for the 2006 Assembly of the World Council of Churches. Posted on the Church of Scotland's **Starters for Sunday** website. <http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>

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

God has shown us the meaning of generosity
in the beautiful diversity of creation,
in the overflowing love of Jesus Christ,
in the never-ending gift of the Holy Spirit.

God has abundantly blessed us and called us
to be a community that honors each other,
to serve others with joy,
to share our love and material possessions.

Let us rejoice in what we have been given and in what is ours to give

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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

Lord, whose love

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1. Lord, whose love through humble service
bore the weight of human need,
who upon the cross, forsaken,
offered mercy's perfect deed:
we, your servants, bring the worship
not of voice alone, but heart,
consecrating to your purpose
every gift that you impart.
2. Still your children wander homeless;
still the hungry cry for bread;
still the captives long for freedom;
still in grief we mourn our dead.
As, O Lord, your deep compassion
healed the sick and freed the soul,
use the love your Spirit kindles
still to save and make us whole.
3. As we worship, grant us vision,
till your love's revealing light
in its height and depth and greatness
draws upon our quickened sight,
making known the needs and burdens
your compassion bid us bear,
stirring us to tireless striving
your abundant life to share.

4. Called by worship to your service,
forth in your dear name we go
to the child, the youth, the aged,
love in living deeds to show;
hope and health, good will and comfort,
counsel, aid and peace we give,
that your servants, Lord, in freedom
may your mercy know, and live.

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Benediction

May we always walk gently upon the Earth,
in right relationship, nurtured by your love,
open to the wind of the Spirit,
taking only what we need,
always open to the needs of others,
making choices that bring wellbeing,
living with generosity, striving for justice,
honouring all with reverence,
reconciling and peacemaking,
mindful of those who will come after,
recognizing our proper place as part of God's creation.

May God grant us the strength and courage
for such a radical transformation. Amen.

~ from Christian Aid and Christian Ecology Link. Posted on **Third Space** blog. <http://third-space.org.uk/blog>

Postlude