St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

All Saints Sunday - November 1, 2026

Call to Worship

In this act of our gathering here
Let us return to Love.

In this season of longing and lengthening
Let us return to Love.

In our wondering and wandering
Let us return to Love.

In our surest moments of knowing the One who is Love, and moments of knowing it least
Let us return to Love.

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*Hymn *The love of God comes close* 474

1. The love of God comes close
where stands an open door,
to let the stranger in,
to mingle rich and poor.
The love of God is here to stay,
embracing those who walk the Way;
the love of God is here to stay.

2. The peace of God comes close
to those caught in the storm,
forgoing lives of ease
to ease the lives forlorn.
The peace of God is here to stay,
embracing those who walk the Way;
the peace of God is here to stay.

3. The joy of God comes close
where faith encounters fears,
where heights and depths of life
are found through smiles and tears.
The joy of God is here to stay,
embracing those who walk the Way;
the joy of God is here to stay.

4. The grace of God comes close
to those whose grace is spent,
when hearts are tired or sore
and hope is bruised and bent.
The grace of God is here to stay,
embracing those who walk the Way;
the grace of God is here to stay.

5. The Son of God comes close
where people praise his name,
where bread and wine are blest
and shared as when he came.
The Son of God is here to stay
embracing those who walk the Way;
the Son of God is here to stay.

"The love of God comes close." Words by John L Bell and Graham Maule. © WGRG, Iona Community (Scotland). Used By Permission. CCLI License #11276509 + Streaming License #21035127.

Prayer of Approach Confession

God of life and blessing,
You have created all that exists.
In Christ, you offer your redeeming love to every soul in every situation.
So it is our greatest joy to be united in the community of your people,
stretching across the generations, throughout all time and space.
We join our thanks and praise to the voices of all your saints,
in heaven and on earth, who worship and adore you, saying:
All blessing and honour, glory and power, wisdom, riches and strength
belong to you, O God, now and forever!

God of courage and commitment,
we confess we have not always followed the path you set before us.
Fear holds us back from fully embracing your gift of new life.
Our anxieties prevent us from bearing witness to your love.

Forgive us, O God.

Give us courage that we may act as your saints in our own time,
faithfully following Jesus, today and everyday.
We ask it in the loving and compassionate name of Jesus. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Friends, hear the good news! Though thousands upon thousands of our ancestors did not follow God's ways perfectly, we have hope in the one who did! Jesus, a man of a particular people in a particular time, taught through his words and deeds that God has already forgiven us. Thus, we and all who have come before us are rightly known as saints – the holy ones of God! Thanks be to God for God's mercy, grace, and love! **Amen!** Written by Rev. Lucus Keppel, Ancho Community & Corona United Presbyterian Churches, New Mexico. Posted on **LiturgyLink.**

Prayer for Understanding

God of ages past, present and yet to come, your Word comes to us as the witness of your saints over many generations. Send the Holy Spirit to open our hearts so that we too may hear your wisdom and come to know Christ more deeply as your Living Word. Amen. The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 23rd Sunday after Pentecost. All Saints Sunday. November 1, 2026. Year A.

Scripture Reading 1 John 4:7-21

God Is Love

7-10 My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God is love—so you can't know him if you don't love. This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved

us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.

11-12 My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love!

13-16 This is how we know we're living steadily and deeply in him, and he in us: He's given us life from his life, from his very own Spirit. Also, we've seen for ourselves and continue to state openly that the Father sent his Son as Savior of the world. Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God's Son participates continuously in an intimate relationship with God. We know it so well, we've embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God.

To Love, to Be Loved

17-18 God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we're free of worry on Judgment Day—our standing in the world is identical with Christ's. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love.

19 We, though, are going to love—love and be loved. First we were loved, now we love. He loved us first.

20-21 If anyone boasts, "I love God," and goes right on hating his brother or sister, thinking nothing of it, he is a liar. If he won't love the person he can see, how can he love the God he can't see? The command we have from Christ is blunt: Loving God includes loving people. You've got to love both.

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

Message Well-formed Love

Love is an easy word to banter about. We receive a gift and we exclaim, "I love it!" We have an exceptionally good meal and we love it. We watch a program and we love it. We love our cars, our stuff, our camp, our home, our vacations, our gardens, our jobs. We easily throw the word love around as if it were a ball being tossed about. And it is not that it is a bad thing. Our English language doesn't give us too many words with which to describe our emotions particularly when comes to those things we love. If we say we really like something, well it just doesn't have the same ring to it as when we say we love something.

So, when it comes to God it is easy to water down God's love to that of human emotion and human love. When we hear that "God is love." It just doesn't have the impact that it might have if there was a special word in English for God's particular kind of love.

But this is what we have to work with, so let's work with it.

God is love.

Hundred to one odds that this statement really doesn't make you feel a whole lot of anything. We have so diminished God's love to our human understanding that the full impact of that three-word sentence doesn't register. It is like we need to sit with that for a time. It is especially hard to think of God's love when it feels like love has been taken from you. Your heart aches and so you wonder about or even reject God's love when you are hurting.

It may be important to make a distinction here to start with. In the Bible we are told that "God is love", not "Love is God." Hear that again, God is love, not Love is God.

God is love. Love comes from God; God does not come from love. We have made love our God instead of God our God. Love is some thing. God is someone. Love is the quality of some thing. God's love does things.

God sent his own son. God works in the world. God commands things.

Love is a feeling. It is a wonderful feeling. It should be. But God is so much more.

The reading from 1 John 4 is an active demonstration of what God's love looks like. Or, at least it gives us a glimpse, as we can not know God and God's ways fully in our human finiteness. What can be helpful to begin with is to understand that we are made from love. The love of God outpoured into the creation of our world. It was meant to be a beautiful and good world. We know it is not. God, in making it so that we could choose love or not, meant that humans made those choices. God wants us to love of our own free will. This has also resulted in pain. We all know pain of loss. The most difficult of that pain is the pain of death. Death is the great divide.

If you think that God doesn't get pain, doesn't understand the depth of that pain then please think on the crucifixion. God's own Son died, there was separation. The reason for all our hope is because God did not leave it there. Jesus' rose again and is with God. Jesus was God with us, but the relationship was severed in death. However, in that Jesus defeated death for all of us for all time. In our dying we also now have the promise of rising from the dead, not to live once again among mortals, but to live fully in the love of God.

Scripture puts it this way,

> This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.[1]

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

Which brings us back to that love. For us, love is manifest in relationship. God's love is manifest in relationship. God's love for every human being is shown in our relationships with those we love and the relationships we are a part of in the world. Our work, our response to God's love, is to love ourselves and to love others.

If you don't love yourself, it will be hard to love others well. And if you don't love yourself, you do not know your value in the eyes of God for God loves you. If we don't love others then there is no way we can say we love God. God's love does not pick and choose who to love. God's love is shown to the world in the way we love one another, those close to us and those we don't even know.

And God's love is not just for Christians. God's love is for everyone. What we read in this letter of 1 John is what that means for those who call themselves Christians to love. Hear again some of these words about love and what that looks like.

> Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God is love—so you can't know him if you don't love.

God wants us to experience God and God's love first hand, but the way to experience God's love is in being in relationship with others. When we grieve, we need others to remind us of love. When we are joyful, it is always elevated when we get to share that joy with others. Yes, there is time to retreat and reflect, but we were made for relationship. It is why the church as a community of faith is such an important part of this equation. The church is a place where love is present because people are gathered together not just for any reason, but because we believe that God is love.

Is the church imperfect in showing love, yes, because we are a group of imperfect people gathered together learning how to give and receive love and then learning how to reflect that into our families and community…into all our relationships. The church is a place to learn about God's love for us. It is a place that at its heart embraces the love that comes from God.

Here, together as gathered community, we give opportunity for the love of God to take up residence in our hearts and home. We give opportunity for our whole selves, body, mind, and spirit to mature in love.

And let us take a look at the role of fear in our lives. The scripture says that "There is no room in love for fear."[2] Please do not read this to say that we should not fear anything. This is not talking about your physical safety and well-being." There are times to fear. If you are under threat, pay attention to fear, it too is a God given response.

The fear that John is writing about here is fear of love. Perfect love casts out fear. God's love for us should take from us any fear that we are unlovable, or that those whose lives are ended are not still living in perfect love. When we speak of eternal love, it is love in

[2] Ibid.

the present time and love always. God loves perfectly. We however do not love perfectly, so we do have fear in our world. It is said that the opposite of love is not hate, but rather the opposite of love is fear.

Let's consider this. It is easy to fear another person, group of people, or even an entire nation when we do not know them. But learn about them, be curious, start a relationship, and love grows. Hope grows. Fear diminishes. Even imperfect love can diminish fear.

Practicing love in our every movement, conversation, and interaction of each day can teach us to let go of fear and embrace love. When we live knowing that we are loved, and that we can love, and this comes from a well-spring of love that is so deep that we cannot reach its depths, when we are no longer crippled or fearful, fearing death, or judgement, then we can trust that we have a well-formed love.

So, this is what remains, God is love. Loving God includes loving people. You've got to love both God and people if you are to have a well-formed love.

As John writes, "…if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love!"[3]

Thanks be to God for such deep and abiding love. Amen

Prayers of the People

Eternal God,
On this Sunday marking the faithfulness of all your saints,
we give you thanks for people in our lives who have shown us
your loving kindness through their witness to Christ.
Inspire us by their examples and show us how we too can
live out our faith in the midst of challenging times.

God of guidance, speak into our lives today.

Loving God,
You keep calling us to care for neighbours in need
and show hospitality to strangers in our midst.
Thank you for your persistent love
which continues to comfort and challenge us.
Open our hearts and our eyes so that we can see how
to offer that love to others as we follow Jesus' example.

Living God,
You bring new life to the discouraged and those facing danger and death.
Thank you for signs of hope which break into this troubled world
and defy the powers that stand against you.
With your Spirit, work for peace in areas of conflict

[3] Ibid.

and reconciliation between enemies.
Show us how to stand up for compassion and mutual respect
in the face of so much anger and ridicule.

Creating God,
we praise you for the beauty of this world
and the rhythms of nature which sustain us.
Give us courage to act on behalf of your creation wherever it is under stress.
Nurture our commitment to act as your stewards of the earth
and give voice to the suffering of voiceless creatures.

God of guidance, speak into our lives today.

Wise God,
hear us in this time of silence
as lay before you the people and places on our hearts this day:

A time of silence is kept – 15-30 seconds.

Now we join with the followers of Jesus in every time
and place to pray as he taught us.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 24th Sunday after Pentecost. November 3, 2024. Year B

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

The gifts of God have touched us through the work of many hands and the commitment of many lives over many centuries. We give our gifts to honour God and all God's saints, praying that we too may be a blessing to those who come after us.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 23rd Sunday after Pentecost. All Saints Sunday. November 1, 2026. Year A.

May you be inspired 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 *Come, let us sing* **706**

1. Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true, tender and true;
out of the heart of the Father above,
streaming to me and to you;
wonderful love, wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

2. Jesus the Saviour this gospel to tell
joyfully came, joyfully came,
came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
sharing their sorrow and shame;
seeking the lost, seeking the lost,
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

3. Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet:
why do they roam? why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home, weary wanderers, home:
wonderful love, wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

4. Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love;
come and abide, come and abide,
lifting my life till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride:
seeking to be, seeking to be
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

"Come, let us sing." Words by Robert Walmsley. Public domain.

Benediction

This week, remember the blessings others have given you,
those saints and servants of Christ you have known,
and those you will never know,
and consider how to share blessings with others.

And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
that you may live in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit
and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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