St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

Reign of Christ - November 22, 2026

Call to Worship

Family of God, on this Reign of Christ Sunday,
we celebrate and remember Christ,
who reigns over all creation with love and grace,
forming us as a family bound together by God.
We come to worship Christ,
who cares for the least of these and calls us to do the same.

We gather to recount all the ways we encounter Christ in our midst
—in our neighbor who checks in when we're sick,
in our unhoused friends who gather for a meal,
in our friends who have been wounded in body and spirit.
We come to worship Christ,
who cares for the least of these and reminds us to do the same.

We join our voices with Christians throughout the world and
throughout time to give thanks and to seek guidance
as we grow in love of God, neighbor, self, and creation.
We come to worship Christ,
who cares for the least of these and inspires us to do the same.

Come, you blessed by God, with open hearts, open arms, and
open doors to welcome and embrace all of our neighbors,
because when we love our neighbors, we love Christ among us.
We come to worship Christ,
who cares for the least of these and empowers us to do the same.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, August 2026. Discipleship Ministries | Week 3 – Twenty-Sixth Sunday after…

Hymn *O for a world where everyone* 730

1. O for a world where everyone respects each other's ways,
   where love is lived and all is done with justice and with praise.
2. O for a world where goods are shared and misery relieved,
   where truth is spoken, children spared, equality achieved.
3. We welcome one world family and struggle with each choice
   that opens us to unity and gives our vision voice.
4. The poor are rich, the weak are strong, the foolish ones are wise.
   Tell all who mourn: outcasts belong, who perishes will rise.
5. O for a world preparing for God's glorious reign of peace,
   where time and tears will be no more, and all but love will cease.

"O for a world where everyone." Words by Miriam Therese Winter © Medical Mission Sisters, 1990. Used by permission.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Most holy God,
You are known to us as the Almighty, Eternal Ruler and Everlasting.
We call you our Shepherd and Guide. We praise you with many names,
but you are beyond our imagination, so much greater than our words.
We know you in the stories of Jesus,
and in him we see your love in action, reaching out to the world.
You move in us and through us by your Spirit,
drawing us to you, sending us to live out your word.
God most holy, Three in One and One in Three,
we praise you with our lips and with our lives
to offer you honour and love, now and always.

In confidence of God's great mercy, we confess our sins:

God most merciful,
We confess that we have failed to love fully or forgive wholly.
You offer us freedom, but we settle for the familiar.
You offer us hope but we prefer knowing what will happen next.
Teach us to give up cautious faithfulness, so that we can offer you our whole lives, and commit to following Jesus into the future you are creating. Amen.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 26th Sunday after Pentecost. Sunday of the Reign of Christ. November 22, 2026. Year A.

Assurance of Forgiveness

The Word of God assures us
that we are able to love through the Spirit of Christ,
whose grace forgives and empowers us
to love our neighbors near and far,
to speak up for those who are broken.
Beloved, in the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Adapted from LT Leticia Rouser, chaplain in the United States Navy. Posted on the United Church of Christ's **Worship Ways** website, http://www.ucc.org/worship/worship-ways/. Reposted on the re:Worship blog at https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/06/confession-you-are-still-speaking.html.\

Prayer for Understanding

God of mystery and majesty, your thoughts are not our thoughts; your ways are not our ways. Send us your Holy Spirit, speaking through the Scriptures, so that our thoughts and ways may be transformed as we encounter your Living Word, in Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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Scripture Reading Matthew 25:31-46

The Sheep and the Goats

31-33 "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.

34-36 “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.’

37-40 “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.’

41-43 “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.’

44 “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?’

45 “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.’

46 “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 Sorted Out

For those who are unaware, St. Andrew’s sits in Thunder Bay’s south end downtown core. Across the street is City Hall, a major bus transfer area, and a public library. It is also known to be an area when many unhoused people spend their time. They sit on the steps of our church, huddle in the bus shelters, particularly at night and when the weather is inclement, and tuck themselves into alcoves that might provide even a little protection and privacy.

Now this area of the city is not to be feared, but it is an area that one should be aware of their surroundings. There are times when horribly tragic things have happened. Over the years people have been harmed. Just this last week, a business owner a few blocks away was attacked and injured when opening his store one morning. But throughout this city, not just in our area, businesses, and people in general, are feeling the pressures of a desperate and hurting population of people who have not found help and healing for addictions and mental health issues.

A few of these people are resorting to doing desperate and terrible things. And this is not just a city of Thunder Bay problem. Globally the desperation is evident as we watch the news and the number of people who are on the move to find a better life and then find that life is difficult no matter where they hang their hats. If you have eyes to see and ears to hear, this is not news to you. But in the midst of this, people are compassionate, and though everyone likely has a right to be hardened, frustrated and angry, many choose kindness, compassion and care.

Almost daily there is a display of that kindness across the street from this church in the form of a security guard. Now that alone should tell you something. The public library ended up shutting down for a short time last year as they dealt with the safety and well-being of the staff after a significant safety incident. They had to find a way to protect staff yet allow this public space to continue to function as intended. The result was a security guard. But this is no ordinary security guard. His name is Bernie.

In the last months Bernie has become a fixture on the street outside the library. Rain, snow, cold temperatures, hot sun, really doesn't matter. If the library is open Bernie is there. What is significant is that he is beloved. He is soft spoken, gentle, and kind. If you were to observe him in action it is action that exudes love. Not at all what one would expect from a security guard. Usually security guards, at least the ones may of us tend to encounter are those at stores who are there to discourage theft. Or they are the ones at airports that only rarely seem to smile.

But not Bernie. His smile beams. He knows the people who are on the street, and it is a rare moment when he is not in conversation with someone, checking in on them, or meeting them for the first time. His demeanor invites interaction. Though he has been hired by the library he makes all of us on this block feel more secure. I have learned that he carries around a roll of loonies so that if he finds someone's meter has run out, he throws a Loonie in the meter. He has a box of handwarmers that he can hand out when he encounters someone who is cold. He chooses to be kind, pays attention, and is compassionate. His loving kindness brings a sense of community to our street.

Between him and Sheila, our custodian who also treats people on our part of the block with care, kindness, and generosity, one can witness compassion at its best. Now, you need to know that neither Bernie or Sheila are paid to be kind, they are paid to do their jobs. However, they extend the part of themselves that is naturally generous with time,

energy, and resources, and it flow from them in the form of love. They don't treat people with respect and care because they have to, but because it is a part of who they are.

These are the kind of people Jesus was talking about in this narrative about the sheep and the goats. It was the difference between people who pay attention and give of themselves to those who are most vulnerable and those who don't. Now many sermons are such that you might be asked to consider whether or not you are a sheep or a goat. However, may I suggest that you don't get too bogged down in trying to figure that out. In the time of Jesus, it was quite normal for a shepherd to have a mixed flock that included both sheep and goats. From my understanding, at night the sheep could graze and stay warm. The goats however needed more protection from the cold, so the shepherd would separate the sheep from the goats at night.

Besides if you go down the road of trying to figure out which you are, what you will likely find is that sometimes you are the caring one and sometimes you are not. And if you had not picked up on it yet, even in the story those who found themselves to be separated out as sheep and goats were as surprised as anyone to find themselves in one group or the other. They had no idea of what the master was talking about. Both asked, "When did we ever…"

The 'sheep' asked, "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?"[1] The 'goats' also asked, "When did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or homeless or shivering or sick or in prison [but] didn't help?"[2]

The difference was care and compassion, and this does not come naturally to us. When we are born, we are totally dependent on the care and compassion of another to make sure our needs are met. We don't understand giving of ourselves. This is something we learn and keep learning. As Christians we continue this learning for a lifetime. That is why one can be a sheep or a goat. We are always learning more about what responding to the needs of others means. And on top of that, how to do so with an abundance of generosity and grace.

There is a caution here as well. Doing good works is not to come from a place where we think we have to be good to get into God's good graces. I can tell you that none of us is deserving of God's grace. All of us fall far short of being the image bearers of God we are called to be. None of us could ever be "good enough" because our human nature always contains seeds of despair, anger, jealousy, fear, and the ability to harm ourselves and others. We will always be people who don't get it all right all of the time.

However, at our core we are made in the image of God and God is the God of love, we are created because of love outpoured. Theologian Lindsay Armstrong puts it this way,

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

[2] Ibid.

> God created the world out of an abundance of love. Like a bubbling fountain, God is love and overflows with love. In creation, God gives something of self, and in sending Jesus and the Holy Spirit, God repeatedly and generously pours love out upon all people, showing us God's own self as well as who we are. Created in the image of this freely giving God, we freely share, because this is what it means to be created in God's image. In particular, we love those conventionally considered unable to give back, and we do not do so to earn God's love or anyone else's love, to curry favor, or to make sure we are considered righteous at the end of time. We give as an expression of the love that is inside of us, bubbling up, spilling over, and flowing out.[3]

In other words, "We love because God first loved us." (1 John 4:19) Loving others, not just those that are easy to love, "is a primary expression of our love of God and of our experience of God's love for us."[4]

This story of the sheep and the goats is often heard as a final judgement tale. It also comes after three very challenging parables about judgement. These are meant to wake us up to the people we are called to be as followers of Jesus and people who love God. All of these stories are told in the context of the whole of the Bible, including the Gospel of Matthew where God sends his one and only Son to be God with us, to live and die and rise again for our sake, so that love has the final word.

The question becomes, are you willing to live your life in the Spirit of Jesus, where love is the first response, justice for the most vulnerable is the goal, where hope resides, and grace is freely given? This is what separates the sheep from the goats. Where is your heart and how does your life bubble over with so much love for another human being, regardless of status and even more so when they are at their most vulnerable, and maybe even their ugliest, that they experience God's love through and because of you?

This is not about putting yourself into unsafe situations. God wants you protected and loved as well. Still, this is about living in a way that love, grace, hope, joy, and peace are experienced in this world. Each of us can do that in small and big ways. We can do this in our individual lives, and we can do this as the church. We can do it from our homes, places of work and places of leisure. We can live this love on the streets and in buildings, to the point that wherever we go we bring so much love that things change, where even the air we breathe seems to change the people and situations around us. It may take time but with hopeful expectation let's see what happens when God's kingdom comes, and it comes through us.

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

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[3] Armstrong, Lindsay P. *Feasting on the Word: Year A Volume 4 Season after Pentecost 2*. Editors David L. Bartlett, and Barbara Brown Taylor. Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville. 2011. P335.

[4] Ibid.

Prayers of the People

Holy 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 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 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 one or the future they planned;
in places where disaster has struck and desperation has moved in:
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 were born and made flesh and suffered pain. Where people suffer in body, mind and spirit; where people experience violence in the home and injustice in the world:
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, where there is no peace in the land:
Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

You came to us all, proclaiming the kingdom of God.
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.
Help us see your face in theirs, for 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

God has blessed us in Christ and in creation with all that we need to thrive.
Yet Jesus' story reminds us there are so many in this world who do not have what they need. What we offer today will reach out in Jesus' name to touch lives in need with the love of God. The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 26th Sunday after Pentecost. Sunday of the Reign of Christ. November 22, 2026. Year A.

As you come to the end of this service 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 *I, the Lord of Sea and Sky* **592**

1. I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.
   All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.
   I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
   Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?

Refrain

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night; I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

2. I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain.
   I have wept for love of them: they turn away.
   I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.
   I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?

Refrain

3. I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.
   I will set a feast for them; my hand will save.
   Finest bread I will provide till their hearts be satisfied.
   I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?

Refrain

"I, the Lord of sea and sky (Here I am, Lord)." Words by Daniel L. Shutte © 1981, Oregon Catholic Press.
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Benediction

Go with open eyes and open hearts,
watching for lives that need to receive God's generosity from your hands,
trusting in them you have met our Lord, Jesus.
And may mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance
through God, Source, Saviour and Spirit of Life,
One God, world without end. Amen.