

**ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH**  
**November 1, 2020 – Stewardship Sunday 2**  
***We Offer Gratitude Through Silence, Holy Communion***

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 7:00 p.m. Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Email [sketchingalong4@gmail.com](mailto:sketchingalong4@gmail.com) to get the Zoom link.

## **Prelude**

### **Hymn: MV 150 *Spirit God, Be Our Breath***

1. Spirit God: be our breath, be our song.  
Blow through us, bringing strength to move on.  
Our world seems inward, defensive, withdrawn...  
Spirit God, be our song.
2. Patient God: soothe our pride, calm our fear.  
Comfort us. When we know you are near  
we grow more certain, our vision is clear.  
Patient God, calm our fear.
3. Loving God: be our voice, be our prayer.  
Reaching out, joining hands as we share,  
we seek your guidance through friendship and care.  
Loving God, be our prayer.
4. Spirit God: be our breath, be our song.  
Blow through us, bringing strength to move on.  
Through change, through challenge, we greet the new dawn...  
Spirit God, be our song.

## **Welcome**

Welcome – both people in sanctuary and those at home joining worship through our video. After this worship is our AGM, those of you in the sanctuary, please stay after worship. Annual Reports are available at the back. Some from our congregation will be joining us via video link on Zoom. This is all new to us, so please be patient – thanks to our tech people, Roger and Torrin in the Booth.

Those at home, if you are new here, note that our contact information is at the end of the video, and you might want to visit our website or Facebook page, or email our office manager so you can receive our weekly e-newsletter called the NEWS. We also have a Virtual Fellowship time tonight at 7:00 pm.

Now we take time, create space for the holy in our hearts – breathe gently, noticing how you are filled with life-giving oxygen. Let us worship.

## **Acknowledging Traditional Territory**

Long before settlers came to this land and subsequent immigrants afterward, there were people here. We acknowledge that many Nations of Indigenous people have lived on the land. We give thanks for this land we are worshiping upon, particularly the Wahnapiatae First Nation and the Atikemeksheng Anishnawbek who have been and continue to be stewards of this land. May we commit ourselves be partners in caring for the land, and may we work towards reconciliation, healing and just sharing of the land. Amen.

## **Lighting the Christ Candle**

We light this candle as a symbolic action to recognize God's presence.

**In every moment, Christ's light shines. Alleluia! *[light candle]***

## Call to Worship

God be with you,  
**and also with you.**

Whether you are hurt or sad,  
**you are welcome here.**

God is in our breath. (*breathe*)  
**We receive God's presence as we breathe in.**

God is outside our breath. (*breathe*)  
**We experience God's presence as we breathe out.**

God is in-between our breaths. (*breathe*)  
**God is present everywhere in all living, breathing things.**

## Opening Prayer

In joy and in trouble, help us, gracious God, to trust your love, to serve your purpose, and to praise your name.

## Hymn: MV 185 *Ev'ry Day is a Day of Thanksgiving*

Ev'ry day is a day of thanksgiving. God, you've been so good to me.  
Ev'ry day you're blessing me. Ev'ry day is a day of thanksgiving.  
I will glorify you, O my Lord, today! (*repeat verse*)

You keep blessing me, blessing me, blessing me.  
You opened the door that I might see, you're blessing me.  
And you keep blessing me, blessing me, blessing me.  
I will glorify you, O my Lord, today! (*repeat verse*)

## Time up Front - *Written by Jeannine Zadow. Narrated by Sylvia Carscadden.*

Last week we learned about Miriam, the first woman prophet in the Bible, who gave thanks to God, sang with a tambourine and danced, celebrating the liberating of her people from slavery. It was a long, difficult journey into the wilderness. In the Bible, the storyteller says it was 40 years. That is a lot of time to spend in the hot, dangerous wilderness.

Let's talk about some of the important challenges that the people of Israel faced in order to survive. First, they built a tent in which to worship God, a mobile space that could be dismantled as they moved, and re-assembled. Each time it was built with care and thankful hearts, they offered many things to God. One special gift they offered was **oil**.

*Narrator pours out a small amount of oil from a glass jar into a bowl...*

What an unusual gift to give God! But if we recall the many uses of oil, it was really a very meaningful one. Oil was used regularly for anointing and for healing; we have done that here at St. Andrew's. Oil in the Bible is also used for cooking, for burning to create light and warmth.

Today we use oil in much the same way as it was so long ago, plus so many other daily uses.

Now you can understand why our ancestors, the people of faith in the Bible, valued oil so much.

Picture this moment. Martha is getting the meal ready in the kitchen; sister Mary approaches Jesus in silence, anointing his feet, blessing him with oil. No words were needed. Imagine her feeling in that moment, loving Jesus. How Jesus felt receiving that gift of Love.

Silence can be filled with love – a gift from God that we share with one another, and a gift we can offer back to our Creator. [*pause*] A silent moment can allow us to feel God's powerful presence [*pause*] just as music and dance can be a gift for sharing with each other and with God.

"Love Your Neighbour. No exceptions!"

## Scripture Readings (*Jill Bennett*)

### **Exodus 35: 10–15**

All who are skilful among you shall come and make all that the LORD has commanded: the tabernacle, its tent and its covering, its clasps and its frames, its bars, its pillars, and its bases; the ark with its poles, the mercy-seat, and the curtain for the screen; the table with its poles and all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; the lampstand also for the light, with its utensils and its lamps, and the oil for the light; and the altar of incense, with its poles, and the anointing-oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the entrance, the entrance of the tabernacle.

### **John 12: 1–8**

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'

### **Sung Response to the Readings: MV 75 *Veni Sancte Spiritus***

Veni Sancte Spiritus, tui amoris ignem accende.

Veni Sancte Spiritus, veni Sancte Spiritus. (*repeat verse*)

### **Message: *Wordless Thanks***

When I first started in ministry almost 25 years ago, I went through a life crisis as I began ministry, at the wise old age of 25. I remember desperately trying to keep it to myself. After all, I hardly know them.

One day, I shared what was going on in my life with someone from the community. Soon after, one snowy evening, I received a strange phone call. "Dave, can you come on down the street to the church, we have a problem."

As I arrived, seeing cars parked down the street, I immediately noticed that lights were on all around the church. I walked in to find almost the entire congregation sitting at tables around the fellowship hall. The smell of home cooked dishes filled the warmth of that room. As I entered, the quiet warmth gave way to the cry, "Surprise!"

They lavished me with love that evening – with food, and my first real house-warming complete with gift giving. You see, I was a 25-year-old kid who had been nomadic. Their love and generosity encouraged me to lay down some roots.

"Preach the gospel; when necessary use words" is a quote derived from a prayer by Saint Francis of Assisi<sup>1</sup>, reminding us that the most effective preaching is done by example. Actions speak for themselves, but sometimes, as in the case of Mary's anointing of Jesus, they can be subject to misinterpretation.

What does it mean to preach without words?

Some of you may have expertise in American Sign Language; for example, here is how you say "Thank you." (*The sign for "Thank you" which is like blowing a kiss, flat hand directed out to the person you are speaking to and with a smile.*)

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<sup>1</sup> Jamie Arpin-Ricci, Huffington Post Aug. 31, 2012 [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jamie-arpinricci/preach-the-gospel-at-all-times-st-francis\\_b\\_1627781.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jamie-arpinricci/preach-the-gospel-at-all-times-st-francis_b_1627781.html).

Signs are also words, just unvoiced. Can you think of a time in your life when a gesture went beyond words? When an action spoke louder than any words could say? Or, when you offered someone nothing more than the “bread” of your presence, or an anointing through your undivided attention?

In silence, I invite you to think back to one of those times and then I will show you a story.

Imagine that scene unfolding only a short time before Jesus will be tried and crucified. Martha looks after the important hospitality of food preparation. Lazarus, Jesus, and Judas Iscariot are sitting around the table. Mary, wordless, fills the room with fragrance of extravagant love. The silence must have felt charged with energy; would I feel uncomfortable if I was there? You? A quiet but powerful gesture – no words. Silence speaks when words are not enough.

But, of course, human instinct is to make sense of it; to put words into the wonder of the moment. We yearn to make sense of it, to explain it, instead of sitting with that sense of mystery and love. What happens when we try? What might be the motivation of Mary’s lavishing of Jesus? We can speculate – Jesus not long ago raised her brother Lazarus from the dead; was her anointing of Jesus a gesture of gratitude? That perfume would have cost a year’s pay for a typical labourer. For Judas, a zealot eager to defeat the Roman empire, extravagance is not in his vocabulary – she just wasted money that could have sustained people suffering.

Love expressed fully cannot be accounted for on a balance sheet. By this world’s standards, Judas is correct. By a purely economic standard, this was a loss. By God’s balance sheet, which calls us to mysterious silence, whatever Mary’s motive, Jesus receives the gift with gratitude. He will offer his own stunning quiet gesture washing his disciples’ feet at their last meal together, even though Jesus knows that one “has lifted his heel” against him. <sup>2</sup>

If we try, in this silence, surely we can imagine the smell of love that was shared between Mary and Jesus.

Truth be told, for most mainstream churches today, the financial reports have been saying that our churches cost a great deal, perhaps we say “too much”, to maintain. Even more so in these pandemic times, we worry. No corner of our United Church is immune; St. Andrew’s isn’t. How do we maintain our structures, our beautiful edifices? Spaces within which we praise God, and where we celebrate the sacred stories to equip saints to bring Good News and Love to our world?

Now, consider the other story today, God giving the specifications through Moses for the construction of the tabernacle, a structure that would protect the covenant with God. After the golden calf incident, the people are feeling grateful to God and contribute their precious goods and skills to make not a graven image, but a mobile home for worshipping God.

No expense is spared, no sensory experience left out: lit by lamps and perfumed with incense, the tent and ark with its poles, clasps, and pillars, the curtain at the entrance, and the table with the bread of Presence make sacred space for experiencing God’s love.

Consider for a moment that not much has changed. Tabernacles are not mobile, but have foundations. Well, in these strange times, maybe we are truer to the ancient nomadic roots, as you at home joining us have made your kitchen table, or office or bedroom, into a mobile worship space as you worship with us today.

Think about the sacred spaces created to God’s glory. The beautiful St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church building, that eventually gave way for an audacious project, St. Andrew’s Place with the United Church nestled within. Can you feel the care that has gone into this church community? The space itself, chairs, the glorious instruments to make a joyful noise to God! In these

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<sup>2</sup> John chapter 13, verse 18

challenging times for people who don't have stable income, the love and compassion of Christ reaches out to the most vulnerable.

This is a vision of Love, grounded in God's lavish love, the same love that compelled Mary to lavish Jesus and all those in the room with such fragrance. Love shared by a stranger to a neighbour in crisis. Love baked into muffins gathered together and shared with the Off the Street Shelter.

The good news is that in our life together we are blessed both to receive and preach the gospel of grateful love through the actions that embody our faith. In the week ahead, I challenge you to offer either a gesture or a prayer of thanks for a neighbour whether near or far.

### **Stewardship Testimonial (*Jen Bruneau & Sue Nykilchyk*)**

#### **Offering Moment**

For those of you who are not new here, hopefully you have received stewardship packages in the mail. In it, you will find updated information about how your financial and volunteer support nourishes God's work here at St. Andrew's. Also in that package is a commitment card, hold onto it, we will talk more about that on November 15<sup>th</sup>. May we consider the significance of St. Andrew's to each of us as we consider what of ourselves and our treasures that we contribute. May it be a prayerful, spiritual consideration.

If you are new here, don't worry. We welcome your offerings, but we hope that you will just worship, listen and feel radically welcome within the community.

Loving One, with praise and thanksgiving we present ourselves and these gifts to you – our talents and time dedicated to bringing Christ's Good News to those we meet, and our treasures that reflect our gratitude for our many blessings. Take these, and us, that together we might realize your dream of a new kin-dom of justice and peace.

#### **Offering Hymn: MV 191 *What Can I Do?***

What can I do? What can I bring? What can I say? What can I sing?  
I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer. I'll bring my love. I'll do my share.

#### **Sacrament of Holy Communion**

The Holy One is here.

**God's Spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to God.

**It is right to offer thanks and praise.**

It is right to give you thanks and praise,  
O God of many names.

You made a covenant with Noah  
and caused nations, in their amazing diversity,  
to spread over the face of the earth.

As of old you led your people  
out of a land of enslavement to a land of promise,  
so, too, you led our ancestors, and some among us,  
into new lands of possibility—there to find you anew.

In the fullness of time, you sent Jesus,  
in every aspect human as we are.  
He grew up in a small town in Galilee,  
far from the seat of religious and civil power.

He spoke with a distinct accent.  
He learned of the breadth of your grace  
from a Gentile mother.  
Beside Jacob's well,  
he was moved by an encounter with a minority woman  
and to her disclosed his messianic identity.  
Therefore, with these and our other ancestors in the faith,  
both named and unnamed, across time, across the globe  
have borne courageous witness to the hope within them,  
we praise you, singing:

**Holy, holy, holy God,  
Power of life and love!  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory!  
Hosanna through the ages!  
Blest is the One who comes  
to bring your justice to earth!**

On the last night he spent with his friends,  
Jesus took an age-old tradition of his people  
and transformed it into something new.  
He took bread, staple food of his land,  
blessed and broke it, and gave it to those around him saying,  
"Take, eat, this is my body, broken for you.  
Whenever you do this, remember me."

After supper he took a cup of wine, common drink of his people,  
and gave it to them, saying,  
"Drink this, all of you, this is the new covenant in my blood.  
Each time you do this, remember me."

These simple actions help us do the sacred work of remembering, bringing to mind the ways  
God's people have always been held in love and compassion. We continue this faithful witness  
today, by taking a moment, and offering a prayer for the people in our circles, as well as the  
people we only see in the news, or as we pass by on the street.

We pray for teachers and students, especially for the community at Lo-Ellen Park Secondary  
School. We pray for parents and for families who wait anxiously. We pray for those who are  
alone, for the vulnerable on the streets, for the hungry, for the searching. We pray that your love  
will grow in this world through us, through our words, our actions and through our witness. We  
pray for peace in the United States this week- people in neighbourhoods, peace of mind, peace at  
polling booths, your peace in this chaotic election week.

### **The Prayer Jesus Taught**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kin-dom come, Thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver  
us from evil. For thine is the kin-dom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

By remembering Jesus in this way now,  
we claim our common heritage  
as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**

Send, O covenant God, your Holy Spirit  
upon us and what we do here,  
that we and these gifts, empowered by your Spirit,  
may become signs of shalom  
to one another and to all peoples of the earth.

Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all glory is yours everywhere, now and forever.

**Amen**

The Bread of Life, shared for you.  
Cup of Blessing, poured out for you.

...the Gifts of God for the people of God.

### **Post Communion Prayer**

Gracious God, may your gifts of love transform and enliven us that we may live lives of thanksgiving. May your presence among us provoke such longing for your realm, that we will never be satisfied until the whole earth knows your justice, your peace, and your love. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

### **Closing Hymn: MV 106 *I Am the Dream***

1. I am the dream and you the dreamer.  
I am the song and you are the rhyme.  
You are the tune sung in ev'ry silence.  
You are the now in the endless stream of time.

2. I am the bell and you the silence.  
You are the yearning I cannot curtail.  
I am the blest and you the blessing.  
You are the wilds in which I lose my trail.

3. You are the word and I the echo.  
You are the leader and I am the led.  
You are the joy and I the laughter.  
You are the Rock on which I lay my head.

### **Commissioning**

As we go out into the world, let us follow Jesus who taught us to remember Mary who anointed him.

**Let us go forth remembering who we are and whose we are.**

Do not be afraid,  
**God will never forget us and forsake us.**

God has called us with the sound.  
**Let us echo God's calling.** (*Sound Singing Bowl*)

God has anointed us today, as with oil.  
**May we go now, anointing those we meet with God's love.** (*Sound Singing Bowl*)

God is with us.  
**We are not alone. Thanks be to God. Amen.** (*Sound Singing Bowl*)

**Benediction Hymn: VU 964 *Go Now in Peace***

Go now in peace, go now in peace.  
May the love of God surround you  
everywhere, everywhere you may go.

**Postlude**

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This worship service is adapted from ***Called to be the Church: Congregational Giving Program 2020. Loving Our Neighbours.*** The United Church of Canada.

Dialogue during **Time up Front** written by Jeannine Zadow.

**Communion** setting adapted from ***Celebrate God's Presence: A Book of Services by The United Church of Canada***, United Church Publishing House, 2000, p. 653.

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