

WORSHIP AT ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH

November 14, 2021

***Discipleship is Stewardship – Stewardship 2,
Making Giving a Spiritual Practice***

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time Sunday at 7:00 p.m.

Email sketchingalong4@gmail.com to get the Zoom link.

Prelude

Opening Hymn: MV 28 God of the Bible, vv. 1, 2, & 5

1. God of the Bible, God in the Gospel,
hope seen in Jesus, hope yet to come,
you are our centre, daylight or darkness,
freedom or prison, you are our home.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

2. God in our struggles, God in our hunger,
suffering with us, taking our part,
still you empow'r us, mothering Spirit,
feeding, sustaining, from your own heart.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

5. Hope we must carry, shining and certain
through all our turmoil, terror and loss,
bonding us gladly one to the other,
till our world changes facing the Cross.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

Welcome & Announcements

Welcome to St. Andrew's United Church in downtown Sudbury Ontario. Here we are, on the journey together, whether you are worshipping online or in the sanctuary following covid protocols – we are joined by God's Spirit.

This is the second Sunday where together we explore what Stewardship is about – on the first Sunday we talked about tapping into the wellspring of giftedness within and around each of us, making it a spiritual practice, being thankful. Today we talk about the making it a spiritual discipline of giving. Out of our sense of gratitude, finding ways to share, and remember my saying that giving is sometimes about money, many times is about giving of ourselves, our talents.

Thanks today for the musical leadership of Ralph and Deb McIntosh who are back with us this Sunday. Oh yes, next Sunday, the celebration Sunday, celebrating St. Andrew's Sunday and Celebrating our Stewardship Journey – taking another look at what this community means to you, thinking: In what way can I commit to giving of myself to the mission of St. Andrew's United Church in the year to come.

It's hard to look ahead, with so much uncertainty in the midst of a pandemic. But sometimes we need a stabilizer, let me call it a spiritual stabilizer, a keel, if you will; spiritual practices like gratitude and a discipline of giving to help counter our inclination to be afraid, to be anxious, to focus on uncertainty rather than the certainty that is our Creator God and this community that nurtures us, grounds us in grace.

If you are new here, please note the credits at the end of this worship on screen with contact information – Facebook, our website, email and just a traditional phone call to us to say hello and allow us to get to know you.

As we prepare to worship, let us take a quiet moment ... [silence]

Inviting Holy Light

Would you join me as we ground ourselves? Feel. Connect with how you are feeling this morning. Breathe into this moment, this place. Take a slow and deep breath. Feel not just your chest, but deep into your stomach feel it fill with lifegiving oxygen. Accepting gifts of life... sharing.

As we gather to worship, we light this candle to remember the light and love that Jesus shared with so many. He did not keep this light to himself. Jesus shared it with his friends, and after Jesus died, his friends continued to share the light with their friends. For generations upon generations, the light has been shared, and love continues. Jesus is still with us. Today, in love, we welcome the light, the light of the world... *[light the candle]*

Nurturing Safe Space

We seek Holy Spirit and Love to help us nurture safe space in this place where all can participate in worship and life regardless of age, ability, race, cultural background, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Acknowledging Traditional Territory

My ancestors were settlers, I am a settler, but I, and you, we are all Treaty people. This is a settler church – formed in the beginning in ways that did not honour the hospitality of the First Peoples of this land. Our Moderator said in the United Church apology in 1986: We confused Western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ. We imposed our civilization as a condition of accepting the gospel. We tried to make you be like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were.

We all, whether you are joining online or those gathered physically in the sanctuary, we all gather a traditional territory of Indigenous peoples. We are grateful to be allowed to use these lands for growing spiritually and worshipping. We acknowledge and pay respect to the Indigenous, the Metis, ancestors of this particular land, particularly those of the Wahnapiatae First Nation and the Atikemeksheng Anishnawbek. Let us work earnestly for Reconciliation.

Call to Worship

I invite you to hold out your hands as we offer this responsive Call to Worship, as if we are offering ourselves to one another and to God.

What have you brought to give today?

We bring our hopes and our fears.

What else do we bring to give today?

We bring our joys and our sorrows.

Anything else that we bring to give today?

We bring our prayer and our wonderings.

Anything else?

We bring our talents and our money.

God, we give all of ourselves in this time of worship;
with gratitude and joy, we worship you together!

Opening Prayer

Let us pray: Giver of life, you have sown love and hope in your world since creation. You have planted joy and kindness in our hearts and watered it with your patience. You shine your peace upon us, that even as we experience life's challenges, your gentle presence reassures us that you are in control.

**Spirit of generosity fill our lives, stir our desire to share with others
what you have so graciously given to us.**

The Prayer Jesus Taught

This we pray along with the prayer taught to us by beloved who loved, and called us to love too,
**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.**

Time up Front – Intentional Giving

Props: 1 cracker, 1 burger bun, and 1 loaf of bread (or any other objects; what matters is quantity)

Looking at these three gifts given for people who are hungry, which one of them will feed the most people?

So how much you give matters. The more you give, the more is available to be given to others. The more you give is the more we have to do what needs to be done.

Hear what the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 9:6. "The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6).

Wait! Does that mean that the other gifts don't matter?

Not at all. Every gift matters. What is important is that everyone gives. When everyone gives, there will be more available to give to others.

*Should someone feel sad because they are only able to give one cracker or the burger bun?
Should someone feel embarrassed because they cannot afford to give a whole loaf of bread?*

Hear what it says in the Bible, 2 Corinthians 9:7. "Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

What that means is that each of us must make up our minds about what we can afford to give. When we decide, then we should give it happily.

We should be thankful that we have something to give, no matter how small we think it is. When we can't give things like money and supplies, then we do what we can to help: we give our time and our talent cheerfully. No matter what we give, when we give cheerfully, God loves it!

This is a repeat after me prayer: God, we thank you for giving to us so that we have something to give. Bless what we give—money, food, time or talent. Help us to give as much as we can. no matter how small it may seem, help us to give it cheerfully. Amen.

Hymn: MV 18 God, Prepare Me to Be a Sanctuary

God, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true;
with thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you. *(sing verse twice)*

Scripture Reading (*Eric Maag*)

2 Corinthians 9:6–7 (NRSV)

This is a letter from Paul to siblings in Christ who live in Corinth. Paul is encouraging the Corinthians to give generously to a collection he is taking for the Christians in Jerusalem. Our time this week is designed to explore what it means to give as a discipline.

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Let us pray: This is the time for reflection. This is the time for inspiration. This is the time for determination. This is the time to set out in the direction revealed by God. Living Word in our midst, may you bless our receiving of your Story. Amen.

Message: “Giving with Purpose”

This message is from the Stewardship Resource [see end credits] and was edited by Rev. Dave.

We reflected at the last Stewardship worship on *gratitude as a practice*, the foundation of following Jesus. In short, we highlighted the fact that the spiritual practice of gratitude can make a difference in us and influence how we live differently and reach out to the world. This week, we focus on the potential of giving to stir greater generosity when it springs from loving intention. We will take a deeper look at this letter from Paul in ancient times, a leader of the new movement after Jesus was crucified.

Paul writes this portion of his letter to the Corinthian church to address one specific area of their Christian witness: their financial giving to support those in need in Jerusalem, including needy Christians. This letter was also written to stir the people to give in the midst of a famine that had swept across Judea.

Within these two verses, there are two key principles for us to consider as we think about giving: 1) it matters how much we give and 2) giving should be intentional with love in mind. Using the principle of sowing and reaping, Paul highlights that generosity begets greater generosity.

Here’s what he says: “...the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6).

This is a principle that holds true in the natural and spiritual world. It is a principle that would be obvious to a farmer or a gardener. There is a direct relationship between the abundance and sparsity of a harvest based on the quantity sown. Now, I’m not a farmer. But it is intuitive that if we scatter seed sparingly in a field, it will produce a meager crop. Scatter generously, and it will produce an abundant crop.

That word “sparingly” is a good translation from the Greek; it means to *hold back*, to give with restraint, *to measure with a teaspoon rather than a jug*. We can imagine Paul suspecting there are givers who are holding back from giving, even though they have enough available to give more. **If that is the case, then the restraint is not just about the money; it is about the state of the heart of the giver.**

The seed you and I sow may be our money, or the offering of our time, or contributing our talent. What holds you, or me, back from giving generously, with our whole heart? What holds us back from giving more, when in reality we can give? Remember that giving is as much our time, our talents as it is giving from our money.

Too often we give out of a sense of scarcity rather than a sense of bounty. Can you relate to giving, but with a worry that you won’t have enough? I think we all been there – feeling you don’t have enough. Losing touch with a sense of trust in God – God who first provides and who promises to give us what we need. Trust is sometimes difficult to come by.

But Jesus says,

...do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear ... Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your Creator feeds them...And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ...But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:25–26, 28–29, 33).

Here’s the thing: if we want to make a difference, to be part of God’s vision of making a difference, then giving with half a heart won’t work. As we stumble across these scripture stories and parables, we are continually reminded that we need to sow our seeds differently. We are invited to change to the way we give, to give out of a sense of bounty rather than out of scarcity.

Paul uses this principle of “bountiful giving”, using the Greek word *eulogia*, literally means “good” “word”, but later evolves into meaning “blessing”. In essence it means that those who bless will be blessed, those who give generously will receive generosity in return. Where might the blessing come from? Let me propose two possible directions:

First, the act of giving itself—can you remember a time that you gave extravagantly to someone or something that was meaningful to you? We feel a burst of satisfaction, joy. Did I actually do that? I went all out, there, rather than following my rule of giving a little to this and to that. Jesus does say, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

The other blessing, I suggest, comes from our Source of blessing, our Creator God. God promises blessing, and God, throughout the stories of our Bible, delivers time and again. The invitation for our modern reality, then is to believe in our hearts that our contribution will produce a greater outcome.

...the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6).

Paul moves from quantity of giving to the state of the heart of the giver. He says “Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion” (2 Corinthians 9:7). The Greek he uses translates to “out of grief or sorrow” and “out of necessity or compulsion”. Giving should not be a painful experience, or feeling like someone is twisting your arm, or holding your loved one for a ransom unless you give. Our heart should neither feel coerced nor guilty as we give.

Charitable giving these days seems often driven by guilt tripping, arm-twisting, and sob stories. It’s hard to say no to images of poverty on the screen, children in need of surgery that will save their lives, parents who need assistance so that they can give their children Christmas presents. These are tactics designed to tug on our emotions. For Paul, giving is not merely out of emotion. Compassion is the emotional response to suffering, but if after giving we feel guilt or regret, I might ask: what drove my response to begin with. Paul’s directive in his letter is: give as you have “made up your mind,” – the Greek word meaning to reach a decision beforehand, to commit myself to it.

Circumstances change, and we are asked to respond – but we must evaluate what we have to give, and also the significance and size of the needs we hope to meet. That is the rational part of our giving. We have that usual offering we give, Paul suggests we prayerfully think about whether or not that is whole-hearted giving, or, if our heart is telling us to give more fully. The heart part of giving is the resolve that we give with trust in our Creator that it will make a difference, then investing our hopes, our faith with our talents and treasure. Christian giving is be a product of thoughtful discipleship. Remember when Scott McClure rode his bike in the Mission and Service

Hullabaloo to raise hundreds of dollars for “Bikes for Pastors”? Remember all the fun-raising we have done for community outreach?

Paul says: God wants invested disciples who are ready to give with heart and soul, to give because they are able to give, as they are able to give, and modern disciples who are committed to give so that God’s work will flourish. What do you think? Are you in? Amen.

Stewardship Song: “This Indescribable Gift”

God cares for the poor, shares freely with all,
God’s righteousness lives forever.

God cares for the poor, shares freely with all,
God’s righteousness lives forever.

We are planting as disciples, knowing that as we sow, we shall reap.
As we give freely, we receive God’s gift of grace; ours to keep.

God cares for the poor, shares freely with all,
God’s righteousness lives forever.

God cares for the poor, shares freely with all,
God’s righteousness lives forever.

God gives seed to the sower, bread to all those who are hungry for food,
supplies and multiplies the gift, increases harvests of good.

God cares for the poor, shares freely with all,
God’s righteousness lives forever.

God cares for the poor, shares freely with all,
God’s righteousness lives forever.

Gifts put gospel into action, by gift of grace our spirits lift.
Thank God who generously offers this indescribable gift.

God cares for the poor, shares freely with all,
God’s righteousness lives forever.

God cares for the poor, shares freely with all,
God’s righteousness lives forever. God’s righteousness lives forever.

Stewardship Moment with Sophia and Benjamin

Dad: What does being a “Christian” mean for you?

Sophia: It means not just talking, but actually doing. Jesus says to love people. Well, the church didn’t love when they created Residential Schools where First Nations children were taken from their homes, they were abused, and often parents had no say. This isn’t right, and my church needs to do more to make this right. I’m learning about Attawapiskat in school. I’d like my church to get to know more about what people face there. Maybe we could try to develop a relationship with someone who lives there who could tell us about life there and their culture.

Dad: Benjamin, what do you think about church?

Benjamin: I have to sit down a lot. I’m glad I have my device to keep me busy when you get talking. Did you know that... [Benjamin offers a “fun fact”] ... I love learning about things on YouTube, using my device.

Dad: Well, if you were to dream about what church could be like, what would make it better? Seriously?

Benjamin: It would be shorter, maybe more stuff for kids where we can move around, have some fun.

Dad: What would Jesus tell St. Andrew's United Church if he came one Sunday to worship?

Sophia: Talk to your neighbours, not judge them. Not just your neighbour in the seat next to you, but strangers. People in tents, get to know them.

Mom: Have you met them? some might be a little scary!

Sophia: No, I'll be honest, I haven't. But I feel like we could do better and start with not judging them. Loving them for who they are, getting to know them.

Dad: How could we get to know them?

Sophia: Maybe we could put together a gathering, not just one time, but building trust with the. Have food and sit down and talk to people. Build trust with them. Remember when we had the picnic and strangers came to get food, I liked that.

Benjamin:

Jesus wouldn't appreciate a bunch of maniac kids running around.

Dad: Thank you for being willing to do this, both of you!

Stewardship – Debby Laporte

Welcome to the second Sunday of our Stewardship Campaign – Discipleship is Stewardship.

By now all of you should have received your Stewardship package either via email or via regular mail. I hope you have had time to read and digest all the pages of the package. It includes a letter from our minister, Rev. Dave, a Stewardship newsletter that shows the wonderful things that have gone on during the year, a pamphlet that includes all the incredible teams that our church is so blessed to have which are run by volunteers, and volunteer opportunities and a narrative budget produced by our gifted treasurer Jill Bennett, and some fun things to do. Thank you to my team for all the hours of dedicated work, so many emails, Zoom meetings and phone calls.

And last but not least your Response Card. I have a basket by the offering basket that you can place your card in, and we hope to have them back by next Sunday, but as we know, your monetary donations and whether or not you can volunteer your time and talents takes careful thought. So, the basket will be available until the end of the year. You can also mail in your card to the church office.

An email with just the response card has been sent to you for ease of printing. There are additional Response Cards with envelopes in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings. Many thanks to Alison for doing this.

Another email that you will have received includes an attachment regarding the Benevolent fund and how this fund is changing. The "other" designation on both your PAR contributions and envelopes will be designated to the Benevolent fund. This fund has a large balance for which we are truly grateful. However, for 2022 your Resource team is asking you to consider allocating more to Local so that we can better manage our financial position as we are still currently operating in a deficit.

In February we conducted a survey and the results showed that we collectively prioritize Worship and Music, and Mission and Outreach including the wider church and our local community. And your council has worked hard to ensure that these are the true priorities. Due to the pandemic we had to rewrite how we do church. New equipment was purchased so that we could offer on-line services. A service was never missed due to the dedicated and tireless effort of so many people. And even though we do not have a music director at this time, we have recruited talented musicians who play the piano, organ and sing. Thank you to these incredible people. Talk about offering of talent! And one day we can lift our voices to the ceiling once again.

And what can I say about how we outreached to so many. Muffins, vitamin C, pizzas, Warm Hearts, Warm Sweaters, Blessing Bundles, Hot Cross Blessing bundles, sandwiches, care packages, socks, Christmas bundles, Connex, and prayers to mention a few. Our council wants to ensure you that we will still give the necessary energy and resources to these items and that we will never put Mission and Outreach on the backburner. The same for Worship and Music. It is the essence of why we are here and what we do.

I thank you for taking the time to discern how you can help our church move forward. We know that we are in transition, and we have begun to work on developing guidelines for our new fund related to Community Outreach.

And if you have any questions about the documents in the package please reach out to any of us on the team. And if you do need a package, we have some copies available. And one last item: there are a few more gratitude jars available. And if you could bring back some post-it notes with things you are grateful for, please drop them off in the designated basket on table by the doors. Or send me an email. Next week is St. Andrew's Sunday and the last day of our program. Please join us here, or on-line. And maybe, just maybe there may be shortbread cookies!

Offering Our Gifts to God

As we offer our gifts today, let us give considering the magnitude of the needs we are trying to help, in this community, across Canada, and around the world. Give with this in mind: the more you can give, the more lives you can impact, and every kind of gift, in any amount, makes a difference in the lives of those who have little or none.

Today, I invite you, if you do not already give, to make a difference in lives across Canada and around the world through Mission & Service. Please choose to do so. If you give to the larger holy work of God through our United Church of Canada by donating to Mission and Service, thank you for that too! You will find a link to the church website at the end of this worship, so you can learn about what we are up to and how you can help.

Offering Hymn: MV 171 Christ Has No Body Now but Yours, vs. 4

Christ has no body now but yours, no hands but yours.
Here on this earth, yours is the work,
to serve with the joy of compassion.

4. Through ev'ry gift, give back to those in need;
as Christ has blessed, so now be his blessing,
with ev'ry gift a benediction, be to the people of God.

Christ has no body now but yours, no hands but yours.
Here on this earth, yours is the work,
to serve with the joy of compassion.

Offering Prayer

Let us pray: May the gifts we offer today be dedicated to your work, O God: to save and change lives, to help people live with meaning and purpose, and to build a better world. God, we give to you with open hands and hearts these red scarves to keep people warm and as a symbol of our love and prayers for them. As you have given freely to us, we return a portion to you with joy. Bless us and our gifts to be a blessing. Amen.

Prayers of the Community

Refrain: VU 411 O God We Call

O God we call, O God we call, from deep inside we yearn,
from deep inside we yearn, from deep inside we yearn for you.

Loving God, giver of all creation, we pray to you in faith with thanksgiving in our hearts. We give you thanks for all you do to care for us. Give us grace to care for others and to love others as

Christ loves us. We are grateful that your love is steadfast and enduring, offered to all through Jesus Christ. We ask your help for all who suffer and strength for those who bring your help to them.

Make us faithful stewards of your goodness.

Refrain: VU 411 O God We Call

O God we call, O God we call, from deep inside we yearn,
from deep inside we yearn, from deep inside we yearn for you.

Compassionate Jesus, healer of all creation, we pray for the sick and those who sit with grief and all those who are in need of your healing touch. We pray for the ministry of healing and caring that comes from the church and other organizations. We pray for the leaders of nations, for honesty, integrity, justice, and compassion in national, provincial, and international politics, and for financial resources to be distributed equitably. We live in a world where people struggle to meet their basic needs while others are denied basic human rights. War and corruption stifle the economic and social advancement of many.

Make us faithful stewards of your goodness.

Holy Spirit, sanctifier of all creation, help us to be generous in meeting the needs of others through the gifts of our time, kind words, and a listening ear. Bless those whose lives are touched through our gifts to Mission & Service. We pray for those known to us who are in need of your care for their minds, body, or spirit at this time. Especially, we pray for

Make us faithful stewards of your goodness.

Refrain: VU 411 O God We Call

O God we call, O God we call, from deep inside we yearn,
from deep inside we yearn, from deep inside we yearn for you.

Closing Hymn: MV 12 Come Touch Our Hearts, vv. 1-4

1. Come touch our hearts that we may know compassion,
from failing embers build a blazing fire;
love strong enough to overturn injustice; to seek a world more gracious,
come touch and bless our hearts.

2. Come touch our souls that we may know and love you,
your quiet presence all our fears dispel;
create a space for spirit to grow in us, let life and beauty fill us,
come touch and bless our souls.

3. Come touch our minds and teach us how to reason,
set free our thoughts to wonder and to dream;
help us to open doors of understanding, to welcome truth and wisdom,
come touch and bless our minds.

4. Come touch us in the moments we are fragile,
and in our weakness your great strength reveal;
that we may rise to follow and to serve, steady now our nerve,
come touch and bless our wills.

Blessing

May God, the Giver of all good gifts, pour out blessing, that you may always have all that you need, abundance enough that you may know the joy of generosity. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Creator, the Christ, and the Comforter, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

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

Most of the prayers and responses and the Message (Message edited by Rev. Dave Le Grand) today come from, *A Five-Week Worship Program • Discipleship Is Stewardship • Called to Be the Church* © 2021. Thanks to the authors of this resource: the Reverends Mary Nichol, Ryan Slifka, Sadekie Lyttle-Forbes, Bob Fillier, and Paul Douglas Walfall.

Prayer after scripture reading adapted from a prayer by Susan Lukey. *Gathering Epiphany 2020*, page 51. Used with permission.

“This Indescribable Gift” by David Kai. © 2020 David Kai.

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