

WORSHIP AT ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
November 21, 2021
Discipleship is Stewardship – Stewardship 3
Giving Thanks and Serving – St. Andrew's - Sunday

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: VU 312 Praise with Joy, vv. 1, 2, & 4

1. Praise with joy the world's Creator, God of justice, love, and peace, source and end of human knowledge, God whose grace shall never cease. Celebrate the Maker's glory, power to rescue and release.
2. Praise to Christ who feeds the hungry, frees the captive, finds the lost, heals the sick, upsets religion, fearless both of fate and cost. Celebrate Christ's constant presence: friend and stranger, guest and host.
3. Praise the Maker, Christ, and Spirit, one God in community, calling Christians to embody oneness and diversity.
This the world shall see reflected: God is One and One in Three

Welcome & Announcements

Welcome to St. Andrew's United Church in downtown Sudbury Ontario. This is the Third and final 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. Last Sunday we spoke about the spiritual discipline of giving. Today in our worship, we will bring our journey to an end as we focus on service and thanksgiving.

Thanks today for the musical leadership of Tracey LeGrand who leads music today. – 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.

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? I invite you to breathe deeply – breathe in grace and love, the sense of community grounded in Christ's love around you. Breathe out the things that worry you. The to-do lists. As we gather to worship, we light this candle to remember the warmth and love that Jesus shared with so many. For us, Jesus is hope, healer, teacher, transformer. We light this candle to welcome Christ Light among us. *[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

We are so blessed to live on this land, land cared for by First Peoples for millennia! We acknowledge that our ancestors, our church, did not appreciate the gift of wisdom, of spirituality that Indigenous of this land were entrusted with by our Creator. 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 acknowledge the Metis and First Peoples, particularly those of the Wahnapiatae First Nation and the Atikemeksheng Anishnawbek. Let us work earnestly for Reconciliation.

Call to Worship (adapted from Psalm 92)

It is good to give thanks to God,
And to sing praises to your name, O God.

Let us declare the steadfast love of God in the morning,
And at night we will speak of God's faithfulness.

With the music of instruments our praise shall arise;
With our shouts of joy we make known our thanksgiving.

For you, O Lord, have made us glad by your work;
At the work of your hands we sing for joy.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray: Jesus, you said that you were among us as one who serves. You washed the feet of your disciples and, in so doing, gave us an example of service. As we come to worship this day, help us to fully understand the example of service you gave us. Show us how to serve so that we can glorify you without calling attention to ourselves.

Show us that in serving,
we can show our gratitude and commitment to you.

Show us that in serving,
we witness to your goodness.

Show us that in serving,
we are offering thanksgiving for all that you have done.

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.

Prayer for Grace

Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." (Mark 9:35b)

I invite us to take a moment to reflect back on the past week, particularly on how we can learn, and grow, as we seek to follow Jesus a sense of service:

Think back to when we served, cared for neighbours: Did we serve with humility, feeling the joy of serving without need of affirmation? Or, did we, really, seek to impress? At times, do we pick who we help – or don't help – based on convenience? (Silence...)

Where we heard the call to serve, to offer compassion and care: Were we truly sensitive to the needs of those we wanted to help and grounded in our relationship to the Creator who calls us to love. Or, did we presume the needs of those we helped? (Silence...)

Source of all Abundance, Holy Creator God, help us to have the mind of Christ and teach us your lifestyle of service. Amen

Assurance

Friends, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and gave them an example of servanthood. Know that Jesus even today washes our feet and enables us to walk the path he sets before us.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn: MV 187 We Give Our Thanks, vv. 1, 2, & 5

1. We give our thanks to God, we give our thanks to God,
we give our thanks to God, we give our thanks to God.
2. We give our hands to you, we give out hands to you,
we give our hands to you, because you reached for us.
5. We give our hearts to you, we give our hearts to you,
we give our hearts to you, because you first loved us.

Scripture Reading (*Dan Desormeaux*)

2 Corinthians 9:12-15 (NRSV)

This is a reading from Paul's letter to the Corinthian church that speaks of how giving and serving is most powerful when it flows from our gratitude to God.

...for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace that God has given you. Thanks be to God for God's indescribable gift!

John 13:1-15 Assorted verses (NIV)

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus continued. "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Let us pray: Alpha and Omega, you encircle time with your presence. You encircle creation with your love. You brought all things into being and receive all things back to you. May we find our hope, our life, and our deep sense of gratitude for your gifts, within your enfolding grace. Amen.

Message: In our Giving & Living – Discipleship

We have been reflecting for the past four weeks giving as a spiritual practice, a discipline.

First we talked about how gratitude as a spiritual practise transforms us. The second Sunday of the Stewardship series was about how generous actions are most powerful when they come from true, loving intentions. Today, we end the series by reflecting on giving rooted in, and expression of, our sense of being a follower of Jesus – a disciple.

We had the story of Jesus observing the widow with limited means dropping in her two lepta, very meagre indeed, and so subtly. Jesus and disciples watching this alongside a parade of other rather ostentatious demonstrations of generosity, people parading up to the offering plate, making sure others saw their grand offerings.

You may recall that Jesus pointed to the humble widow and said that she gave far more than the wealthy givers. I joked that perhaps this observation will not help our efforts to inspire more generosity in our community. But hold on a moment.

In the reading Dan just did, the letter to the Corinthian church, Paul appears to be saying that the primary qualification for generous giving is not whether or not we have lots of money. The primary criterion for giving is in being a disciple of Jesus. Generosity is not in the amount, great or small, that we give.

Paul says that we give according to our means – quantity means less than what is in our heart as we give it. Do we give to fulfill an obligation, or do we give because as we remember that the Creator first gave to us? Do we give to achieve some kind of goal or category, or do we give out of gratitude for the gift of Jesus, his life, his message, his life given and his resurrection achieved for us?

The difference is not the amount, but what is in our heart as we give. Paul writes this letter to a Church, encouraging them to make a financial gift to the Jerusalem church. But not everyone in the Corinthian church is wealthy, just as we in this St. Andrew's community are not all wealthy. The needs in the Jerusalem church are great, so they are encouraged to give from their hearts by Paul. Another interesting thing in the time is an ethnic difference; the Church in Jerusalem was largely Jewish, but Corinth, a cosmopolitan city, is culturally, ethnically diverse. This was a big "ask" by Paul, because there had been some serious fault lines between Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles).

Some Jews had trouble swallowing the idea of Gentiles in the fold. The only commonality between the Corinthian Church being appealed to and the Jewish Church in Jerusalem is that they both followed Jesus. Being disciples, though, meant everything. It still does, in spite of theological and ethnic differences among our modern-day Christians around the world, we are one in Christ.

Paul says to Corinth, and to us, that we give to express what we believe. We give because we serve God, we are channels of God's grace. I remember as a child hearing about giving the first fruits. The ancient Israelites giving their best crops, animals, as an offering to the Creator, a thank you for life. I recall as a child growing up in a Church how that baffled me. That change my dad gave me to put in my pocket before church, I wanted, and probably did, hold back a portion of it my commission for staying quiet in church. But this idea of giving extravagantly according to my means, the first fruits from me to God's work. I get it now.

Paul says that we give from our deep desire to glorify God. Giving not just of our treasures, but from our intentions, our heart.

I didn't know that the word Paul uses for give, in Greek, has the same roots as the word we know as liturgy. To give is to worship. It is service by those who have ability to help financially, to those who are less fortunate. But to give for Paul also means service to the priest in the Temple. When we give, we become channels of the grace of God to others. Grace, being the free gift from God; you can't earn it. We give freely, sharing that grace, sharing our first fruits. We cannot know how many people are impacted by our giving. God gives to us first, and, in response, we are invited, not obligated, to follow Jesus as disciples. THAT is the most generous gift we can give, is our whole heart.

Our sense of discipleship, of serving, makes our gifts generous. I'll give Paul the final word, here: "Thank God for [God's] gift that words can't describe!" (2 Corinthians 9:15, Common English Bible) Amen.

Stewardship Song: "This Indescribable Gift" (Video)

James Warner-Smith (soloist) and Graham Laporte (pianist)

Stewardship Moment with Sylvia Carscadden

Good morning.

I feel very privileged to be speaking this morning about my relationship with this community of faith.

I am going to tell you my story – some of you know large parts of it and some of it may not be so familiar. What you may not know is that our family began to come to St. Andrew's not long after we arrived here in 1965. At that time the big stone church was an imposing site on Larch Street. I remember it well because it reminded me of another St. Andrew's that I grew up in, in Oshawa.

I remember the Rev. Stanley McQueen bringing the scripture alive with his reading, Bette Leake playing the organ and George Betancourt singing. I didn't really know anyone, but we had little children and soon I was helping, playing the piano in the Sunday school. I met Barb Thornley and Joan Goddard and they organized a little nativity in the Sunday School class. Something about that simple telling of that old story brought me to tears – maybe it was because my own children were wearing the tea towels and housecoats.

I was actually there the famous Sunday when Rev. McQueen arrived in his hard hat to make the announcement that the building was not safe – an announcement that changed the ministry of this church community. Anyways, times changed and we moved to a neighbourhood church in our community.

There was a lot of excitement about the new building on Larch Street. I came here many times, to concerts, to lectures, to the Fall Fair, as a performer and even a guest performer once. At one of her spring concerts Louise Innes took a big risk and invited our very young Kampana Ringers to perform on this very platform. It was terrifying.

And there were some church events too. Probably the most memorable for me was the time the Moderator, the Right Rev. Stan Mackay, during his visit to Sudbury Presbytery, stood in the windows – right over there – raised his arms and prayed the Four Directions. That was before we had much awareness of our indigenous brothers and sisters, but that is a powerful memory for me.

Eventually, Pat Aitken encouraged me to apply for a new position that was opening up at St. Andrew's. And later she told me the deadline for applications was very soon and I needed to get mine in. Well, who could deny Pat, and before I knew it I was having an interview in the minister's study before a sea of faces I did not know. And not long after that I was following David Mundy around the hospital and he was introducing me as the new associate at St. Andrew's. And I said to myself. "Is he talking about me?"

Then there was the ICU. I had no trouble with the ICU, but I said to David, "When I call in on the phone from the waiting room, who will I say that I am?" And he said, "Tell them you are her minister!" Well, it took some practice to get those words out.

But I did eventually. For 13 years I was the Pastoral Care Associate at this church. Those years were a gift to me – so much to learn, so many ways to grow. I listened to your stories. I watched the children grow up. I prayed beside your beds in the hospital, I went to the funeral home, I heard your worries and disappointments. I celebrated birthdays and anniversaries. I invited myself for many visits to shut ins and homes. I came to appreciate the deep faith and commitment of so

many. These qualities were often quietly held, reverently shared, over cups of tea. What a privilege it was to walk that journey with you.

But nothing stays the same, and St. Andrew's and I have morphed into new beings. Now it is the outreach of this community that draws on my energies. The downtown is a different place from the days of the old stone church and St. Andrew's is finding new ways to be the church in our community. How are we going to be Christ's body in the middle of the pandemic, the opioid crisis, dwindling church numbers? In the middle of apartments occupied by vulnerable individuals? That is our challenge in this strange time.

So, what do I think of as I share my heart this morning? Several words float up to the surface.

The first is community. How much it means to belong to a community. It means having beautiful space in which to meet, space that is filled with light and seeks to welcome everyone. It means gathering for worship, to enjoy the rituals and the patterns that celebrate God's presence and bring meaning to our life together. It means reaching out to people in new ways that technology can offer. It is sharing the stories of people, ancient and modern who were touched by God.

Belonging to a community means we share some deep values – not always agreeing but in our faith we find the deep connections that hold us together.

And that brings me to the second word – which is that hard word – Love. In the downtown of our city it is hard work to love but that is what we are trying to do and that is why I feel I belong here. Because Love is listening. We are called to listen to many stories, the stories of those in our own faith community, the stories of those in our building, the people in the park, those in other churches in our neighbourhood. We listen for God, for the spark of the Holy that reminds us we are held in Love.

Our church has hard work to do. We are called to care for one another. In the past we all pretty much looked the same. Today we celebrate diversity and we reach out to those around us. This is my church. I know we are struggling but we belong to God and we are not alone.

Prayerfully Reflecting – Debby Laporte & Team

Words about taking time now quietly reflecting on our spiritual journey, our sense of gratitude, our stewardship of our gifts as we share them with St Andrew's.

St. Andrew's Day: "A Toast" by Jean Blewett (Reader: Betty McFarlane)

Wha cares if skies be dull and gray?

Wha heeds November weather?

Let ilka Scot be glad to-day

The whole wide warl' thegither.

We're a' a prood and stubborn lot,

And clannish-sae fowk name us-

Ay, but with sic guid cause none ought

Tae judge us, or tae blame us,

For joys that are we'll pledge to-day

A land baith fair and glowing-

Here's tae the hames o' Canada,

Wi' luve and peace o'erflowing!

For joys that were, for auld lang syne,

For tender chords that bind us,

A toast-your hand, auld friend, in mine-

'The land we left behind us!'

Ho, lowlanders! Ho, hielandmen!
We'll toast her a' thegither,
Here's tae each bonnie loch and glen!
Here's tae her hills and heather!

Here's tae the auld hame far away!
While tender mists do blind us,
We'll pledge on this, St. Andrew's day,
'The land we left behind us!'

Offering Our Gifts to God

As an invitation to the offering, let me offer you two very important words: THANK YOU. Thank you for the gifts of money which you are about to make, because I know that they come from your faith in Jesus. Thank you for the ways you live your faith and share yourselves. Now, together, as Christ's church, let us thank God "for [God's] indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15) With hearts full of thanksgiving, let us offer our gifts of money for the service of God through our community of faith and the Mission & Service of the United Church.

Offering Hymn: MV 182 Grateful Refrain, vs. 2 & Refrain

Grateful for the life you give us, thankful for your Holy Son,
joyful in your Spirit flowing over all, O God of Love.
Grateful for the Bread of Heaven, thankful for your Holy Word,
joyful in your mercy flowing, we will praise you.

2. May our lives proclaim your justice,
may our voices sing your praise.
May our hands work in your service
to the glory of your name.

Grateful for the life you give us, thankful for your Holy Son,
joyful in your Spirit flowing over all, O God of Love.
Grateful for the Bread of Heaven, thankful for your Holy Word,
joyful in your mercy flowing, we will praise you

Offering Prayer

Let us pray: Bless, O God, the gifts that we offer. As we offer them, we dedicate ourselves to you and to your service. Help us as your disciples to give, to be committed, to be grateful, to be your witnesses, and to be thankful. In so doing, may the gifts which we give bring glory to you. Amen.

Prayers of the Community

Jesus, you said, "Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you" (Matthew 7:7). Trusting in your word and promises, we come asking, seeking, and knocking, not only for ourselves, but for the needs of the world around us.

We lift in our prayer the world and all the peoples of the world. We remember especially before you the people who live in want, hunger, or need. Move us beyond sympathy to see the ways that we can serve them.

You have given to us the gifts and talents to serve others.
Thank you, God, for your indescribable Gifts!

Help us to serve with thanksgiving.

We remember those places where adequate medical care is not available to all, places where otherwise treatable medical conditions lead to prolonged illness or death. Move us beyond tears to see the ways that we can serve to help ensure medical care is available for all.

You have given to us the gifts and talents to serve others.

Thank you, God, for these indescribable Gifts!

Help us to serve with thanksgiving.

We remember those who are discriminated against because of their female and trans gender; women who are given less pay for the same work; women and trans-people who face humiliation and danger because of their bodies and their functions; all those who face abuse and violence in their homes. Move us beyond trying to ignore the cries for help to see ways that we can serve, so that all may live with dignity and joy.

You have given to us the gifts and talents to serve others.

Thank you, God, for these indescribable Gifts!

Help us to serve with thanksgiving.

We remember those who are discriminated against because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We hold before you those who are afraid to be themselves because the truth of who they are will lead to ostracism and abuse. We hold before you the memory of those who have been murdered because of fear and hate. Open our eyes to see the injustice that is being done and help us to serve so that tears may end and the joy of living be restored.

You have given to us the gifts and talents to serve others.

Thank you, God, for the indescribable Gifts you have given us!

Help us to serve with thanksgiving.

We hold before you those who are harmed by the evils of racism and white privilege, those who, because of their race or the colour of their skin, have been treated as less than human, as less than created in God's image, those whose lives are less valued than others. Move us to speak and act in ways that break the cycles, and help you to realize your kin-dom vision. We pray for ourselves, our families, our community and world. Situations of desperation, loneliness, injustice. We offer to you now our own prayers in silence for those we are concerned about. (silence)

You have given to us the gifts and talents to serve others.

Thank you, God, for these indescribable Gifts!

Help us to serve with thanksgiving. Amen.

Closing Hymn: MV 209 Go, Make a Difference, Refrain, vs. 1, vs. 3, Refrain

Go make a difference. We can make a difference.

Go make a difference in the world.

Go make a difference. We can make a difference.

Go make a difference in the world.

1. We are the salt of the earth,
called to let the people see the love of God for you and me.
We are the light of the world, not to be hidden but be seen.
Go make a difference in the world.

3. So let your love shine on, let it shine for all to see.
Go make a difference in the world.
And the spirit of Christ will be with us as we go.
Go make a difference in the world.

Go make a difference. We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world.
Go make a difference. We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world.

Blessing: An Affirmation

Let us affirm what we have learned as we journeyed:

We are stewards of the things of God.

God has created and continues to create. God has entrusted to us the responsibility to care for the things God has created. God has given to us all that we need for living.

We are accountable to God for the ways we have care for the world.

In expressing our faith in Jesus, let us give generously to the work of our congregation and in the wider church through Mission & Service. Let us invite others to give to the work of God and thank God for the work God continues to do.

We thank God for the ways that we participate in the work and mission of God.

We are disciples of Jesus. We are called to proclaim Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in the ways we live.

As stewards, we are called to discipleship. May it be so. Amen.

Benediction Hymn: MV 212 Sent Out in Jesus' Name

Sent out in Jesus' name, our hands are ready now
to make the world the place in which the kingdom comes.

The angels cannot change a world of hurt and pain
into a world of love, of justice and of peace.

The task is ours to do, to set it really free.

O, help us to obey, and carry out your will.

Postlude

Prayers and Responses as well as the core ideas for the Message 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.

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