

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
September 17, 2023 – River Sunday

Welcome to Worship

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

Email sascha12@sympatico.ca to get the Zoom link.

Prelude

Opening Hymn: VU 710 *Shall We Gather at the River*, vv. 1, 2, 3

**1. Shall we gather at the river,
where bright angel feet have trod;
with its crystal tide forever
flowing by the throne of God.**

**Yes, we'll gather at the river,
the beautiful, the beautiful river;
gather with the saints at the river
that flows by the throne of God.**

**2. Ere we reach the shining river,
lay we every burden down;
grace our spirits will deliver,
and provide a robe and crown.**

**Yes, we'll gather at the river,
the beautiful, the beautiful river;
gather with the saints at the river
that flows by the throne of God.**

**3. Soon we'll reach the shining river,
soon our pilgrimage will cease,
soon our happy hearts will quiver
with the melody of peace.**

**Yes, we'll gather at the river,
the beautiful, the beautiful river;
gather with the saints at the river
that flows by the throne of God.**

Welcome and Announcements

Welcome to St. Andrew's on this River Sunday! Today we continue a series of worship services celebrating the gift given us of Creation. I invite you to attend next Sunday's service and stay afterwards for our "Doing Discipleship" program. Social Hour is on Zoom every Sunday night at 7pm. To get your Zoom link, email Bev. Her email is above, and on the YouTube page you are looking at if you are worshipping from home. The link was also sent with NEWS on Thursday.

Inviting Holy Light

We centre our bodies and spirits now. We breathe. [*volunteer plays the Singing Bowl*] Illuminating God, your radical love enters the world like a new dawn. Break into our lives with the radiance of a single candle flame. Point us toward the light of healing and wholeness. In the name of your beloved one whom we call Jesus, we pray. Amen. [*light candle*]

Sung Response: VU 82 *A Light is Gleaming* (Refrain only)

**A light is gleaming,
spreading its arms throughout the night,
living in the light.
Come, share its gladness,
God's radiant love is burning bright,
living in the light.**

Nurturing Safe Space

Every one of us is welcome in this space. We are blessed as a community, to be created in our diversity of ages, skin colours, sexual identity, gender, all the diverse ways in which our minds understand our world, all of us are beloved children of God, and we are welcome.

Acknowledging Traditional Territory

For Thousands of years, Indigenous peoples have lived and journeyed on this land, weaving their identity and their spirituality intimately with the land. As we worship this morning, we remember that European colonization came about, largely, because of the Doctrine of Discovery – a flawed understanding that ignored the Indigenous presence on the land.

We affirm that Indigenous peoples have lived on these lands, Turtle Island, for millennia. We are Treaty people, called to honour the Robinson Huron Treaty made here in 1850. We seek a new path of healing grounded God's love. We seek transformation. And We begin worship this morning by acknowledging that we are on the Traditional Territories of the Wahnapietaeping First Nation and the Atikemeksheng Anishnawbek. In gratitude for this new path, may we journey together towards reconciliation.

Call to Worship

See the clouds part on this new day and the colourful bow that reaches across the sky as a sign of welcome and promise. Come to remember all that is between us and God, not just us. Come to remember that that promise reaches to Forest and Land. It runs through Wilderness, and gushes up from River, where we might see that colourful reflection. Let us quake with anticipation and wonder, feeling the water tickle our toes and call us into the fullness of life. You and I, let us ride on the rapids of hope. Let us find the beauty and wonder in being so connected to creation.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray Ramsay Lake, Nepahwin Lake, the Vermillion River, Onaping Falls, Whitewater Lake, Lake Wahnapietae, and Junction Creek.

Flow with us, God, through the loud rushing rapids and among the deep silent pools. Acknowledge our many sources and outlets for sharing our gifts as we come together to find all that bubbles up in your wisdom. Move us into the current of your creative energy as we immerse ourselves in worship and praise with River as our guide. We pray this, along with the traditional version of the Prayer that Jesus taught...

The Prayer that 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, for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: VU 271 *There's a Wideness in God's Mercy, vs. 1*

**1. There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in God's justice
which is more than liberty.**

Prayer for Grace

[Silence. Volunteer slowly fills the baptismal font using the pitcher of water.]

Each drop of water is so sacred. Ponder the ways in which you and I do not appreciate and care for water the way we know we should. Maybe we let the tap run. Can we hear River gurgling in protest?

Bright as crystal, clear as day, River assures us that water is life. How can we be more mindful, more aware, as we go from here, of the sacredness of water? Imagine the first time you will turn on a tap after this worship, can you listen to River, Lake, Creek speak as you cleanse... refresh?

When we wash things down our sinks, how can we feel connect to, listen to, River? Are there things that we pour into our sinks unconsciously? Can we imagine River speaking to us as, today, tomorrow, this week, we flush things? Can we instead feel Wonder for water that is so essential to life?

Take a moment to ponder, to repent – repent, meaning, literally to turn 180 degrees around from the behaviour, or attitude, that causes harm. May we hear River speak.

[Silence... play singing bowl]

Words of Affirmation

Rivers are made for flowing free – and so are our lives. May God’s forgiveness and transformation flow through and from each of us, bringing life to us and all, now and always. Amen.

Hymn: VU 271 *There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy, vs. 5*

**5. For the love of God is broader
than the measures of the mind,
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.**

Scripture Readings (Deb McIntosh)

The Season of Creation offers intentional time to consider the role of creation in Bible stories and in our lives and to remember that humans are just one part of the ever-unfolding story of God’s Creation. This week’s texts call us to reconnect with our relationship with River, the Tree of Life beside them, the holy water flowing from the heart of Holy One.

Genesis 8:20-22, 9:12-17 (Common English Bible)

Noah built an altar to the Lord. He took some of the clean large animals and some of the clean birds, and placed entirely burned offerings on the altar. The Lord smelled the pleasing scent, and God thought to God-self, I will not curse the fertile land anymore because of human beings since the ideas of the human mind are evil from their youth. I will never again destroy every living thing as I have done.

As long as the earth exists, seedtime and harvest, cold and hot, summer and autumn, day and night will not cease.

God said, “This is the symbol of the covenant that I am drawing up between me and you and every living thing with you, on behalf of every future generation. I have placed my bow in the clouds; it will be the symbol of the covenant between me and the earth.

“When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, I will remember the covenant between me and you and every living being among all the creatures. Floodwaters will never again destroy all creatures. The bow will be in the clouds, and upon seeing it I will remember the enduring covenant between God and every living being of all the earth’s creatures.”

God said to Noah, “This is the symbol of the covenant that I have set up between me and all creatures on earth.”

Revelation 22:1-5 (CEB)

(Volunteer pours a little more water in the Font)

This is a reading from the book of Revelation. During the reading, I will pause, and invite you to come forward to pick up a leaf from the Baptismal Font, to take back to your seat. Please feel free to stay in your seat if you wish, our volunteer(s) will take a leaf to you.

Then the angel showed me the river of life-giving water, shining like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb through the middle of the city’s main street. On each side of the river is the tree of life, which produces twelve crops of fruit, bearing its fruit each month. The tree’s leaves are for the healing of the nations.

There will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Night will be no more. They won't need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shine on them, and they will rule forever and always.

(Again, pour a little water from the Pitcher into the Font.)

Let us hear River pray with us, Creator, offer life through me to creation. Sing your song as I tickle rocks and filter through Land to give Forest and Wilderness water for roots and creatures. And after the groaning of waiting, may all taste the fruits of your renewed creation. Amen.

Message: "Seeking Hope when the times feel hopeless"

Message will be posted on the website when it is available.

Anthem: MV 87 Water Flowing from the Mountains (CHOIR ONLY)

1. Water flowing from the mountains.

Water flowing o'er the earth.

Water comes to us, so precious.

Living water gives us birth.

Drink deep this source of life.

Drink deep and know.

For living water sings, and living water brings
the love that makes our spirit grow.

2. Water rushing down the rivers.

Water rushing to the sea.

Water comes to us, so precious.

Living water makes us free.

Drink deep this source of life.

Drink deep and know.

For living water sings, and living water brings
the love that makes our spirit grow.

3. Water springing from the dry place.

Water springing in the sun.

Water comes to us, so precious.

Living water for each one.

Drink deep this source of life.

Drink deep and know.

For living water sings, and living water brings
the love that makes our spirit grow.

Mission for Mission

Educating the Ministers of Tomorrow (VIDEO – Text of video below)

Alexa Gilmour, M&S: From Educational Leadership development of hymn books, Mission and Service supports communities of faith. Today I'm meeting with Jennifer Janzen-Ball, Executive Minister for Theological Leadership to discuss how Mission and Service supports our Community of Faith leaders.

Alexa: Jennifer thanks for being with us this morning.

Jennifer: I'm happy to be here thanks Alexa.

A: How does mission and service support provide leadership in the Church, and Globally?

J: One is through Candidate Aid bursaries which go directly to people who are studying for Ministry in in all three streams of ministry. We also provide Grants to our theological schools.

Partly, I think, people donate because they've had their own experience of Theological Education, and really value it, and want to be part of helping that to continue. I think others in congregations see the value in terms of the education that their Minister has had and the way the minister is able to walk with them in their Faith Journeys. Still others, I think, just value various ways of educating people, and want to contribute to that.

But the other thing that was so important to students was realizing that people throughout the church cared enough to donate to Mission and Service and so that kind of intangible support was also really highly valued by the students. It is a symbol of that wider support that the Church offers.

A: I was one of those people supported by Mission and Service, and Theological Education support, and I was a single parent trying to make my way through, and it certainly was, as you said, that experience of the whole church supporting.

It also had for me an element of the Spirit's blessing. I have tremendous gratitude for that important role that the Church played in my life at that time.

J: It was my experience as a student as well, just that sense of being held in community I think is really important. Your gifts do matter; they matter both tangibly in people's lives, in a real way. But, also as I said earlier, in this intangible way, because the gifts signal the support of the Wider Community, the care of people who are strangers to one another.

Potentially, those gifts to Mission and Service really do make a significant difference no matter what the size.

A: Mission and Service helps to remove barriers to educational leadership and will remind students that they are uplifted by their Community.

Offering Moment

[Kids at the front in Sanctuary beside the Baptismal Font, evergreen sprigs in hand. Dave invites people to hold onto their cut-out leaves, make them flutter as a leaf would on the branch of a tree in the breeze.]

Worship Planning Team Members (VIDEO – Text of video below)

Celebrating the waters of life, wrapped within nature's rhythm, here in worship celebrating the Season of Creation, we find River's life-giving Spirit flowing through the core of our being.

The Creator's River of Love flows deep and wide, always inviting us into hope. Now, we celebrate that Holy Love and find seek to experience that love well up inside of us, building up in us, helping to smooth over the sharp edges of resentment, impatience, intolerance, in us.

[Kids sprinkle congregation with Sprigs/Water from the Font.]

Thank you, God. Amen.

Dedication Prayer

God of transformation, we thank you for your continued promise to care for and sustain all Creation. Help us to follow your example, raising our concern and care for one another and all of Creation. Amen.

Dedication Hymn: VU 538 *For the Gift of Creation*

**For the gift of creation, the gift of your love,
and the gift of the Spirit by which we live,
we thank you and give you the fruit of our hands.
May your grace be proclaimed by the gifts that we give.**

Prayers of Community

[Dave asks congregants to take hold of their cut-out leaves and invites the congregation to reflect silently on the idea that the leaves of the trees along the river of life in Revelation 22 offer healing for the nations. Dave invites them further, to offer a prayer upon that leave for some specific

healing now, for themselves or the world. On the other leaf, offer a prayer of hope, some glimpse of healing that you see around you after a time of pain and hurt.]

God, you are our source of life. You offer us your love and healing, so we may help to repair our broken world.

God, our comfort and healer, hear our prayers for hope and healing. Renew our relationships with you and all your creation. Disturb us from our complacency so that we can become agents of healing. Help us to live into your promise of new life as we pray the prayer that Jesus taught us.

We pray now, in silence, the prayers for healing and give thanks for those glimpses of hope, prayers silently for ourselves and our world.

[Silence]

We offer these prayers along with River, our kin, and in the name of your Beloved, Jesus who calls us to be transformed and to be transformational. Amen.

Closing Hymn: MV 144 *Like a Healing Stream*, vv. 1, 2, 4

**1. Like a healing stream in a barren desert,
Spirit water bringing life to dusty earth,
God is trickling through our lives as in a dream unfolding,
promising revival and rebirth... like a healing stream.**

**2. Like a gentle rain on a thirsty garden,
Spirit water come to nourish tiny seed,
God is bubbling through the soil to coax a new creation,
yearning for an end to want and need... like a gentle rain.**

**4. Like a mighty sea reaching far horizons,
Spirit water with a love both deep and wide,
God is working in our hearts to shape a new tomorrow:
God will always challenge and provide!
Like a mighty sea, like a river strong,
like a gentle rain, like a healing stream.**

Blessing

Now, as we go forth from here, may Forest, Trees, the Leaves of healing,
carry you and I into new life;

May the Land, Earth of being, ground us, all of us Children of Creation;

May the Wilderness and its untouched, wild, beauty, transform us, Spirited Children;

And may River, Water all around us, and Rain refracting Light into Rainbows, flow through us, Family of the Holy One;

May Creator birth love in you,
and Wisdom instill hope in you,
and Spirit breathe us into life. Amen.

Blessing Hymn: MV 163 *River Running in You and Me*, vv. 1, 7

**1. River running in you and me,
Spirit of life, deep mystery,
dancing down to the holy sea,
River run deep, River run free.**

**7. River singin' in you and me,
Spirit of life – deep mystery –
catch us up in your melody,
River run deep, River run free.**

Postlude

Inviting Holy Light written by Laura Turnbull. *Gathering*, Pentecost 2, page 29. Used with permission.

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