

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Sixth Sunday of Easter – May 22nd, 2022

Prelude: “Come, Holy Spirit” – Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Welcome to St. Andrew’s today as we celebrate the Sixth Sunday of Easter.

St. Andrew’s 164th Anniversary will be celebrated on Sunday June 12th at 11 am. The Anniversary Supper of Broasted Chicken and Strawberries will be Friday June 17th.

Thank you for your support of all our past services, which are posted on our websites – Southbuxton.ca and Talbotstreet.ca

Thank you to our production crew; music by Christie Coatsworth, readings by Annette Skillings and the slides by Tracey Major. You make all the difference. Thank you!

Lighting the Christ Candle:

Call to Worship:

Eric: Come, listen to stories of faith from long ago.

People: Come, celebrate Christ with us in the here and now.

Eric: Come, help create holy possibilities for the future.

People: Come, drink fresh waters from the river of life.

Eric: Come, join generation upon generation in worshipping God.

Opening Prayer:

People: The song of God’s love spreads abroad in all the earth – to every race and nation. It dances through barriers of history and prejudice. The song rises among the silenced and rejected, the suffering and the longing ones. The song can be heard on the road of life waiting to offer hospitality. The song brings melodies of delight within the Body of Christ here. All creation is gathered close to the heart of its Maker.

Opening Hymn: VU 559 “Come, O Fount of Every Blessing”

- Peninsula United Church, Surrey BC

1 Come, O Fount of every blessing,
 tune my heart to sing your grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing
 call for songs of endless praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
 sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount; I'm fixed upon it,
 mount of God's unfailing love.

2 Here I pause in my sojourning,
giving thanks for having come,
come to trust, at every turning,
God will guide me safely home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God,
came to rescue me from danger,
precious presence, precious blood.

3 O, to grace how great a debt
or daily I am drawn anew!
Let that grace now, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to you.
Prone to wander, I can feel it,
wander from the love I've known:
here's my heart, O, take and seal it,
seal it for your very own.

Scripture: Acts 16: 9 - 15 "A Leader Called Lydia" by Alice Dale

Let me tell you a story of something wonderful that happened many years ago. This story is an excellent reminder that God works amazing surprises in our midst all the time.

I used to travel with the apostle, Paul.

One time, Paul said he had a dream – you know that kind of dream where it feels so real you almost have to pinch yourself to see if it was a dream or not? Paul said it was that kind of dream.

In this dream, Paul met someone who called us to go to Macedonia. So, we did – it was quite a journey, but we made it.

When we got there, we went to a town called Philippi. We looked for a synagogue – that's like a Jewish church. Sometimes, they were hard to find; you needed ten men (they had to be men) to form a synagogue. Sometimes there were not very many Jewish people in a town.

But Paul figured, "no problem." We'd go down to the river. Sometimes, people would gather at the riverside to worship God.

Sure enough, we found a group of people worshipping God. They were all women, but that wasn't the most intriguing part; the intriguing part was that they were led by a woman who wasn't even Jewish. Her name was Lydia. Lydia was an important business woman in town – a dealer in purple cloth.

She and Paul hit it off right away and started talking about all kinds of things – things about God, that is. Paul talked about how loving God was and how God was always calling us to speak out on behalf of those who were not treated very well. And he talked about Jesus. He talked about the wonderful things Jesus taught and how loving Jesus was. He told her about Jesus being killed because some people didn't like his message of God's love. He told her how Jesus is now alive in a new way, to be with us, and to remind us that God is with us forever.

Lydia listened carefully to every word and shared her own stories as well. As the day was wearing on – it's amazing how fast time flies when you're sharing good stories! – she invited us to come to her house and stay. Paul didn't want to, but she insisted. So, we went! We stayed there a few weeks. From that, a church grew and the stories of Jesus spread all around that area. All because of a woman called Lydia.

Message: “Together In Ministry”

We never really know who we are talking to and God is working in their heart. Although later we can see from the fruit of their actions that the Holy Spirit in with them. What would have happened if we had not ministered to them? Would God find someone else? How might we feel if we ever found out that God had to find someone else because we would not listen? Yet we may have ministered to them and their heart may not have responded. Someone else welcomed them with a heart of grace and they connect immediately. Together they go into life sharing God’s work together. May we always welcome one another with hearts of hospitality, and may everyone see God’s good works in our lives.

We talk in the United Church that we are “Conciliar Church”. What does that mean? As I understand it - we in the United Church are always about making the circle wider. Our Church Boundaries are able to expand as the Holy Spirit leads the Church. That is why the United Church is welcoming of all types, nationalities and colours of people in their circles of “Being the Church”. The United Church is not so much about what you know, but how to be involved with other disciples to engage in acts of mutual ministry and hospitality.

This gives us a freeing spirit as it’s not so much about you and I, but it is about the Church and the Church Community that includes you and I. It’s not about what I think is right - but what we can do together. If the Holy Spirit is leading and guiding us, God promises to dwell in the hearts of those who open their hearts in love. God’s praise and Christ’s body invite all to join – regardless of background, sexual identity, and even if they are totally different than us. Our job is to make them feel welcomed. They, with us can then open their hearts to God and together we will receive strength and transformation. Thanks be to God.

Paul is heading out into Gentile territory. Paul has taken the Church from Asia to Europe for the first time. The author of Acts shares these stories of Paul’s journeys as “We” – we did this or we did that. Today’s reading is about looking for a Place of Worship on the Sabbath. This was Paul’s custom – to seek a place of worship wherever he was visiting. If Paul could not find a Synagogue, Paul would go down to the local River to find folks worshipping by the flowing water. This is exactly what happens in Philippi. Paul could not find the Jewish place of worship in Philippi, so they searched down by the river and they meet a local group worshipping God. The group is all women. Their leader of worship was not even a Jew, but she was encouraging these women by sharing stories.

Lydia is that leader who shares stories of God whom she believed in. Likely the worshippers who Paul found may not have been Jewish worshippers, but a group of women sharing, singing and worshipping.

Lydia is a businesswoman who deals in purple cloth. Purple materials were a luxury; the dye used was expensive. Lydia's trade depends upon customers of wealth. Whether or not she is a person of wealth, Acts does identify her as the head of her household. Lydia's actions are similar to Tabitha's actions of caring for the widows and poor women. Lydia's heart is willing to be opened to the words and the needs of another. She is hospitable with both the sharing of the Gospel and to those who need her hospitality.

Can you imagine once Paul knew what was happening - if he rushed in and said, "Hold on there - you have no qualifications to share things about God". What would have followed Paul's outburst if he had done that? No, Paul joins them and later Paul also shares stories. Stories have a way of sharing information and understanding that do not devalue the stories already shared. Stories are so attached to our own experiences. Stories do not alienate others. Your story adds to another's story.

Lydia and Paul serve as disciples together. They minister to one another, to their companions and households. If Paul was to continue to another place - he needed to work with people such as Lydia. He did that by telling stories. We as believers love to hear stories. When have you heard a story that changed your outlook?

I remember as a child, going to Church during one night of the week and seeing pictures and hearing the stories of missionaries who served in other parts of the world. Their stories and pictures would help us to understand those that they served. Hearing those stories may have grown my love for travel and experiencing new adventures.

If the Church in your community closed - where might you gather for worship? If someone opened their living room for worship - would you go? What might you need to realize for this to be a place of holy worship? Could this be an extension of a "Conciliar Church"? Have we just drawn our circle wider? What story or stories might we share? What else might we share with others - than a living room worship? How might we as the small congregation serve each other in ministry? Would this be considered genuine worship? If we see the Holy Spirit among us - I think it is! We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 808 “On Eagle’s Wings” – Forest Grove United Church, North York ON
Vocals: Jordan Kenny

1 You who dwell in the shelter of our God,
who abide in this shadow for life,
say to the Lord: 'My refuge,
my Rock in whom I trust.'
 'And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
 bear you on the breath of dawn,
 make you to shine like the sun,
 and hold you in the palm of my hand.'

2 The snare of the fowler will never capture you,
and famine will bring you no fear:
under God's wings your refuge,
God's faithfulness your shield.
 'And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
 bear you on the breath of dawn,
 make you to shine like the sun,
 and hold you in the palm of my hand.'

3 You need not fear the terror of the night,
nor the arrow that flies by day;
though thousands fall about you,
near you it shall not come.
 'And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
 bear you on the breath of dawn,
 make you to shine like the sun,
 and hold you in the palm of my hand.'

4 For to God's angels is given a command
to guard you in all of your ways;
upon their hands they will bear you up,
lest you dash your foot against a stone.
 'And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
 bear you on the breath of dawn,
 make you to shine like the sun,
 and hold you in the palm of my hand.'

 'And hold you, hold you in the palm
 of my hand.'

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: We receive new life in Christ. We share our Good News with others, by speaking, by caring and by giving. Let us give to share the Good News.

Offertory: VU 541 “Praise God From Whom...”

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offertory Prayer:

People: Loving God, we know that ministry is not something we do for others nearly so much as it is a life-giving work you call us to do with others. Use these gifts and our talents, blended with the gifts and talents of others around the world, to make a difference in our lives and the lives of others. Amen.

Prayer Hymn Verse: VU 376 “Spirit of the Living God”

Spirit of the living God, move among us all;
make us one in heart and mind, make us one in love:
humble, caring, selfless, sharing.
Spirit of the living God, fill our lives with love!

Pastoral Prayer & Lord’s Prayer:

Eric: Loving God, you gave to John of Patmos a wonderful vision of a river of life.

People: We pray today for that image to come to reality throughout our world.

Eric: We know that there are many who are thirsty, who live in places of drought, who travel far to get one container of clean water, who do not have the luxury that we take for granted of turning on a tap and having fresh water gush out.

People: May the world find ways to provide fresh, clean water to those who are thirsty.

Eric: We know that many are thirsty for hope, who long for the day when a life-giving river might flow to their door and not simply pass them by.

People: Bring rivers of hope, of truth, of light gushing into places of dryness in our world.

Eric: We know that there are those for whom rivers are frightening and harmful.

People: Bring relief to those who are plagued by floods, or who are overwhelmed by a crazy life that washes over them and carries them away.

Eric: Help us, loving God, to see every river, every stream, every lake, every precious drop of water as a symbol of your commitment to life and hope.

People: May we savour the goodness of the waters of life and find new and exciting ways to share them with a thirsty world.

Eric: We offer prayers for our Community... .. as we say together the Lord’s Prayer...

*Our Father, Who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom 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 kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

Closing Hymn: VU 686 “God of Grace and God of Glory” – Riverside Church, New York City

- 1 God of grace and God of glory,
on your people pour your power;
now fulfil your church's story;
bring its bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour.
- 2 Lo, the hosts of evil round us
scorn your Christ, assail your ways;
fears and doubts too long have bound us;
free our hearts to work and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the living of these days.
- 3 Cure your children's warring madness,
bend our pride to your control;
shame our wanton selfish gladness,
rich in goods and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss your kingdom's goal.
- 4 Set our feet on lofty places,
gird our lives that they may be
armoured with all Christlike graces,
pledged to set all captives free.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
that we fail not them nor thee.

Blessing:

Eric: May God's grace, the light of Christ, and the Holy Spirit be with us, now and forever more.

Forth in Your Name, O Christ: VU 416

Forth in your name, O Christ, we go,
our daily labour to pursue,
you, only you, resolved to know
in all we think, or speak, or do.

Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: “He Touched Me” – Christie Coatsworth

Prayers: - Please include these people in your prayers this week.

We have offered prayer for these people each Sunday morning just before the Zoom Service.
It was suggested to share these names with the total group – as “In the Spirit We Are One”.

Cancer:	Tom	
	Louise	Louise' Granddaughter - Blake
	Betty	Ingrid
	Alison	Brenda
	Nancy	Lisa
	Sarah	Larry
	Brian	Jack
	Zoe	Becky
	Francine	
	Melissa	Karen
	Jenny	Michelle
	Gary	Margaret
	Gus (Sick kids)	Dolly
	Chris	Ukraine – Allied and Canadian Forces
	Glenna	Barry
	Ann	Joe
	Jim	Tracey
	Lori	Scaman Family
	Margaret	Gary & Joyce