

BEACHBURG PASTORAL CHARGE
St. Andrew's 129th Anniversary Service
May 2nd, 2021

Welcome

Welcome to St Andrew's 129th Anniversary Service. I decided to start off today's service to give those of you who have joined us on-line and perhaps have never had the chance to grace the inside of these four walls a view of our church here in Beachburg Ontario.

To the 12 steps from ground level up into the sanctuary, which is now accessible by our elevating lift which we dedicated back in March of 2018. To the lovely wall hangings, like the last supper donated by Irvin, the 125th banner celebrating our 125th anniversary donated by Eleanor, the new sound and projection system professionally enclosed in cabinetry loving made by Eleanor and Bob, a fully renovated kitchen made possible through the UCW and a new rear entrance made possible by a bequeath from Winnifrede We are proud of this sanctuary which has been so well maintained over the years.

So although we are not able to celebrate in our normal way with a special guest speaker or a tasty luncheon we are so fortunate to have a number of members of this congregation who are passionate about music. Heather our organist and Barry our pianist are joined today by Jim on the violin and Ruby and Jean with voice and on ukulele. We want to thank them for taking the time and precautions necessary for them to be able to provide today's special music. So I welcome them as they provide today's opening number "Treasure These Moments"

Let Us begin our worship service by Lighting of the Christ Candle

Grandmothers and grandfathers, parents, children, people of all ages and places...following Christ's Way. For years before us, for years yet to come, we wander where God calls us. We go where Christ's light shines!

Gathering Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for drawing us into community. Inspire us with the lives of those who came before us, those who have served you in faith, giving away your love to all those who needed it.
May you change us with a vision to continue that mission, to be a constant

presence for those who travel through life. May we continue to be a community of welcome that cares for all our neighbours, believing into what is still yet to be.

May we now hear your word: a comforting word in its familiar sound, yet a disturbing word in what it speaks anew and longs for us to become. Call us from our past, through the voices of our ancestors, in the songs that we hear, the words that are spoken and in the prayers that comfort our souls as we now gather in your presence to experience your peace and love. All In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Scripture

2 Chronicles 7:1-6 - Dedication of the Temple

7 When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. ² The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled it.

³ When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."

⁴ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. ⁵ And King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand head of cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats. So the king and all the people dedicated the temple of God.

⁶ The priests took their positions, as did the Levites with the LORD's musical instruments, which King David had made for praising the LORD and which were used when he gave thanks, saying, "His love endures forever." Opposite the Levites, the priests blew their trumpets, and all the Israelites were standing.

John 15:9-17

⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you

friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

Meditation – Love Never Ends

For me my video entrance into the church today carried mixed emotions. A sadness that today is normally celebrated in a special way. Maybe a guest speaker, or a tasty lunch afterwards but, I also feel a sense of joy and comfort as this little church still carries on despite all the obstacles that have been thrown in our way over the years and especially this past year.

An anniversary whether it be the first or in this case the 129th is the culmination of many years of hard work and perseverance, not only by our forefathers and mothers but also by us.

And while the last year has shown us that church is more than just a building, there is something about this place where I stand that somehow centres and lifts us up.

That is why I chose the old testament lesson today which is about the dedication of the great temple of Solomon in the ancient city of Jerusalem. Now if you were to continue reading that passage you would read that the dedication was followed by a 7-day festival. Unfortunately, I don't have the authority to give you the next week off work to celebrate, but I would if I could.

Solomon's temple no longer stands today. Its walls have long since been knocked down supposedly by the Babylonians in 586BC, and the only part that remains is one wall, called the western wall or the Wailing Wall, which is considered to this very day to be holy ground for Jewish worshipers.

However, even that wall is not an original part of Solomon's temple; that wall was built when King Herod tried to rebuild the walls of the second temple after one of the many times when conquering armies marched into Jerusalem and burned down the walls as a sign of their conquest.

There is a magnificent Islamic structure that stands upon the ground where the temple of Solomon once stood; it is a mosque called The Dome of the Rock. It has a brilliant, gold colored dome that sparkles in the sun and can be seen from miles away in every direction. When modern travelers to Jerusalem see The Dome of the Rock they get some idea of what it would have been like to be in Jerusalem when the temple of Solomon was still standing.

It would have been the most majestic building that any Jewish person or foreign travelers to the city had ever seen. Maybe as a modern-day tourist you have been fortunate enough to observe such a spectacle or perhaps any one of the great cathedrals of the world.

At one of my preaching courses a few years back our guest speaker was Dr. David J. Randolph now a professor of theology at Olivet University in San Francisco. He told us something of the great cathedrals of Europe.

To visit the cathedrals of Europe is one of life's unforgettable experiences. Their vast reaches and awesome splendours dye the memory with magnificence. In the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, the sun strikes the rose window and the stained glass shatters the sun light into a thousand pieces and sprinkles it across you and you will never forget the moment.

It was ironic and a bit of a surprise when in my very next class of the day was on church history, were we happened to look at a book by medieval scholar, G. G. Coulton which discussed these very cathedrals. He concluded that these massive religious centres did not have as great an effect on the life of their times as did the smaller parish churches, where most of the preaching and teaching took place.

Coulton writes'' It was in the preaching of the word that the meaning of faith was made clear to the wise and simple alike.''

That reminds us that it is in small churches like ours where teaching and preaching and sharing takes place, that the work of

the kingdom is best done.

Wise and simple (choose your categories carefully) ministers and congregations teach each other and learn from each other how to translate the Biblical faith, and their personal faith into the kind of love for one another that never ends.

It was not in the temple, but in the smallest of buildings where it began for the church – in the Upper Room. The disciples thought that love had died when Jesus died. They felt like orphans. The late Presbyterian minister David Buttrick reminds us that:

“On a profound level, all human beings at some time or another feel a kind of orphaned aloneness in a world that can seem large and alien.”

But love was alive, not dead. The first thing they learned was that love never ends. As the young church develops, two realities characterize its life: one is the gift of the spirit; the other is the gift of love. “See how these Christians love one another” was heard often in the markets and coffee shops.

I think we all know that there are many people today who think the church is passe, they have no time for it while turning in all different directions, looking for something.

The psychiatrist Dr. Syzrynski. tells us about a 16 year old girl who came to him for counselling. In the course of discussions she said to him,

“You don’t believe in that church crap? The Doctor reflected, “I looked at her with pity. I thought of all the great minds of science, historians, writers, poets, musicians, leaders of the nations, the most powerful men and women of the world all of whom believed in religion, practiced religion, and here was this 16-year-old girl with her pathetic comment on herself, You don’t believe in that church crap?

There has been no agency in the world, which has meant more to more people, provided more hope and encouragement than the church. No organization that has provided more relief for human suffering, set up more lighthouses; way stations and half way houses than the church. No one entity that has done more to hold up before everyone the impossible ideal of love that conquers everything, the real and vital and life-changing hope that love lifts up the world.

Well, where does that take us? We wouldn’t be here today if we didn’t believe in the church. We wouldn’t have made the tremendous contribution of time and money towards the work of this church if we did not believe in its mission.

I hope we are here today because we believe in our commitment to love, and to never stop loving, because God in Christ never

stops loving us.

Father Eugene Kennedy has written a book called *A Time For Love*, a title borrowed from Ecclesiastes, but in reality a meditation of our reading from the book of John.

In it he writes,

Quite simply that the chief function of any community that calls itself a church is to help people understand how to love better and to help them grow in sharing it with others: to create the environment in which people grow up enough to love each other more truly and more responsibly. The church is meant to preach the dynamic of redeeming love, of that power that illumines the commonplace of everyday life and that integrates all the loose ends and suffering of human life.

Father Kennedy , continues

Love endures and carries on its effects in us, and continues to be powerful well beyond the moment or the relationship in which it is experienced. Love is not like food that provides temporary nourishment but does not permanently stay the rhythm of hunger.

Love gives us strength that remains with us because it adds something to us that does not ebb away of itself. It changes us because it makes us grow and there is no going back on growth that has been achieved. Love that we have really known from another, lives on in us even when the other has left us through death or separation.

It is like a fire that burns brightly to light our way and warm us for the days when we are alone or under stress. It kindles our own power to love; we can keep giving love away without losing any of it.

Of course, nowhere is that more true than when the followers of Jesus experienced the separation that his death brought to their lives. And yet they knew the power and the effect of his love that endured in their lives. Nothing can ever separate us from that love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And in the warmth and by the challenge of his love we give ours away continually without any fear of losing it.

When any congregation starts to love each other, and expresses that love for its oldest and youngest members, there is no telling where that love will end, as children and young people grow up and go out to take their place in the world of work, of industry, of politics, of the arts or wherever, that love which was planted as seeds in their lives here in this place will cover the world.

The doors that I entered when I started today's video is a two way street. It allows us to access and express love within our own walls, but also allows us to move beyond these walls to the immediate community, to the wider world community, to express that love that never ends through our caring for others.

Do we have that faith? Yes we do. In small and large ways it is being shown. We do have a ministry in this community which is being fulfilled most capably by the members of the church.

Make no mistake this church continues because of the love that you show to the people both inside and outside of these walls. I hope we will continue to expand our mission.

AS Robert Raines writes,

In every local church there are persons in whom the seed of mission is waiting to be born ... Around every local church there is human misery crying out for help. People who are given eyes to see will see the need to which they are being called. People who are given ears to hear will hear the voices of need calling them. A local church, by God's grace, may let a small part of its corporate life be infiltrated by the seed of mission. No one can tell how that seed will grow, what old structures in that church will be broken as the new life enlarges and strains for form and expression.

It's wonderful to think about, the way love never dies.

Think about that. The way love never ends. The way love lifts us and others up. God loves us continually, forgiving, healing, restoring, renewing our lives, and leading us with new challenges individually and as a church.

In committing ourselves to Christ and in response to him, we give ourselves to the world, knowing in our own hearts and lives, the truth of God's word, that though everything else in this world comes to an end and eventually disappears from sight, but love, true love never ends. Thanks be to God.

Please enjoy the band as they perform "I'd Rather Have Jesus"

Prayer of the people

Lord, on this Anniversary Sunday, we reflect upon the 129 years that our fore fathers and mothers have engaged in meaningful mission and worship here in this church and in the community. We hold tight to their traditions, giving us a solid foundation, but we strive Lord to listen closely as you make known to us the path that will lead us into the future. Like our ancestors we too must engage with the children and youth who are to follow.

Let us share your love O Lord – with our family, the people in this congregation, the people in our new online community and the people of the world.

We now pray for those that close to our hearts, for those who grieve, for those who are sick in mind or soul we now raise up to you, O Lord.

We pray for those who are sick or dying, in the Covid hot spots of the world like India that are under the constant fear of infection, let us now raise a silent prayer so that they too might feel your presence.

On this our church birthday We pray now for your continued guidance in our search for mission. Guide us as your people as we slowly emerge from isolation to make the necessary decisions as we prepare a new and defining focus for us each one of us individually and as a community of faith as we strive to be disciples of your love.

Lastly we pray for ourselves that we may draw on the strength of our fore fathers and mothers who built this church and this community, secure in the fact that you are our strength and our salvation. O Lord help us as we slowly return to a new way of doing life, to appreciate the hug of a close

friend or a loved one. to thank those who serve us who we have previously overlooked, and may we never take for granted our freedom to congregate with one another. And through all the uncertainty that we will face in the coming months may we extend your love to all that we meet secure in the words you taught us to pray: Our father who art in heaven...

Thank you for joining us today as we leave you with a special number performed by our Beachburg Band entitled "The Church In The Wildwood" Until we meet again.