

**Sunday June 1, 2025
Seventh Sunday of Easter**

*The service today was prepared by the Rev. Greg Simpson, St. Andrew's United Church, Chatham, ON.
on behalf of Antler River Watershed Regional Council for the Sunday of the Annual Spring Meeting.*

We Gather In God's Presence

Prelude: "Be Still My Soul" Jean Sibelius. Arr. by Cindy Berry

Birthdays, Celebrations, and Life and Work of the Congregation

Lighting the Christ Candle

We light this candle to remember that Christ's light cannot be confined —
Not by walls, not by circumstances, not even by distance.
Christ's light burns in us and among us, igniting new hope and new life.

Preparing Our Hearts for Worship

Call to Worship

Come, people of renewal —

God's Spirit invites us into new life.

Come, people of hope —

Christ's light shines across every boundary.

Come, people of faith —

Together, we rise into the future God is creating.

Let us worship God, who breaks our chains and revives our souls!

Hymn VU 375 "Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness" Words and Music: James K. Manley, 1975, © 1978 J. Manley Publishing.
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Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness, Wind, Wind on the sea.

You moved on the waters, you called to the deep,
then you coaxed up the mountains from the valleys of sleep;
and over the eons you called to each thing;
wake from your slumbers and rise on your wings.

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness, Wind, Wind on the sea.

You swept thro' the desert, you stung with the sand,
and you goaded your people with a law and a land;
and when they were blinded with their idols and lies,
when you spoke thro' your prophets to open their eyes.

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness, Wind, Wind on the sea.

You sang in a stable, you cried from a hill,
then you whispered in silence when the whole world was still;
and down in the city you called once again,
when you blew thro' your people on the rush of a wind.

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness, Wind, Wind on the sea.

You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes,
from the bondage of sorrow the captives dream dreams,
our women see visions, our men clear their eyes,
with bold new decisions your people arise.

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness, Wind, Wind on the sea.

Opening Prayer (*unison*)

God of earthquakes and lullabies,
God of prison doors flung open and dawns cracked wide,
you are the source of every renewal.

In places where we feel tired, breathe your Spirit.

In places where we feel alone, sing your song.

Knit us together across congregations and communities,
that we might thrive in your love and carry your hope
into all the world.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Ministry of Music: "Sing For Joy" Duet from the Oratorio Judas Maccabaeus. GF Handel(1685-1750).
Edited and Arranged by Linda Spivak Avery

Apostles' Creed VU 918

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;
 he descended to the dead.
 On the third day he rose again;
 he ascended into heaven,
 he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
 and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic Church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. Amen.

We Open Ourselves to Receive God's Blessings

Responsive Reading: Psalm 97

Rejoice, rejoice, let all the earth rejoice.

You reign, O God! Let the earth be glad!

Let the islands and coastlands rejoice!

**Clouds and thick darkness are round about you;
 righteousness and justice, the foundation of your throne.**

Fire goes before you,
 consuming your enemies on every side.

**Your lightnings light up the world;
 the earth trembles at the sight.**

The mountains melt like wax before you,
 before the Sovereign of all the earth.

**The heavens proclaim your righteousness,
 and all the peoples see your glory.**

Rejoice, rejoice, let all the earth rejoice.

Be ashamed, all you who worship images, who boast of idols;
bow down before God, all you gods!

Zion hears, and is glad;
 the cities of Judah rejoice, O God, at your judgements.

**For you are the Most High, above all the earth;
 you are exalted far above all gods.**

You, O God, love those who hate evil.

You preserve the life of your saints.

You deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Light dawns for the righteous,
and joy for the upright in heart.

Rejoice in God, righteous people.

Give thanks to God's holy name!

Rejoice, rejoice, let all the earth rejoice.

Scripture: Acts 16:16-34 Paul and Silas in Prison

One day as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a female slave who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, "These men, these Jews, are disturbing our city and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us, being Romans, to adopt or observe." The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. He brought them up into the house and set food before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

*The other readings for this week are: **John 17:20-26; Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21***

Meditation: "Singing in the Dark: Renewal that Shakes the World"

Rev. Greg Simpson

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfrJtUPN_SY

Hymn VU 578 "As a Fire Is Meant for Burning" Words: Ruth Duck, 1983. Music: Marty Haugen.

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As a fire is meant for burning with a bright and warming flame,
so the church is meant for mission, giving glory to God's name.
Not to preach our creeds or customs, but to build a bridge of care,
we join hands across the nations, finding neighbours everywhere.

We are learners; we are teachers; we are pilgrims on the way.
 We are seekers; we are givers; we are vessels made of clay.
 By our gentle, loving actions, we would show that Christ is light.
 In a humble, listening Spirit, we would live to God's delight.

As a green bud in the springtime is a sign of life renewed,
 so may we be signs of oneness mid earth's peoples, many hued.
 As a rainbow lights the heavens when a storm is past and gone,
 may our lives reflect the radiance of God's new and glorious dawn.

We Respond To God's Grace

Invitation to Invest in God's Mission

Friends, today we pause to give thanks — not just for the gifts we will offer now, but for all the ways you already give, every day.

Through your generosity, your congregations are places of hope and healing — places where people find belonging, hear Good News, and experience the renewing love of God. Through your offerings to the Mission and Service Fund, you are reaching far beyond your local community — supporting Indigenous ministries, food banks, youth programs, disaster relief, refugee support, and global partnerships that carry love across every boundary.

Your giving is already making a real, tangible difference. You are feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, comforting the hurting, and building communities of justice and peace.

And today, as we lift up the theme of revitalization and renewal, we remember that every gift — no matter the size — becomes part of the Spirit's work of transformation. Every act of generosity plants seeds of hope. Every dollar given, every prayer offered, every kindness shared is part of God's renewal unfolding right here, right now. So we invite you: continue to give generously. Continue to invest not only in the life of your own congregation, but also in the wider mission we share — across the region, across the country, across the world. Let us offer what we have, and what we are, trusting that in God's hands, it will be multiplied in love. Thanks be to God!

Our tithes and offerings will be received.

Offertory Hymn MV 50 "Alleluia" Words: traditional liturgical text. Music: Norah Duncan IV.

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Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Prayer of Dedication

God of abundance, bless all gifts and those who give them. Use them to nurture new life in places of need, to strengthen communities of hope, and to sing songs of freedom across this region and beyond. Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession & The Lord's Prayer

God of New Beginnings, You breathe life into dry bones, You crack open prison doors, You summon dawn from the darkness. Today, we come with hearts open — seeking your renewal for ourselves, for our churches, for the whole world.

Revitalize us, O God. Stir our spirits once again.

For congregations across our region—some thriving, some struggling, all longing to be faithful—renew our vision, refresh our courage, remind us that we are not alone.

Revitalize us, O God. Knit us together in love.

For ministries and leaders carrying heavy burdens, for tired volunteers and uncertain hearts, for communities wrestling with change, pour out your Spirit of strength and joy.

Revitalize us, O God. Strengthen our hands and our hope.

For all who are imprisoned — by walls, by injustice, by despair — for those held captive by fear, illness, addiction, or loneliness, break every chain and open every heart.

Revitalize us, O God. Set us free in your grace.

For the earth that groans under the weight of our neglect, for waters and lands and creatures that long for healing, breathe your renewing Spirit into all creation, and teach us to walk gently once more.

Revitalize us, O God. Renew the face of the earth.

For our neighbours near and far, including the people of Angola and Mozambique — for Indigenous communities seeking justice, for refugees seeking safety, for all people yearning for peace — move us to work together for your vision of wholeness.

Revitalize us, O God. Make us builders of your reign.

For those who grieve; the beloved of the four teens and their teacher from Walkerton, for those facing illness or difficult diagnoses, for caregivers who walk hard roads, for anyone today who carries heavy sorrow; especially Annette, Clara, Jack, and Ken; wrap them in your love and light.

Revitalize us, O God. Comfort and uphold your people.

For ourselves—in the quiet places of our hearts, we name our own needs, our own prayers, our longing for renewal...

For these and all our prayers spoken and unspoken,

Revitalize us, O God. Breathe your Spirit into every corner of our lives.

God of earthquake and sunrise, of broken chains and opened doors, of singing in the darkness and joy that bursts forth—revive your people, revive your church, revive your world. Let our worship be the song that stirs the dawn. Let our lives bear witness to your endless, renewing love. We pray in Jesus' name, who taught us to pray, saying:

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.

Hymn MV 45 “You Are Holy” Words and Music: traditional song, South Africa.
English paraphrase and arrangement: More Voices, 2007.

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You are Holy. You are Freedom. You are Justice.

Benediction

Go now, singing songs of hope **even in dark places.**

Go now, strengthened by the Spirit **who breaks chains and opens hearts.**

Go now, as a people of renewal —

revitalized to love, to serve, and to thrive together.

In Christ’s name, **Amen.**

Response: *to the tune VU 81 (DIX).* Words: Unknown.

Music: Conrad Kocher, 1838; adapt. William H. Monk, 1861. Music in the Public Domain

We will meet the risen Christ

as we live in love each day

so to God we give all praise

every day is Easter Day!

Alleluia! Death has died.

Christ arisen! Christ alive!

Postlude: “Holiness Medley: Jesus I Come, Whiter Than Snow, Take Time to be Holy”

Arr. Melody Bober

ANNOUNCEMENTS

June 8: In addition to the Sunday closest to the 100th Anniversary of the United Church of Canada, it is also Pentecost. We plan to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion (The Lord’s Supper, Eucharist, or whatever else you may choose to call it). If you are joining online, please make sure that you have juice (fresh or fermented) and bread (Wonder, sourdough, gluten free, etc.) available.

BBQ & National Centennial Anniversary Service June 8: We are planning a bbq dinner at 4 p.m. prior to viewing the National Centennial Anniversary Service in the sanctuary at 5:30 p.m. The service will be broadcast live from Gower Street United Church in St. John’s, Nfld.

Lectionary Readings for next week: June 8, Pentecost

Acts 2:1-21 OR Genesis 11:1-9; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; Romans 8:14-17; John 14:8-17, (25-27)