

Worship on March 13, 2022 (CCLI: License Number #3156883)

(Welcoming Elder: Edwin Webster)

Order of worship

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 637 Take my life, and let it be consecrated
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Prayer for our children
- Praise song – BOP 206 Jesus, remember me

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- Scripture: Philippians 3:3-4:1
- Sermon: Straining forward to what lies ahead (Lent 2)
- The Prayer for the people of God

We Respond

- Offering & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – Come, Thou Fount of every Blessing

We Serve

- Benediction

Announcements:

. Welcome! Grace and peace to you all who are worshipping God with us today. This is Sunday, March 13th, 2022. God loves you and God provides our needs. As we worship God today, let us come and experience his goodness.

. We have been using the same Zoom online worship link. So, if you miss any email, please use the link from previous emails.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81510729031?pwd=dUYvSlU4Wk9QU0haRVJGS3QvVkJXQT09>

Meeting ID: 815 1072 9031 Passcode: 1122334

. Rev. Soong will have his office hours on Wednesday from 9am-12pm. He can talk to you on the phone or meet and talk to you in person. Please let him know.

. Our 150th Anniversary story is on Presbyterian newspaper, Connection, Issue 21, Spring 2022.

. Prayer is unseen, yet powerful. If you have prayer needs, let us know.

Cheryl Daddis @ cheryl@pathcom.com or Soong @ revsoonghuh@hotmail.com

. Ukraine needs our prayers and our resources. If anyone wants to make donation for Ukraine, please do so. This money will go to PWS&D.

. Also, because of Pandemic, we stopped helping with food pantry. Let us start again by collecting food and money to support the Aurora Food Pantry and Food Bank.

. Thank you for your continuing support with your gifts. As we offer our gifts to the Lord, let us give our hearts and our lives to the Lord as well. May God be in the centre of your hearts.

As we come into the presence of our God, let us calm down our hearts and minds, and focus on our Lord.

Responsive Call to Worship

One: The Lord is our light and our salvation

All: Of whom shall we be afraid?

One: The Lord is the stronghold of our life:

All: We will wait for the Lord in faithfulness.

One: Let us seek the Lord's face in this time of worship:

All: We will honour God's presence in our prayers and our praises!

Praise song – BOP 637 – Take my life, and let it be consecrated

<u>Vs. 1</u> Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee Take my moments and my days: let them flow in ceaseless praise let them flow in ceaseless praise	<u>Vs. 3</u> Take my voice and let me sing Always only for my King Take my lips and let them be Filled with messages from Thee Filled with messages from Thee
<u>Vs. 4</u> Take my love, my Lord, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee ever, only, all for Thee	<u>Vs. 5</u> Take my will, and make it Thine, It shall be no longer mine Take my heart, it is Thine own It shall be Thy royal throne It shall be Thy royal throne

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

God ever creating, ever loving, ever leading: when things around us feel chaotic, you are peace.

When so much we hear is not reliable, your word is truth. Your word is our anchor.

When we are paralyzed by fear and anxiety, your presence is freedom.

When we feel bereft and helpless, your love gives us hope.

God, you are the Source of all that matters.

We bring you our prayers and our praise this day, for you reveal yourself to us in the goodness of creation, in the love and mercy of Christ, your beloved, and through the energy and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. We worship you, O God, ever Three and ever One.

God of compassion, we are creatures who seek our own comfort.

We confess that we prefer our own plans to your purposes. We shrink from costly discipleship and put our own interests first. Forgive our fleeting commitment and the times we have indulged our own complaints. Have mercy on us. Inspire us with the energy to do your will and serve our neighbours in the example of Christ, your Son and our Lord.

This time we come to you in prayer that you taught us how to pray: (The Lord's Prayer:)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Sisters and brothers in Christ at St. Andrew's, while it is true that we have all sinned, it is a greater truth that we are forgiven through God's love poured out in Jesus Christ. To all who humbly seek the mercy of God I say, in Jesus Christ our sin is forgiven. The old has passed away, behold, the new has come. Be at peace with God, with yourself, and with one another.

Prayer for children

Loving Father God, thank you for bringing these precious children and youth in your presence. Thank you for your love and your goodness upon our lives. And we thank you for our March Break. May this time off from school gives them refreshing time and good rest. Give them safety and good health. Precious Jesus, be in their hearts and help them grow in you in everything, their thoughts, their feelings, emotions, knowledge, behaviours, speech, and spirits. Fix their hearts to you alone. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Praise Song BOP 206 Jesus remember me

Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom
Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom

Prayer for Illumination:

God of wisdom, your Word brings light to show us the way you would have us follow. As the Scriptures are read and proclaimed this day, send us your Holy Spirit to aid our understanding and guide us in the ways we live out your truth. Help us be attentive to your word with our whole heart. Thank you Jesus. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Scripture: Philippians 3:3-4:1

3 For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh— 4 even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. 7 Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. 8 More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, 11 if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. 16 Only let us hold fast to what we have attained. 17 Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. 18 For many live as enemies of

the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. 19 Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. 21 He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. 4:1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

“This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God.”

SERMON: Straining forward to what lies ahead

Today’s sermon title is “Straining forward to what lies ahead.”

Today is the second Sunday of Lent. How are you spending your Lent this year?

My first image of Lent is **the cross drawn with ash**.

I thought of this image all through this week. Ash.

Why ash?

Ash is dust. When God created human, God used dust.

Genesis 2:7, “The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

Ash or dust reminds us where we are from. Yes, we are from dust.

Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, reminds our human limitedness. We are mortal. We don’t last forever **like a sand castle**. WE NEED GOD. We need the breath of God. We are broken because of our sin. Therefore, we need reconciliation with God.

This is the lesson of Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent.

As we are renewing our faith in God, where are we looking at? We are who we are because of our past. Therefore, do we remain in our past?

We all have experienced that we are caught up in our past experiences. Our past is very powerful. The life of the Apostle Paul is a good example who experienced very striking conversion. In his past, he persecuted Jesus followers out of the love for God. But, after the conversion, he lived for the message of Jesus Christ whom he persecuted.

Before knowing Christ, Paul took his pride from what he had. Paul had many reasons to be proud and confident in his past or, we can say, his background. Listen to what he says about the background in his past and the spiritual renewal after the conversion. **Philippians 3:3-11, NLT:**

For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort, though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more!

I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin – a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake, I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous

through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! (Philippians 3:3-11, NLT)

Do you see that he has many reasons to be proud and confident with the human condition? And he enjoyed what he had from his birth and what he earned through his effort in his life. But, now, Paul is saying that these are not worthy. These are worthless compared to the infinite value of knowing Christ. His mind was changed completely. For having Christ and knowing Christ, his Lord and Saviour, he considers everything worthless. They are like garbage to him now.

If I summarize what he is saying now in one sentence: it would be **"by the grace of God, I overcame my past."**

So, now what?

Paul's confession: I will look forward to what lies ahead of me.

Christ brought salvation. Christ will open up a new future.

My fleshly background, such as pure-blooded citizen of Israel, member of Pharisees, or circumcised on the eighth day of my birth, was my confidence, but now no more.

What brings me confidence is not my background any longer, but it is Christ.

Back to Genesis 2:7, **"The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."**

We are formed from the dust of the ground. But, **we compare with others, what kinds of dust we are formed.(slide)** I am formed with the dust of gold. I am formed with some diamonds. I am formed with a lot of minerals. I am formed with toxic chemical dust.

This is our fleshly background. Many times, our lives are determined with them like Paul's past confidence with his outward circumstances.

Where do we find our value? How do we find confidence in our lives?

What is the hope of our lives? What are the foundations of our lives?

What is going to happen to our lives? What is the direction of our lives?

To these questions, this is Paul's answer:

Forgetting to what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.
(Philippians 3:13)

How do you like your past? It is your history. Your lives are built upon your past. It is very very precious whether you like it or not. Your everyday life, every hour you held on, led you here and made who you are right now.

But, still, whether you are proud of your past or not, past is past.

We cannot change it. It happened already.

Are we still influenced by our past? Or did we overcome our past?

Are we still thinking of our past? Or are we looking at what is coming in our future days?

Apostle Paul concludes his letter with this exhortation. This could be the guidelines of how to STRAINING FORWARD TO WHAT LIES AHEAD. **Philippians 4:8, “And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.”**

Our take-home today is this. **Forgetting to what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. (Philippians 3:13)**

We are going to do THIS with Paul’s concluding exhortation. Look upon the Lord. Fix your eyes on the Lord. Fix your thoughts on what is true, what is honourable, what is right, what is pure, what is lovely, and what is admirable.

Our faithful God has been leading our lives so far, and he will continue to do so. Let us look upon what is ahead of us.

This is the word of the Lord for us today.

Prayer for the people of God

Gracious Father God, Loving Father God, we thank you for your presence upon us. We thank you that you are our guidance. You loved Paul who persecuted Christ followers and his precious churches. You changed him completely. You filled his whole self with your love and grace and mercy and wisdom and power with humble heart.

We stand before you desiring God. Desiring your presence in my own heart, in each one’s heart right now, Lord. Give us passion that Paul had for you. Give us courage to follow your steps wholeheartedly. Give us wisdom to discern which direction we should walk. Fix our eyes where we should look at. Jesus, you are our path, you are our truth, and you are our life. Come into the centre of our hearts and be our LORD.

Help us stop looking at our past, but reaching forward what you prepared for us in our upcoming days.

We are praying for Ukraine. Due to Russian invasion, their lives are heavily influenced. They are evacuating from their own hometown. They live in fear. They live in uncertainty. They are in such great sadness and hardship. Merciful God, righteous God, help them restore their lives. Isn’t this so wrong? Correct this situation. Change the hearts of wrongdoers. Stop this injustice.

Raise up your people and help us show your love and grace. From worldwide, we are send our prayers and hearts and resources. Empower us and magnify our little help. They need you. Be present in the midst of their difficulty, Lord.

We are praying for our congregation. We specially pray for Adele. Due to her situations, she stepped down from the Clerk of the Session. Give power to her and restore the intimacy with you. Be with her family and be present among them with your love and grace.

We also pray for each individual who are having hard times in our congregation.

There are people who are physically sick. Place your hands upon them right now. Heavenly Father, embrace them to your heart. Encourage them and give peace and confidence in their hearts.

There are people who are struggling with their relationships. You are the King of peace. You are the Master of relationships. Teach them your wisdom. Give them understanding hearts. Give them patience. Fill their hearts with your love and courage. Give them courage to connect or disengage.

There are people who are distant from you. Lord, pour out your love upon them. Let them be soaked with your love. It's okay to be lonely. It's okay to struggle. It's okay to get mad at you or at oneself. Human wisdom is limited. Your thought are incomparably higher than ours. After their struggle, let them come to the conclusion that God is different from us. God, you are God, and we are not. Bless them to come to the point that they realize that you are God. Hold them with your faithful hands.

And there are people who are weary and tired. There are people who are desperate for you. We all need you, Lord. As we worship you, as we pursue your presence, help us hang in there. Help us empty ourselves filled with our own thoughts, but fill us with you.

You are our Saviour and Lord. We offer up ourselves to your loving hands. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering.

Our lives overflow with good gifts which come from God. Out of the goodness we enjoy, let us present our offering to God with thankfulness and generosity. Let us pray for our offering.

Offering prayer:

Living God, we offer our gifts today in hopeful gratitude.

Bless these gifts and use them to increase the goodness enjoyed by those in need.

Bless our lives that, through our relationships, others will be touched by the hope we know in Christ Jesus and find their lives blessed by his love and mercy. You are the Giver of everything.

We thank you and praise you. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Song for the Journey Come thou fount of every blessing

<u>Vs. 1:</u> Come thou fount of every blessing Tune my heart to sing Thy grace Streams of mercy, never ceasing Call for songs of loudest praise Teach me some melodious sonnet Sung by flaming tongues above Praise his name, I'm fixed upon it Name of God's redeeming love	<u>Vs. 2:</u> Here I raise my Ebenezer Here by thy great help I've come And I hope, by thy good pleasure Safely to arrive at home Jesus sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God He to rescue me from danger Interposed his precious blood	<u>Vs. 3:</u> oh to grace how great a debtor Daily I'm constrained to be Let thy goodness, like a fetter Bind my wandering heart to Thee Prone to wander, Lord I feel it Prone to leave the God I love Here's my heart Lord, take and seal it Seal it for thy courts above
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Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. Past is past. Let us look at what lies ahead of us. God prepares our future. God holds our hands. God walks with us. And God loves you and God desires you. Be with him.

Benediction: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.