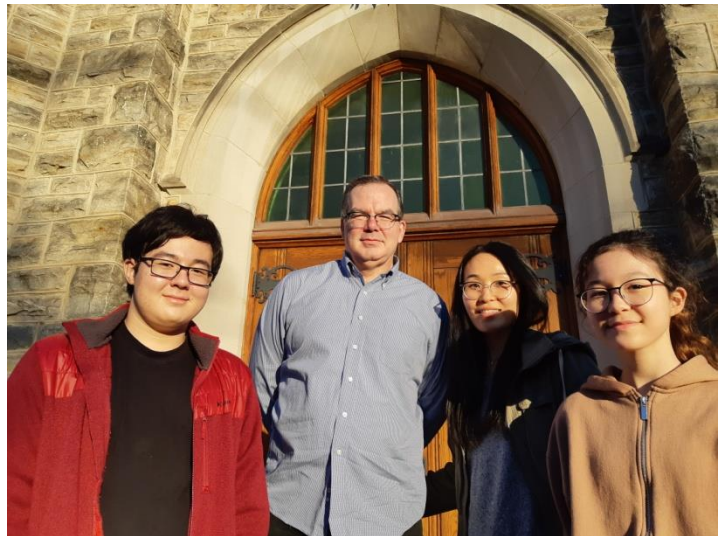


St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
May 23rd, 2021
Rev. Stephen Dunkin
Pentecost Sunday

Announcement

Dear Members and Adherents of St. Andrew's, Perth:

In 2019 the Session set up a Search Committee to begin the process of looking for the next minister of this congregation. During the time since, the search has been a matter of fervent prayer within our congregation. Unfortunately, the search process has been hindered due to the turmoil in the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. However, since the time we began to list this position on the PCC website under "Vacancies" we have received many profiles from ministers inquiring about St. Andrew's. The Committee declined to interview any of the applicants because they did not feel that any of them fit the criteria of what the congregation was looking for in a minister. Recently we receive an application from Mr. Gerry Gallant who is a new graduated of Knox College. After reading his profile, the Committee was "cautiously optimistic" and asked to be able to view some of his services online. The Committee then requested a Zoom interview with Mr. Gallant. They were very impressed with his commitment to Christ, his Scripture centered preaching, his willingness to openly and honestly answer any questions put to him and his humility (among other things). The Committee, through the Interim Moderator, then invited Mr. Gallant to come to Perth (he lives in London) with his family (Gerry and his wife Evie have two children, Daniel almost 17 and Kaelyn going on 12) so that we could meet them and they could have an opportunity to see the town and St. Andrew's. During their visit, all the members of the Session, the Search Committee and many members of the Board of Managers had an opportunity to meet the Gallants and to ask them questions.



On Thursday evening, May 13th the Committee recommended to the Session that Mr. Gerald L. Gallant be invited to preach for a Call to St. Andrew's. The Session, meeting later that evening, concurred and agreed to issue an invitation to the Gallant family to come to Perth the weekend of June 5th and 6th

and for Mr. Gallant to preach for a call to the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Due to the present lockdown which is slated to end June 2nd, we are uncertain what that will look like in terms of the church being open for worship. The present restriction is 10 people. What it will be once the lockdown ends or if the lockdown will be extended is uncertain. However, the Search Committee and the Session will do everything possible to make sure that all members and adherents have an opportunity to hear Gerry preach. He is willing to do multiple services if that is the only option. On behalf of the Search Committee and the Session, I would like to express how excited we are to have you meet Gerry, Evie, Daniel and Kaelyn.

With this announcement I am also calling a Congregational meeting to be held on Sunday, June 6th. Whether that will be able to be held in the sanctuary or by Zoom will be determined once the state of the lockdown is known.

One further thing needs to be dealt with at the Congregational Meeting and that is reaffirm our Trustees – Rob Allan, Walter Gemmill, David Oliver and Stuart McKim.

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Stephen G. Dunkin
Interim Moderator

Call to Worship (based on Psalm 105:1-2; Romans 5:5; Revelation 4:8)

The love of God has been poured into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us;

we dwell in him and he in us.

Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name;

make known his deeds among the peoples.

Sing to him, sing praises to him,

and speak of all his marvelous works.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty,

who was and is and is to come!

Prayer of Invocation

Blessed be our God at all times,
now and always and forever and ever. **Amen.**

Glory to you, our God! Glory to you!

Holy Spirit, Lord and Comforter,

Spirit of truth everywhere present, filling all that exists,

treasury of good gifts and source of life, come and dwell in us;

cleanse us from all sin and in your love bring us to salvation:

God, holy; God, strong and holy;

God, holy and immortal; have pity on us. Amen.

Hymn #299:**“Holy, Holy, Holy”**

(Click on the link below to play the hymn. The lyrics are on the screen.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jGql3QiRdl>

1. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three persons, Blessed Trinity
2. Holy, holy, holy, all the saints adore Thee
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea
Cherubim and seraphim, falling down before Thee
Who, was and is, and evermore shall be
3. Holy, holy, holy, though the darkness hide Thee
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see
Only Thou art holy, there is none beside Thee
Perfect in power, in love and purity
4. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty
All Thy works shall praise Thy name
In earth and sky and sea
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty
God in three persons, blessed Trinity

Call to Confession

Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command.
and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor
to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.
Whoever has my commands and obeys them,
he is the one who loves me.
He who loves me will be loved by my Father,
and I too will love him and show myself to him.”
Let us confess our sin to God.

Prayer of Confession

Generous God,
you send us the Spirit of courage,
but we have been afraid.
You send us the Spirit of truth,
but we cling to our illusions.
You send us the Spirit of healing,
but we cannot let go of our hurts.
Holy Spirit of forgiveness, come to us again:
shake our hearts,
set our souls on fire with your love:
send us out into the world
rejoicing in your power.

We hold out to you
 all our particular burdens of guilt and sin,
 and we ask for your help
 to live the way of your justice and love. **Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon (based on Ezekiel 36:24-28)

“I will take you out of the nations;
 I will gather you from all the countries.
 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean.
 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you;
 I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.
 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees.
 You will be my people, and I will be your God.”
 Friends in Christ: by the power of the Spirit,
 we are united with Christ and given a new spirit.
 Live in the joy and peace of that assurance.

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen**

Responsive Reading (Psalm 104:24-34, 35b)

O LORD, how manifold are your works!
 In wisdom have you made them all;
 the earth is full of your creatures.

**Here is the sea, great and wide,
 which teems with creatures innumerable,
 living things both small and great.**

There go the ships,
 and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.

**These all look to you,
 to give them their food in due season.**

When you give it to them, they gather it up;
 when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

**When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
 when you take away their breath, they die
 and return to their dust.**

When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,
 and you renew the face of the ground.

**May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD rejoice in his works,**

who looks on the earth and it trembles,
who touches the mountains and they smoke!

I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;

I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

May my meditation be pleasing to him,
for I rejoice in the LORD.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

Praise the LORD!

Ministry of Music: “Jesus, Strong and Kind” (feat. Colin Buchanan)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5Y8s-Sz_ac&feature=youtu.be

1. Jesus said that if I thirst
I should come to him
No one else can satisfy
I should come to him

3. Jesus said that if I fear
I should come to him
No one else can be my shield
I should come to him

2. Jesus said if I am weak
I should come to him
No one else can be my strength
I should come to him

4. Jesus said if I am lost
He will come to me
And he showed me on that cross
He will come to me

Chorus x 2

Chorus

For the Lord is good and faithful, He will keep us day and night
We can always run to Jesus, Jesus strong and kind

Scripture Reading

Philippians 3:12-16

12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. **13** Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But 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 upward call of God in Christ Jesus. **15** Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. **16** Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Prayer for Illumination

Lord, open our hearts and minds
by the power of your Holy Spirit,
that as the Scriptures are read
and your Word is proclaimed,
we may hear with joy what you say to us today. **Amen.**

“Pressing On!”

Philippians 3:12-16

I am going to begin by focusing on one verse of Scripture that I think is misquoted more than most others that I am aware of. It is found in Philippians 3 where Paul writes: **13** **But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal** Why do I call these some of the most misquoted verses in the Bible? Surely their intent appears to be very clear. The past is over and done with. Because there is nothing you can do about the past, forget it. Forget what lies behind you – the negative aspects of your upbringing, your mistakes, your hurts and your sins. Instead, focus on what is in front of you; that is, on what lies ahead. Focus on what lies before you and just keep pressing on!



How does that strike you? Does it sound like good advice? Does it appear to be sound theology? Does it seem like good psychology? Personally, while I think it sounds good, it is really bad theology. It is unsound Biblically as we will see shortly and it is lousy psychology. You may say to me, “Stephen, how can you say that when it appears to be an obviously true statement?” After all, we know that living in the past is not healthy. We know that people who continually keep bringing up the past can be an absolute pain in the neck. Surely it must be much better for all involved if we close the door to the past and move on. However, let me ask you: “Is this really the best way to live our lives?”

Over the years I have met many people who tried to close the door on the past by attempting to forget it. Unfortunately, it doesn’t work. I remember an elderly woman, the widow of a Presbyterian minister, who was very cynical and bitter. I visited her regularly. At first it appeared that the root of her bitterness lay in her attitude toward her overly religious, church going parents. But as I continued to visit her, the truth that she had closed the door on and tried to forget slowly emerged. Actually, it was her minister husband that she was angry at. All the years of their marriage, he had had the same mistress that many ministers have. He was so busy serving the Lord and the people of his various churches that he had no time for his wife and their children. When she spoke of him at first, he sounded like the most wonderful man in the world and definitely the best minister ever. Everything had been so wonderful but it was all a lie. When she finally began

to speak truthfully, the anger bitterness and resentment just began to pour out. She had been deceiving herself and she had to face reality. The past was very much a part of her present. She could not forget what was behind and move on.



Years ago, I was asked to take the funeral of an elderly Hungarian woman who had lived through two world wars. In both of them she had been forced from her home. She had spent a number of years in displaced persons camps, separated from her husband and with the care of a young daughter. Her husband had been able to immigrate to Canada in 1950. This woman and her daughter had been able to follow a year later. The day of the funeral, I stood in a corridor of the funeral home and observed the several hundred people who had come to pay their respects. Some of them had lived through World War II. Most were refugees of the 1956 Hungarian uprising. I thought to myself as I watched them, “Here is a room full of pain.” For some it was written on their faces. Others I expect carried it deep inside. They may have done well in Canada – “made

good” as we say – but the wounds of the past would be ever present, no matter how hard they tried to forget.

Art Zielstra was the founder of Cornerstone Christian Counseling Centre in Waterloo and he had a huge impact on me and Barnabas House Christian Counseling Centre in Kingston. Art once shared with me what it was like to minister to a Dutch Reformed congregation in Western Canada in the late 60’s and early 70’s. By that time, many of these people, who had come to Canada from Holland in the early 50’s were beginning to get on their feet financially and were beginning to enjoy the fruit of their hard work. This congregation was going through a time of renewal and many of the members were beginning to find a new depth to their faith – a new joy in their walk with Jesus Christ. At the same time, their lives began to fall apart. Just as things were beginning to go well in many areas of their new life, deep inside old hurts and wounds from the war years began to percolate to the surface. Many had tried to forget what they had suffered under the Nazi occupation of Holland by closing the door on that painful part on their past. They had buried themselves in making a new start and hard work. They had little or no time to reflect on what they and their families had suffered. Suddenly, it couldn’t



be put off any longer. The past began to intrude into the present in a very unpleasant way.

My observation, based on what I have shared with you and my own experience is that we cannot forget the past. Besides, I don't believe that is what Paul is suggesting that we do in Philippians 3. It is very dangerous to take one isolated verse of Scripture and build a practice or belief on it. We must look at a verse in its context. Verse 13 must be looked at in the context of the whole of Chapter 3, particularly what precedes it.



Paul does use the words **forgetting what lies behind**, but what is it that Paul wants to forget? Does he want to forget his whole past? No, what he wants to forget are those things that he used to place his confidence in – things like his ancestry, his family origins and his status as a member of a particularly favoured tribe and

race. He wanted to forget how his confidence had at one time been in his personal achievements – how he was more zealous for the laws and traditions of his ancestors than almost any other Jew. He wanted to forget how he could boast that when it came to keeping the law, he had an unblemished record. At one time he boasted about all these things, but now, according to verse 8, he says: **I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish.**

In their place he had found a new source of confidence and that confidence was Christ. All his past achievements were like sheep manure compared to **the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**. Then in verses 10 and 11, as we saw last week, Paul talks about what he really wants out of life. **10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.** If I can summarize, Paul is saying, “Here is what I want to **forget** and here is what I want to **get!**”

Does he have it yet? The answer is no! He makes that very plain. **12 Not that I**





have already obtained **all this**, or have already arrived at my goal...

What do the words “**all this**” refer to? They refer to verse 10. They refer to knowing Christ, knowing the power of his resurrection, participating in his sufferings and becoming like him in his death.

This is Paul’s aim. This is his goal. This is what he wants out of life. He

sees that everything he had striven for before was worthless and he wants to put that aside. He no longer wants to put any confidence in it.

People, to say that you want to forget something by no longer putting your confidence in it, is very different from what most Christians want to do. Many of us have tried to forget **what lies behind** by ignoring the past. We try to close the door on it and say to ourselves, “It is of no consequence anymore. I am going to close the door on it. I am going to focus on the future.” But God wants to do something very different. He wants to allow the Holy Spirit to search the innermost parts of our hearts so that Jesus can deal with the wounds and deeply ingrained attitudes of our hearts. Psalm 139 presents us with the cry that should be on all our lips.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my anxious thoughts!

24 And see if there be any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!



God alone knows our hearts. He alone truly knows the pain that is there. He knows that although we may appear to have it altogether on the outside, inside we all have **our anxious thoughts**. He knows the offensive ways that are a part of each one of us. He wants to lead us out of those things into the healing and peace that only come from him.

I believe that when we ask God to search our hearts, he takes us right back to that period in our lives where that part of our character was formed. He “digs deep” to

the very foundations of our lives. The fiber of our character and personality was trained and practiced into us in the first six years of our lives. By the time we were twelve years of age, our character, how we see the world and how we interpret life – well, those things were pretty well fixed in concrete.

Unless we go back and allow God to deal with the wounds, the hurts, the judgments and the attitudes that were formed during these years, we are pretty well relegated to dealing with life only in terms of managing our behaviour. God wants something very different for us.

1. **He wants to renew our minds.** In Romans 12 we read: **2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.** If our minds are not renewed and transformed, then no deep change can take place in our lives.
2. **He wants to give us a new heart and a new spirit.** In Ezekiel 36 we read: **26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.** In Psalm 51 David repents before the Lord and cries out for mercy. He traces his sin right back to its origin. **5 Surely, I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.** He recognizes what God needs and desires from him.

**10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**

**17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.**

Any person who tries to close the door on the past by **forgetting what lies behind** is making it impossible for God to bring them deep and lasting healing. What God wants us to do instead is to forget those things that we,



in the past, have put our confidence in and begin to put our reliance in Jesus alone.

Now, I have spent most of our time this morning trying to correct a mistaken understanding of this passage. As a result, I have almost missed its central message. In the late 70's and early 80's, singer, songwriter and musician Bob Dylan, on his spiritual journey, entered a Christian phase. There are two schools of

thought in terms of this. One is that he made a brief detour through the Christian faith. The other is that this period has made a lasting but muted difference in Dylan's knowing Christ. I don't have a definitive answer, but I do know this. He made two albums during that time – one called "Slow Train A Coming" and the other "Saved". On the second album there is a track called "Pressing On" which I believe is based on Philippians 3:14. In it he speaks of "pressing on, to the higher calling of the Lord".

Twice in the space of 3 verses Paul uses the words **I press on**. In verse 12 he writes **but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me**. On the Road to Damascus, Jesus took hold of Paul and he never let go. So Paul's desire was to **press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me**. In verse 13 he writes, **I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it**. It still eluded his grasp but he does not give up. **13 But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**

I ask you this morning, has Jesus Christ taken hold of you? If he has, then keep pressing on:

- While he heals you of the hurts and wounds of the past;
- While he renews your mind and transforms your life;
- While he replaces your heart of stone with a heart of flesh;
- While he puts a new Spirit within you.

Keep pressing on to the higher calling of your Lord!

Hymn: "Pressing On" with Regina McCrary & The Chicago Mass Choir, written by Bob Dylan (No onscreen lyrics)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Se4YBi07cWw>

Well I'm pressing on
Yes, I'm pressing on
Well I'm pressing on
To the higher calling of my Lord.

Many try to stop me, shake me up in my mind,
Say, "Prove to me that He is Lord, show me a sign."
What kind of sign they need when it all come from within,
When what's lost has been found, what's to come has already been?

Well I'm pressing on
Yes, I'm pressing on
Well I'm pressing on
To the higher calling of my Lord.

Shake the dust off of your feet, don't look back.
Nothing now can hold you down, nothing that you lack.

Temptation's not an easy thing, Adam given the devil reign
Because he sinned I got no choice, it run in my vein.

Well I'm pressing on
Yes, I'm pressing on
Well I'm pressing on
To the higher calling of my Lord.

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St. W., Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only: standrewspert offering@gmail.com . Please include your Offering Envelope # in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (eg Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Invitation to Offering

Give to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering and come before him.

**We will sacrifice a thank offering to God
and call on the name of the Lord.**

**We will fulfill our vows to the Lord,
in the presence of all God's people.**

Let each of us use whatever gift we have received,
faithfully sharing God's grace in many forms.

Freely we have received; freely we will give.

Offertory Prayer

God of wind, word, and fire,
we bless your name this day for sending
the light and strength of your Holy Spirit.
We give you thanks for all the gifts, great and small,
that have been poured out upon your children.
Accept us with our gifts to be living praise and witness
to your love throughout all the earth,
through Jesus Christ, who lives with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever. **Amen.**

Pastoral Prayer

Lord, on this Pentecost Sunday, we come reminded of the Spirit of fire, who came as a rushing wind breathing life and hope into the frightened hearts and

minds of the disciples. You transformed the early Church into a powerhouse of committed believers who were directed to expand the borders of the Kingdom of God – to reach out into new communities and people groups. We praise you that this same Holy Spirit has continued to provide comfort and guidance to your Church in all ages and is at work in our midst here at St. Andrew's. Lord, for several years we have prayed for you to guide us and to provide the shepherd, pastor and teacher of your choosing to lead this congregation during the uncertain times that lie ahead. For many months it seemed as if you had not heard our prayers for we received little in the way of encouragement in our search. Lord, thank you that at a time when we began to despair, you sent us Gerry Gallant who, in a couple of weeks, will be preaching for a Call. Lord, continue to make us sensitive during this period to your leading and give us discernment to fully recognize if this is a true gospel Call.

In addition, we pray for the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) which will meet virtually starting June 6th. We recognize that this Assembly marks a watershed in our denomination's history which will have the greatest impact on it since the decisive discussions regarding church union in 1925. We pray that your will be done in this Assembly. We pray that we may greet whatever decision emerges with grace and at the same time be prepared to stand firm in the truth of God's Word. May whatever decisions we make as a result be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer.

Lead us, Lord.

Leading us in your Righteousness.

Make your way plain before us.

For it is you, Lord, and you only

Who makes us to dwell in safety.

We pray for our world, our country, our province and our community as we see the ravages made in people's lives by this pandemic. Our hearts go out to those who have lost loved ones; those whose health has been impacted by the disease and also by not being able to get treatment for other health conditions because the healthcare system is overloaded. We think of those who have lost jobs, those whose educational plans have been put on hold, for wedding plans that have been drastically altered or put on hold and ask that in each case they might be able to see the hand of Jesus at work in their lives. We remember those who have not been able to properly grieve the loss of loved ones because of lockdown, In this case, we think particularly of the family of our own dear Ann Savage. We think of those who have been stuck in nursing and retirement homes and have felt shut off from their families and for those who have died in hospital without the benefit of the presence of their families to comfort them. We pray for the family relationships that have been strained because of COVID fatigue and the marriages that have deteriorated or broken.

For all these we ask that the same Holy Spirit, who has brought comfort and strength to your people in all ages, move in their lives in a new and unexpected way. May their eyes be opened to see that Jesus can bring life and hope in the darkest of circumstances.

We pray in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, who live and reign together with you, one God forever and ever. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn #384: “O Breathe of Life, Come Sweeping Through Us”

(Click on the link below to play the hymn. The lyrics are on the screen.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAjmYffP0us>

1. O breath of life, come sweeping through us,
Revive Thy church with life and power;
O Breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us,
And fit Thy church to meet this hour.
2. O wind of God, come bend us, break us,
Till humbly we confess our need;
Then in Thy tenderness remake us,
Revive, restore, for this we plead.
3. O breath of love, come breathe within us,
Renewing thought and will and heart;
Come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,
Revive Thy church in every part.
4. Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating
While harvest fields are vast and white?
Revive, us Lord, the world is waiting,
Equip Thy church to spread the light.

Benediction

Go now, and do not be afraid.
Put your hope in the Lord your God
who called you before you were born
that you might sing praises to God all your life long
and proclaim the gospel of grace through faith.

And may God watch over you with favour;
May Christ Jesus have compassion for you
and with gentleness lead you in your life;
And may the Holy Spirit put a song of praise in your heart
and sustain your faith forever.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.