

St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

traditional land of the Three Fires Confederacy: the Odawa, Potawatami and Ojibwe.

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Worship This Week Jan 1, 2023

WELCOME & Prayer –

PRAISE SONGS – What child is this? The First Noel

NEW YEAR’S RESPONSIVE READING – PSALM 8

PASTOR: O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens. ALL: You have taught children and infants to tell of your strength, silencing your enemies and all who oppose you. PASTOR: When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you set in place— ALL: what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? PASTOR: Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. ALL: You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority—PASTOR: the flocks and the herds and all the wild animals, ALL: the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and everything that swims the ocean currents. PASTOR: O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!

SONG – As with gladness men of old

RECEIVE OFFERING & PRAYER

ANNOUNCEMENTS –

GOD IS MY WITNESS –

PRAYER – requests

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE --

As we begin a new year, we approach you, Lord, with the desire for a fresh start. We do so in the confidence that, as the prophet Jeremiah wrote, “The faithful love of the Lord never ends. His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh every morning.” (Lam. 3:22-23) So we ask that you help us put the past in its place and allow us to move forward.

Bless those who seek you; may they find you in all places, and may their faith deepen with every step. For those whose spiritual journey has hit a dead end, help them find a new path; turn your face to them and give them hope. And for those who do not know you, for whatever reason, soften their hearts so that they may want to find you.

Provide meaningful employment for those who need it. Help those who work do their jobs with efficiency and in safety.

Watch over those who are healing from any distress: physical, mental or emotional. Find answers for those are seeking a cure. Strengthen those whose bodies are weak.

Grant a peaceful exit for those whose earthly lives are nearing an end, and receive their souls in loving embrace.

Grant your peace to those who are living with the daily pain that comes from being separated from loved ones, whether they are in a home or in your heavenly kingdom. Give them strength until we are reunited.

For our children, nieces and nephews and grandchildren, show them the way. May they seek the light of Christ to make their way in a dark world.

We thank you for new life and ask that you guide and protect our young families.

We ask for peace between anyone at war with one another, whether it's family, neighbours or nations. May relationships be restored.

Lord, we welcome your Holy Spirit. Come and invade our souls and bodies, be in our church. Come, work in powerful ways like the wind, transforming our lives, filling our heads, guiding our hearts.

Lord, we lift these prayers to you with the words you taught us

SCRIPTURE – Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. 2 A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest. 3 A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up. 4 A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance. 5 A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn away. 6 A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away. 7 A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak. 8 A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace. 9 What do people really get for all their hard work? 10 I have seen the burden God has placed on us all. 11 Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.

MESSAGE

Timing is everything. There's a time to open your mouth and say something and there's a time to be quiet. There's a time to step in and take action, and there's a time to hold back and let a situation work itself out. For those who invest, they watch and wait for the right conditions before they buy and sell. And so on. All that come with wisdom and maturity. But it's more than just common sense and market conditions. There's also a sense that the time is right.

The weeks leading up to the new year are filled with looking back on the year that was. Top 10 lists for everything – best movies, best new TV shows, books. And we look forward, with hope, the year ahead. All those predictions we've seen in the recent weeks of what lays ahead in 2023 are educated guesses at best.

Economists crunch their numbers and say we're due for a recession. Politicians talk about all the good things and sunny days ahead. Writers and pundits look at social trends and try to forecast the next big thing. What no one can predict is the next disaster, pandemic or war. To do that, you'd have to have the mind of God. All we can do is be prepared. Those two words "be prepared" is what the opening words of the third chapter of Ecclesiastes is all about. The author is Solomon, the great king and probably the wisest person to live aside from the Lord. Ecclesiastes is the book which took note of all the things we do in life and ask "why?" What is the purpose of life? We're born and we die. But it's what's in between which matters. Handling the inevitable challenges of life, along with the unexpected, is what we all face.

Timing is everything. The teacher writes, "For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven." Everything means just that. Every area of human activity is subject to God-appointed seasons. We're given 14 examples. (Seven is the Biblical number of completion, by the way. Two sets of seven. This poem summarizes the entire human life cycle.)

There are all things that we need to recognize that are ultimately under God's control. A time to be born and a time to die. We don't choose the moment of our conception and we are not to choose to time and place of our death. A time to plant and a time to harvest suggests that God is in control of the natural environment. A time to tear down and a time to build up, a time to cry and a time to laugh, a time to grieve and a time to dance, a time to search and a time to quit searching, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to be quiet and a time to speak – all of that is a combination of us using common sense and wisdom in

cooperation with God. It's a team effort. A time to kill and a time to heal. Kill in this context does not mean murder or war. Rather, it's about nature – wildlife and land. There is a natural rhythm to be found in nature. There are proper seasons for hunting. A time for war and a time for peace. Until the end of the world comes, war will always be an option for every nation. Never out of aggression, only to defend. A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. This is what armies did to make life difficult for the enemy. Deliberately spreading stones on land or a road would slow down the enemy from advancing. A time to love and a time to hate. God is love and we are to love him and each other. But we are also commanded to hate evil. Even God hates: Proverbs 6:16-19 – “There are six things the LORD hates—no, seven things he detests: ¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that kill the innocent, ¹⁸ a heart that plots evil, feet that race to do wrong, ¹⁹ a false witness who pours out lies, a person who sows discord in a family.”

Timing is everything. There are some folks out there who just go with the flow. Such a person would wake up naturally. No alarm. They work when they feel like it. Everything they do is governed by their own inner clock. Some of it would be feeling. Some would be governed by the rising and setting of the sun. They'd hunt and fish according to the best conditions. Of course, such a person would be exceedingly rare in North America, because sooner or later, you'll have to make an appointment to see a doctor for something. You can't just turn up when you feel like it. As well, it's doubtful they'd work outside the home or be part of any human activity that meets in person.

The opposite extreme would be someone who operates according to a strict schedule. Their alarm clock goes off at exactly the same time every day. They eat at precise hours. Everything is measured and timed. There might be room for spontaneity, but only if it's within certain pre-ordained times. I don't know anyone who operates that way.

Our natural bodies know that timing is everything. There's a healthy balance and it's called a circadian (Sr-KAY-dee-un) rhythm. This is the body's internal clock that tells us when to sleep, wake up, and eat. This internal clock is influenced by outside factors such as sunlight and temperature. When sunlight is prevalent, serotonin is produced which causes us to feel energized. However, when sunlight is absent, melatonin is produced which causes us to feel sleepy. This is the natural circadian rhythm. Everyone's rhythm is different. This is why some people stay up later and wake up earlier than others. The medical community has found that it's healthy to maintain the same rhythm by going to

bed and waking up at the same time. Disrupting your circadian rhythm can result in exhaustion, physical and mental health problems. There is a healthy rhythm to the day. It's a natural thing. We understand this.

The same principle can be applied to spiritual matters. This is what the author of Ecclesiastes is getting at. While human activity goes by a 24-hour cycle, spiritual timing is larger. In fact, because it's God's timing, there are no limits that we understand.

We don't know what's going to happen. Only God knows. The best way to be prepared for what God has planned to be more like God. Allowing God to work in us so that our minds are closer to the mind of Christ. For, "Who can know the LORD's thoughts? Who knows enough to teach him? But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ." 1 Corinthians 2:16. ". . . people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end." Ecclesiastes 3:11. God allows a glimpse.

The invitation for us is to recognize the voice of the Lord whispering in our ears. We will be able to tell the difference between His voice and that of the enemy. We will be able to be ready. We prepare for the unexpected. Problem solving is what life seems to be all about. And not just for bad stuff, but opportunities as well. Timing is everything.

What better time than the beginning of a new year to ask: What time is it in my life? What time is it in my work life? What time is it in the life of this congregation? I don't believe in coincidences. What about the timing of last week's blizzard, which peaked two days before Christmas and its aftermath disrupted travel right up to Christmas Eve and Day and forced cancellation of our two Christmas services. I can't recall the last time we had an actual blizzard in this part of the province. I grew up in London and I remember a handful in the 1970s and 80s. What's God saying in all this? I don't know for sure but the feeling I have is that maybe we make too big a deal of Christmas. Stop, stay home. Celebrate the birth of Christ not in a festive, human sense or even by special worship. It's interesting that the shoppers and staff who were stranded at Wal-Mart became an impromptu family. The largest retailer in town which does a huge amount of business in the weeks leading up to Christmas became a centre of Christlike hospitality in a time of need. What if that spirit of Christmas was celebrated all year 'round in our hearts? The same could be said of Easter. Just a thought.

Timing is everything. In our lives and in our churches, is it time to make a renewed effort to get out get out of the way. Let God's hands work. This does not mean we do nothing. Rather, we wait for God's hands to guide us. If we don't know of it's not obvious, then wait. Until we get word, carry on with our existing marching orders – love God and love each other. Love God by putting Him first and obeying His commands to live simply, use what we have been in given in the way it's intended. Love our neighbours by caring for the least of these. God knows the big picture. He controls the universe. History unfolds according to His plan. He knows the times and the seasons. Timing is everything not only in our world, but in God's world. The closer we are to God, the more we will be in synch with God's timing. We are invited to get into a spiritual rhythm and allow the hands of God to work.

PRAYER -- Father God, every day is new. Every day is an opportunity for a fresh start. But there is something powerful about New Year's Day – not just a new date on the calendar, but a new year. Father, with the power of the Holy Spirit, help us put the past behind. Help us cut the things that are weighing us down. Help us remove everything that gets in the way of your most excellent power from working in our world. And there is much. Father, the problem is in us. We are too focused on our ourselves. We worry, we plan. Sometimes, we're paralyzed and we don't even try. Our bold request on this day is for your peace to be with us, your wisdom in our minds, your love in our hearts. Help us look beyond the temporary human fix and seek eternal power. Father, we ask for nothing less than to be able to receive your power and love and wisdom and grace. Bring it on, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.

HYMN – 811 Standing at the portal

NEW PRAYER

Shut ins – Alan (Curly) Clark at Riverview Gardens.

Condolences – To the family and colleagues of OPP Const Grzegorz Pierzchala. Pray for protection around frontline officers everywhere. Pray for strength to carry on. (Constable Pierzchala is the fourth police officer in Ontario to be shot and killed on the job in the past four months.)

Thanks – To family members who go out of their way to care for one another, especially during the festive season. This includes younger family who provide hospitality.

CONTINUE TO PRAY

Health and healing –

1. Dianne Richards – MRI in January
2. Jeff Strain – healing from knee surgery
3. Bill & Bonnie Lozon – for a bed to open for Bill in a nursing home in Wallaceburg or Chatham
4. Jennie Atherton, Becky Desjardine, Margaret Follows, Mark Labadie, Bette Northcott, Tom O’Neill, Cherie Pegg, Sandra Whitson
5. Awaiting surgery: Dan Shaw
6. Mary Templer – relief from dizziness, more able to walk normally, vision to improve.
7. Anyone seeking or undergoing treatment for addictions
8. Anyone wrestling with anxiety and depression
9. Karen Northcott – thanks for good biopsy results but continue to pray.

There are many whose names are not listed here – God know who they are and what they need.

Seniors and shut ins – Norma Latimer at Riverview Gardens and Jim Lusk and Ross Fuchs at Oaks Wallaceburg, Joyce MacTavish at Barrie Manor, Aubrey Butler at home.

Session – Mark Labadie (clerk and representative elder), Cindy Brewer, Sheila Eves, Andrew Neely, Mark Richards and Julie Shaw.

Board of managers – Wendy Weston (chair), Paul Vandenberg (treasurer), Will Brewer, Ross Fuchs, Linda Malott, Jenn Mason, Von Parking, Mark Richards, Jodie Rich, Dan Shaw and Mike Wicks.

WHAT’S UP:

Pop can fundraiser – Bring your pop cans to church! Leave them in the bin behind Rutherford Hall. They’re worth money!

DATES

Jan. 9 – Session (meet day changed to Monday during winter/spring)

GIVING:

E-transfer to pcvan1313@gmail.com. Bring envelope on Sunday or if you have a key, leave it in the treasurer’s mailbox. Mail it to the church, PO Box 93 Dresden. N0P 1M0. Put it in the mailbox at the home of treasurer Paul Vandenberg. 1313 North Street, Dresden.

Telephone number 519-683-6194

GIFT CARDS – You pay face value for the gift cards and the church buys them at a discount through Chatham Christian Schools. **Next deadline January 29.**