

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church**

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

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**Worship This Week Sept. 24, 2023**

**Piano** – Marilyn Wranich

**Sound/powerpoint/livestream** –

**WELCOME & Prayer** –

**Two SONGS** – 500 Open my eyes that I may see, Jesus name above all names

**YOUNG & YOUNG AT HEART** – Rita

**Kid's PRAYER** –

**SONG** – This little light of mine

**RECEIVE OFFERING** –

**ANNOUNCEMENTS** – Presbytery granted \$1,800/New sound mixer ordered, Prayer study guides available

**GOOD NEWS MOMENTS** – Personal response from Yancy family

**PRAYER REQUESTS/PRAYER** – Lozon family after Bill's passing

**SCRIPTURE** – Genesis 15

**MESSAGE** –

Let's remind ourselves (once again!) of God's promise in Genesis 12,

“Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.” (Gen 12:1-3)

Abram, along with Serai, responded. But they stumbled along the way. They didn't trust that God would provide during a famine. Nor that God would protect them in Egypt. They showed signs of trust when they emerged from Egypt and found themselves in the Promised Land for the first time.

After rescuing his nephew, Abram and his army were met by Melchizedek, the Priest and King of Salem. He blessed Abram and in return, Abram made an offering.

God's promise in Genesis 12 was still valid. God reminded him in Genesis 15.

But Abram showed a lack of faith again.

“O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since you’ve given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.” (Gen 15:2-3)

God reminded him of the promise.

“Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!” And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith. (Gen 15:5-6)

But Abram wondered again.

“O Sovereign Lord, how can I be sure that I will actually possess it?” (Gen 15:8)

This is a lot of doubt for a man supposedly known for his faith. His words are remarkably similar to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, after the Angel told him his unborn son would be great in the eyes of the Lord and have the spirit and power of Elijah.

Zechariah said to the angel, “How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.” We know what happened. The angel struck Zechariah with blindness until John’s naming and dedication.

In Abram’s case, there were also consequences. After presenting the animals to God as a sacrifice, Abram fell in a deep sleep “and a terrifying darkness came down over him.” Darkness is never from God. Satan showed up. This is a powerful example of how God’s people are targets of the enemy. The enemy does not like it if we are seeking and following God, so he will do everything in his power to get us off track. The enemy loves to spoil the party.

But first, The Lord responded with instructions to set up an ancient ritual in which parties to an agreement would walk between the divided parts of sacrificed animals as an illustration of what might happen to them if they were to violate the terms of the agreement.

The Lord told him, “Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” So Abram presented all these to him and killed them. Then he cut each animal down the middle and laid the halves side by side; he did not, however, cut the birds in half.

Before this happened, that’s when Satan showed up. We will not enter into our blessings without first experiencing some trial and tribulation. The terrifying darkness was a foreshadowing of what was to come.

Then the Lord said to Abram, “You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. (As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction.” (Gen 15:13-15)

The promise remained and would be fulfilled. But not immediately. In fact, they would take hundreds of years and much pain.

After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. (Gen 15:17)

It’s not clear exactly what this represents. Some believe the firepot and flaming torch symbolize God himself. The smoking oven reminds us of the many times smoke or a cloud represented the presence of God: as the pillar of cloud with Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22), as the smoke on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:18), as the cloud of God’s Shekinah glory (1 Kings 8:10-12). The burning torch reminds us of the many times fire represented the presence of God: as the pillar of fire with Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22), as the burning bush displaying the presence of God before Moses (Exodus 3:4), as the fire from heaven that at times consumed sacrifices that pleased God (1 Kings 18:38, 1 Chronicles 21:26, 2 Chronicles 7:1).

It’s a powerful promise. What followed was the covenant itself.

So the Lord made a covenant with Abram that day and said, “I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River— the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.” (Gen 15:18-21)

Finally, God handed Abram the legal document which promised the land. Note how long it took for the covenant to be proclaimed after the initial command in Genesis 12. Add it up. God made His promise to Abram seven times before finally making the Covenant. It took a full 100 years before the Covenant was given. And then it would take another 15 years before Isaac is born. No wonder Abram and Serai were getting a bit antsy.

But God is true to His word. If He makes a promise, he does not renege. Same with any divine statement. Another is the Lord’s final words before returning to heaven: “I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Do we believe that? Sometimes, I have to wonder. Where is God when things aren’t going well? Where’s God when people die at a young age? Where’s God when innocent victims are injured or killed? Where’s God when natural disasters take lives? And so on.

We could also ask: Where was God when His own Son was arrested, convicted and executed by crucifixion? God’s there. He just turned His face away. For a short spell. Sometimes for a season. But there’s always a reason.

Abram’s dark dream and God’s prophecy of being exiled and taken into slavery were reminders that we will not enter into our blessings without first experiencing some trial and tribulation.

Don’t lose heart – He is with us always. The Lord was with Abram and Serai even when they lost faith and ran away and played games with the Egyptians. The Lord with Abraham even when he lost faith and doubted the promise.

If there's darkness and tough times in your life, it does not mean God has forsaken you. Rather, it might mean you're being tested or strengthened, or it might be a penalty for a sin you weren't even aware you committed.

Don't lose hope. Don't lose faith.

**HYMN** – Have thine own way (400 Family of God)

**BENEDICTION** –

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Second call for elder nominations! Eldership is a calling. Ruling elders are responsible for the leadership, pastoral care and oversight of the congregation. They are ordained using the same vows as ministers. Anyone who has identified themselves publicly as Christian, is on the congregation's membership roll, been nominated by other church members or session and is feeling God calling them to leadership is eligible. Session will be accepting names until Oct. 1 to be considered for the office of ruling elder. Session members are listed below.

**PRAYER** -- Requests may be sent to the pastor, either for sharing or in confidence. If a need is not listed here it's because the family has opted for privacy.

### **NEW PRAYER**

1. Lozon family after the passing of Bill on Sept. 17.

### **CONTINUE TO PRAY**

Health and healing –

1. Becky Desjardine, Margaret Follows, Ron Mason, Bette Northcott, Karen Northcott, Tom O'Neill, Cherie Pegg, Sandra Pegg, Julie Shaw, Sandra Whitson
2. Anyone seeking or undergoing treatment for addictions
3. Anyone wrestling with anxiety and depression

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

Seniors and shut ins – Betty Bradley at Albany Retirement Home Petrolia, Dianne Richards at Park Street Place, Jim Lusk at Oaks Wallaceburg, Lane Douglas and Ross Fuchs at Fairfield Park in Wallaceburg, Aubrey Butler at home.

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

### **WHAT'S UP:**

Say hello to Lily – Our new administrative person, Lily Carroll, is from Chatham but she will be working remotely while attending college in Toronto. Lily will be taking care of the weekly email,

website maintenance, social media and other tasks which can be done online. If you have any announcements to be added to the weekly email, send them to Lily using this email: [standrewspcdresden@gmail.com](mailto:standrewspcdresden@gmail.com)

New study – Began Wednesday Sept. 20 and continues every Wednesday at 7 p.m. St. Andrew's for at least six weeks. We're reading "Prayer: does it make any difference?" by Philip Yancy. DVD teaching and a reader's guide. Co-lead by Pastor Andy and Pastor Rob Elka from Evangel.

Elders on session – Mark Labadie 519-359-4842, Cindy Brewer 519-683-4113, Sheila Eves 519-683-4148, Andrew Neely 519-359-8903, Mark Richards 519-809-9175 and Julie Shaw 226-627-1953.

Legacy Grandparenting Summit – New Life Assembly in Petrolia is the closest host congregation where this can be viewed on Sat. Oct. 21 from 9-4:30 p.m. Early bird deadline to register is Sept. 18. <https://brushfire.com/legacycoalition/simulcast/553755>. This website provides all the details: <https://legacycoalition.com/summit/>

## **GOOD NEWS MOMENTS**

Presbytery granted \$1,800 towards the cost of a new sound board/mixer.

## **DATES**

Sept. 25 – Gift card order deadline. Cards to be delivered to church Sept. 29

Sept. 25 – Board of managers meets 7 p.m.

## **WAYS OF GIVING:**

E-transfer [st.andrewspcdresdenon@gmail.com](mailto:st.andrewspcdresdenon@gmail.com). If required by your bank, our treasurer's name is Linda Moore. Her number is 226-627-2727. If you are asked for a security question, please contact your local bank branch.

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. NOP 1M0.

Gift Cards – You pay face value for the gift cards and the church buys them at a discount through Chatham Christian Schools. Next deadline Sept. 25. Cards will be delivered to church Sept. 29. Gift card order forms are attached – take your pic: PDF (print, fill in, scan and return by email) or a fillable Excel (which does the math for you. save and attach to your order!) Send orders to [standrewspcdresden@gmail.com](mailto:standrewspcdresden@gmail.com). Use [st.andrewspcdresdenon@gmail.com](mailto:st.andrewspcdresdenon@gmail.com) for the E-transfer payment.