

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

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

Box 93, Dresden, Ontario NOP 1M0

519-683-2442 standrewspcdresden@gmail.com Rev. Andy Cornell

Worship Oct. 1, 2023

Piano – Marilyn Wranich

Sound/powerpoint/livestream –

WELCOME & Prayer –

Two SONGS – Morning has broken, People need the Lord

YOUNG & YOUNG AT HEART – Rita

Kid's PRAYER –

SONG – Jesus wants me for a sunbeam

RECEIVE OFFERING –

ANNOUNCEMENTS –

GOOD NEWS MOMENTS –

PRAYER REQUESTS/PRAYER –

SCRIPTURE – Genesis 17:1-8, 15-22

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am El-Shaddai—'God Almighty.' Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. 2 I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants." 3 At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, 4 "This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! 5 What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. 6 I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them! 7 "I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God."

15 Then God said to Abraham, "Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. 16 And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants." 17 Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. "How could I become a father at the age of 100?" he thought. "And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?" 18 So Abraham said to God, "May Ishmael live under your special blessing!" 19 But God replied, "No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant. 20 As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will

become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year.” 22 When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham.

MESSAGE – Abram’s journey continues. Let’s recap. He was 75 years old when he left Haran (Genesis 12:4). They went to Egypt to escape the famine. They were booted out of Egypt and settled in the Promised Land. He and his family clashed with the tribes, they rescued nephew Lot and had the encounter with Melchizedek, the Priest and King of Salem. Years are ticking by and still no son. God does deliver the promise that he and Serai would be parents of a great nation in the form of a covenant – a legal document. But they continued to wait.

Although Abram is known for his faith and was counted as righteous because of his faith he (and Serai’s) faith were challenged – and tested. Not trusting God to provide in the famine. Not trusting that God would protect him in Egypt. Not believing God when he was reminded that the number of his descendents would outnumber the stars. Still he and Serai grew impatient. Eleven years after the original promise, Serai got tired of waiting and allowed her husband to sleep with her servant in order to have children. Abram was 86 when the son Ishmael was born of Hagar, the servant girl (Genesis 16:15-16). Fast forward another 13 years. Still no legitimate heir. Abram is now 99. Serai is 88. But God’s promise and covenant remained.

Their frustration was understandable. Say you received a powerful word from God that something would happen. You and your spouse heard the same word – which was affirmed over and over by circumstances which pointed to destiny. You may even have encountered believers with the gift of prophecy who tell you that they had a vision in which this promise was to be fulfilled. You have no doubt that it’s from God. On a human level, it appears as though the promise was simply not going to happen – for the simple reason that the odds are slim to none. Tell the story and most people might think you are delusional. Abram and Serai probably had the same doubts. Now consider that it had been 17 years since God had last spoken to them. And then God appeared again.

Abram was 99 when the Lord appeared and announced his name: “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ ” This is the powerful voice of God. If it was a movie, the voice would be as loud as a jet engine on takeoff, the deep bass sound would vibrate the theatre. In real life, it might have been even more powerful. When God speaks, all of creation listens.

Abram’s reaction was exactly the same as when Jesus, years later, said “I am” to the soldiers who came to arrest him (John 18:6). They fell to the ground. The powerful presence of God does that. It’s why people who participate in worship in which the Holy Spirit is present can fall to the ground. I’ve witnessed it. I have personally experienced it. There are no words to adequately describe it – other than to say every [part of your being suddenly weak in the presence of something powerful. It’s not fear. It’s joyful submission. That’s what Abram did. He fell face down on the ground.

Now that God had Abram’s attention, he issued a command: “serve me faithfully and live a blameless life.” What God wanted was Abram to serve Him completely, be totally devoted, put God first before everything else. It’s a tall order, but it’s no different than the words of Christ: “If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26-27)

God then repeated the promise to “give you countless descendants. . . . I will make you the father of a multitude of nations!” The promise of offspring is now “nations.” It’s not that God has changed his promise – rather he’s just unfolding the covenant as God planned.

This is a turning point, because God then changes their names to Abraham and Sarah. And he repeats the promise: “You will be the father of many nations. I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!” 7 “I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8

And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God.” Regarding Sarah: “16 And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.”

Abraham bowed down to the ground, but inside, he was laughing. “How could I become a father at the age of 100?” he thought. “And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?” 18 So Abraham said to God, “May Ishmael live under your special blessing!”

Notice how Abraham kept these thoughts to himself and didn’t speak them. But God knows our thoughts.

19 But God replied, “No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant. 20 As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year.” 22 When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham.

Abram was becoming a great man of faith, but you don’t make a great man of faith overnight. It takes years of God’s work in them, years of almost mundane trusting in God, perhaps interrupted with a few spectacular encounters with the LORD.

God’s promises can take time to be fulfilled. God’s promises can appear to be contrary to nature. God’s promises may not make sense. God’s may repeat himself. God tests our faith. All the time. God can keep us waiting. And waiting. But in the end, He delivers. Because they are promises.

Today’s scripture and teaching is not just a history lesson. It’s a reminder that we are Abraham and Sarah. God has called each believer to be active members of the body of Christ. We may serve other people in the church if we are elders or

deacons, work in the nursery, teach Sunday school, help the youth group, visit the nursing home, and so on. Yet what we can forget is that even our work outside the church is a way to serve others. Doctors serve sick people by providing medical care to those who are unable to give it to themselves. Mechanics serve others when they make repairs for those who lack the skills to keep their cars running. The list goes on and on.

Vocation isn't something we only think about in our teens. It's a lifelong question. And when I say vocation it could mean a job or career. Or it could mean volunteer work. It could mean some sort of mission into the world. We are never too old to do something new. We are never too old to be open to new ways God might use us. The experience of Abram at 99 and Serai at 88 is an extreme example. But it's not fable. It happened. And something equally unimaginable can happen to each one of us. Amen.

HYMN – The Solid Rock (Family of God 92)

BENEDICTION –

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We're making it easier to place gift card orders.

1. Rather than attach order forms with the weekly email, they'll be permanently found on the website. <https://standrewsdresden.ca/> under the "giving" tab
2. Send e-transfer AND order forms to st.andrewspcdresdenon@gmail.com. Deadline is typically the last Monday of the month.

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. For all those recovering from surgical procedures.

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:

Weekly email – Send info to our administrative assistant Lily Carroll
standrewspcdresden@gmail.com

Midweek discussion – Wednesdays at 7 p.m. St. Andrew's. 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.

Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes – now available. Return by Nov. 12.

DATES

Oct. 2 – Session meets

Oct. 29 – Anniversary service with message from Rev. Mike Maroney and music by Marc & Kim Reid

WAYS OF GIVING:

E-transfer 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 Oct. _____. Cards will be delivered to the church. Send orders and e-transfers to st.andrewspcdresdenon@gmail.com.

Click **Gift Card Order Form**.