



## **St. Andrew's United Church of Christ**

7610 Ann Arbor Street, Dexter, MI 48130

Email: [CAAdams@StAndrewsDexter.org](mailto:CAAdams@StAndrewsDexter.org)

[www.StAndrewsDexter.org](http://www.StAndrewsDexter.org)

### **TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTCOST**

Sunday, August 23, 2020 at 10:00 A.M.



Dear Friends in Christ,

This summer is moving along much too quickly! It's been almost two months since St. Andrew's resumed in-person worship in July. Like many other practices, worship is sure different. I miss singing and being able to shake peoples' hands the most; but view these behaviors as expressions of loving my neighbor as myself in doing what is best for our personal and collective health and well-being.

I will be absent from worship next Sunday, August 30<sup>th</sup> and out-of-town from Saturday, August 29<sup>th</sup> to September 5<sup>th</sup>; with a scheduled return to lead worship on Communion Sunday, September 6<sup>th</sup>.

Debbie and I are renting the same cottage that my family began renting when I was a teenager; now our family, adult children and grandchildren, will be joining us for a few days of that week. The cottage is on Silver Lake right next to the sand dunes, so my hope is that my legs will still be able to carry me to the top of the dunes and compete with my grandchildren at the volleyball net!

Thank you again for your prayerful support and faithful giving for the ministry at St. Andrew's during these uncertain and unprecedented times.

Peace and Prayers

In Christ,

Pastor Bigelow

**Silent Prayer for the Beginning of Worship** — Lord God, we come to worship you today. We come to sing, sadly not with our voices, but gladly with our hearts; we come to have fellowship, to pray and to listen. You always hear us, but now help us to hear you through the music, the prayers, the scripture and its interpretation. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **WE GATHER TO WORSHIP THE TRIUNE GOD**

RINGING OF THE BELL AND CHIMES

WELCOME

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

May our lives profess and proclaim that “our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.” (Psalm 124:8)

**Amen!**

The Lord is my light and my salvation,  
**whom shall I fear?**

One thing that I ask of the Lord;  
**one thing that I seek:**

that I may dwell in the house of the Lord,  
**all the days of my life,**

to behold the beauty of the Lord,  
**and worship in his house!**

(Psalm 27:selected verses)

SALUTATION

May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

(II Peter 1:2)

**Amen!**

The Lord be with you!  
**And also, with you!**

GATHERING HYMN [\*When in Our Music God is Glorified\*](#)

## OPENING PRAYER

Lord, we come to you this morning out of the routine of our lives when days, weeks and even months seem to blend together in the sameness of schedules. Lift us out of our routines and help us value each day as a precious gift from your good hand; enabling us to be refreshed and appreciative of each moment. Receive our worship as we pray, that it will be reverent, holy and acceptable in your sight. In the name of Jesus, we pray, Amen.

## **WE ARE RENEWED BY THE SPIRIT**

### CALL TO CONFESSION

We cannot come before God unless we are first honest with ourselves about who we are, about the mistakes we make and about how well or poorly we care for others. In this spirit, let us offer our prayers to God.

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Merciful and loving God, whose love and care never ceases, we come to you as we are:**

**We are tired of hearing all the restlessness in our world.**

**We are anxious about problems that go unresolved.**

**We are worried about events beyond our control.**

**We do not easily let go.**

**For mistakes we cannot redeem, for tasks left undone, for uncertain goals, we need your forgiveness and ask for your grace.**

(silent reflection)

**For recovery of strength and enthusiasm; we pray for your Spirit. For fullness of life, gracious hearts and open hands; we pray to be followers of Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.**

### WORDS OF ASSURANCE AND FORGIVENESS

In Jesus Christ there is pardon from the past, power for the present and promise for the future. Believe this Gospel, go forth and live in peace!

### GOD'S DIRECTION FOR OUR LIVES

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

(Ephesians 4:32-5:2 NIV)

## WE HEAR AND LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD

### SCRIPTURE LESSON

New Testament — Luke 11:5-13

SERMON – *The Parable of the Friend at Midnight: “How Much More...”*

(found on pages 6-8)

HYMN OF RESPONSE [Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me](#)

## WE GO FORTH TO REVEAL JESUS CHRIST IN THE WORLD

### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

Loving God, we thank you for the strength that you have provided throughout our years. For your abiding presence that has carried us through difficult times when we thought that we were alone. We thank you for the gift of family and friends who surround our lives and enrich our days. We thank you too, for giving us pets with whom we can share affection and love, for their forgiving and accepting natures. We thank you for wild animals in the woods and fields, in the air and water, being who you call them to be.

We ask Lord in these everchanging and uncertain times that you increase our faith. Help us to trust you when the skies are dark and to accept the things we cannot understand. Increase our hope. Give us the hope which has seen things in bad and ugly moments and which refuses to despair; the hope that is able to fail and yet to try again, the hope that can accept disappointment and yet not abandon hope.

Increase our love. Help us to love our neighbor as you love them; to love you as you first loved us. Help us love your commandments so that they are not weariness or burdensome, but so that there is a joy to them. So that we may find perfect freedom and in doing your will, find our peace. Hear these our prayers in Jesus' name who taught us to pray:

**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.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.  
Amen.**

PARTING HYMN    [\*I Want Jesus to Walk with Me\*](#)

BENEDICTION

May the grace of Christ attend you, the love of God surround You, and the Holy Spirit keep you now and forevermore.

**AMEN!**

POSTLUDE

SERMON – *The Parable of the Friend at Midnight: “How Much More...”*

SCRIPTURE

New Testament — Luke 11:5-13

Can you imagine asking your spouse to run to Meijer’s and pick up some milk and bread, only to have him/her bring home some motor oil and lighter fluid? Or imagine that it is your birthday and one of your best friends comes over and brings you a beautifully wrapped present only to open it and find that it is full of garbage. It’s unthinkable isn’t it? I can’t imagine that!

Jesus give us a Word Picture of God and his Kingdom with this parable that poses an unthinkable situation that is hard for us to believe. One late night a hungry friend turns up unexpectedly at a friend’s house and catches him without a scrap of food in the house. So, the only thing the householder could do was to go next door and wake up his neighbor and ask him for three loaves of bread, the usual meal for one person, kind of like the Mac & Cheese meal that one might have on hand for when the grandchildren come over unexpectedly for lunch or dinner. Now remember this is late at night...and if we peek into the window of the sleeping neighbor, his children are bedded down in a row on raised mats, with a parent at each end. And suddenly there comes a hammering at the door.

The head of the household is startled from his sleep and is not amused. The person inside says, “don’t bother me, the door is already locked and my children are in bed...I can’t get up and give you anything...but the person outside in the dark refused to take NO for an answer. He keeps knocking...the householder probably yells...Hey, don’t be a nuisance...my doors were locked a long time ago. If I get up, I will disturb my whole family...No, I am staying in bed!!! But the person outside refuses to take no for an answer...he keeps knocking until at least the householder in sheer exasperation gets up, unbolts the door and gives him three loaves of bread, which is a meal in middle eastern culture.

Now think for a moment about how your neighbors might respond if you were to knock at their door at midnight and ask them for a snack for a friend that just arrived at your house. Or better yet, how would you respond if someone is knocking at your door that late at night?

On one level then, the picture that Jesus paints with this parable focuses on the persistence of the person knocking on the door. If a friend can be coaxed to get up from a comfortable sleep and begrudgingly give help, how much more likely is it that God, our heavenly friend, will be willing to help us at any hour. Ask and it will be given, search and you will find; knock and the door will be open to you. There is something about hanging in there...and keeping on...keeping on...but, if we leave this picture here, it is only half painted. The parable focuses us on something

more about God and God's rule in the world. It tells us that when you go to your neighbor at midnight, everything is against you. The hour is too late, everybody is in bed, the door is locked, but never-the-less, with that much against you, will receive what you asked for...why...because your neighbor is a person who will not act shamelessly. He can be trusted to answer the door and provide a meal.

The God to whom we pray is similarly reliable. God is faithful to his promise, God is not arbitrary, acting this way one day and that way the next day. His behavior is consistent with his inner nature. Even though you approach God at the most awkward time, you can count on God helping you. Here the emphasis is not what we can accomplish if only we are being persistent enough in our prayers, but rather on the kind of father, God is.

So, Jesus continues...which parent, if asked for a fish, will give a snake; or if a child asks for an egg, will be given a scorpion instead? That's unthinkable, isn't it? If we ask God for a fish or an egg, we can trust God not to give us a snake or scorpion.

So then, what about bringing our petitions to God in prayer? Prayer is certainly much more than a list of "give-mes" handed to God, but at the same time, nothing is too trivial or insignificant or too weighty or far-reaching to be brought to God in prayer. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray to give us each day, our daily bread...our requests can be brought to embrace our everyday needs. But our needs extend past the physical, as Jesus continues the prayer to ask God to forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. If one is not able to forgive others, it is unlikely that he or she is able to accept forgiveness from God. And so weekly, we pray not only for forgiveness for ourselves, but for the grace to forgive those who have wronged us.

A problem for many people is the reconciling of the "ask and it will be given, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you," with prayer that seemingly goes unanswered. This is a place of great disappointment and difficulty for many people. It's an important question that is often the source of difficulty in even knowing what to ask for in prayer. Does Jesus really mean what he says? Is the point that we receive something even though it might not be what we asked for...some people will try and resolve the issue by putting the blame for unanswered prayer on the person praying...that is "well, you didn't pray hard enough, or have enough faith, or prayed for the wrong thing." I don't buy all that because I know many a faithful Christian who prayed over many a heart felt issue, when the prayer seemed to go unanswered...when the prayer, day after day, month after month, year after year, seems to bounce off the ceiling and God is mute or absent.

When a person is in this situation, maybe the answer to prayer is for patience and strength to live the question. That's tough! But our text today focuses on God who is a friend and who will not give his children a scorpion when they ask for an egg or a snake when asking for a fish. God's ways are not our ways and God's understandings are not ours, yet how much more does he love us and give us good things.

There is a prayer entitled, *Prayer Unanswered*, written by an anonymous author that goes like this:

*I asked for strength, that I might achieve;  
God made me weak that I might obey.  
I asked for health, that I might do greater things;  
I was given grace that I might do better things.  
I asked for riches, that I might be happy;  
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.  
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of people;  
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.  
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life;  
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.  
I received nothing that I asked for and hoped for;  
My prayer was answered.*

So, the text concludes the account and sermon this morning, "If you then who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

**How much more**...will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him." (Luke 11:13).

Let us pray.

Lord God, you have taught us to come to you with our requests, promising to hear us and answering our prayers. Help us to be honest, to trust you with our needs and desires and be confident that you will do what is best for us. Whatever the outcome of our prayers, keep us strong in our faith and in our love for goodness and mercy. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

✚ Dear Friends, with a saddened heart, I must say good-bye to my Friends at St. Andrew's. Our daughter and son-in-law have been nagging us for years to move south and live near them! And now my mom also lives in the area. Time just seemed right. We spoke with a realtor, just to get an idea of what our home was worth, thinking to sell and move in the next couple of years. But we decided to list it, had nine showings that weekend and a bidding war on Monday! I feel that God is saying to us, it is time to move south! Our home is under contract, pending the results of the inspections. By the first of October, we hope to be in Tennessee and begin the house hunt there and a new life close to our daughter! With love, Cindy Adams, Church Office Manager

PS: Do you happen to know of a couple of high school or older boys who would like a job helping us move our furniture and boxes into storage pods on Saturday, September 19<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup>? Please have them contact me at 734-475-2633. Thank you!

- ✚ Sunday, August 30<sup>th</sup> Worship Service at 10:00 am led by Reverend Steve Bringardner.
- ✚ Sunday, September 6<sup>th</sup> Worship Service at 10:00 am led by Pastor Bigelow.
- ✚ Monday, September 7<sup>th</sup> is Labor Day.
- ✚ Vesper Service on Wednesday, September 9<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm.