

Lent 2 / AGM Sunday

March 1, 2026

Prelude: Come down, O Love Divine

arr. Bruce Nasmith

***Hymn: We are one in the Spirit**

No. 471

1. We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
and we pray that all unity may one day be restored,
and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
and, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

2. We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
and together we will spread the news that God is in our land,
and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
and, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

3. We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
and we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride,
and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
and, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

4. All praise to the Father, from whom all things come,
and praise to Christ Jesus, who is God's only Son,
and all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one,
and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
and, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

Welcome, Announcements & Worship Theme

CALL TO WORSHIP:

We come to worship to be inspired, blessed, lifted up, comforted, enlightened, and encouraged in faith, hope, and love.

We come to worship to be challenged, because we cannot grow if we are not challenged.

We live in a world that encourages us to invest our money and time wisely, expecting a good return on our investment.

We come to church to learn how to invest in love because it is valuable to us in and of itself. Anything we get back, then, becomes a bonus gift rather than an expectation.

How may we learn a more divine investment strategy for our personal lives and our church life?

Come to us, enlighten, provoke, inspire and empower us with clarity, insight and direction as we worship you this hour, O God.

ALL: Let us worship God together!

***Hymn: The love of God comes close**

No. 474

1. The love of God comes close
where stands an open door,
to let the stranger in,
to mingle rich and poor.
The love of God is here to stay,
embracing those who walk the Way;
the love of God is here to stay.

2. The peace of God comes close
to those caught in the storm,
forgoing lives of ease
to ease the lives forlorn.
The peace of God is here to stay,
embracing those who walk the Way;
the peace of God is here to stay.

3. The joy of God comes close
where faith encounters fears,
where heights and depths of life
are found through smiles and tears.
The joy of God is here to stay,
embracing those who walk the Way;
the joy of God is here to stay.

4. The grace of God comes close
to those whose grace is spent,
when hearts are tired or sore
and hope is bruised and bent.
The grace of God is here to stay,
embracing those who walk the Way;
the grace of God is here to stay.

5. The Son of God comes close
where people praise his name,
where bread and wine are blest
and shared as when he came.
The Son of God is here to stay,
embracing those who walk the Way;
the Son of God is here to stay.

Prayer of Approach, Confession & 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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;**

**And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil;**

**For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Peace of Christ be with you all;
And also with you.

Children's Time

(Children are invited to join in activities following Children's Time)

Choir: Call to remembrance

Richard Farrant

Call to remembrance, O Lord

Thy tender mercies

And Thy loving kindness

Which hath been ever of old

O remember not the sins and offences of my youth:

But according to Thy mercy

Think Thou on me, O Lord

For Thy goodness

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 12: 19-24 (p. 255)

Barb Keilhauer

Luke 14: 12-14 (p. 74)

INTRO: Our first reading this morning comes from 1 Samuel 12, verses 19-24. The people have asked for a King to rule them. For the prophet and judge Samuel, such a request is a rejection of God as their one and only true king. However, Samuel also tells them that God will never reject them and will acquiesce to their request. God may be hurt, but God's commitment and love for the people outweighs any hurt God may feel. Listen:

"¹⁹ All the people said to Samuel, "Pray to the Lord your God for your servants, so that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins the evil of demanding a king for ourselves."

²⁰ And Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the Lord your God, but serve God with all your heart, ²¹ and do not turn aside after useless things that cannot profit or save, for they are useless. ²² For God will not cast away God's people, for God's great name's sake, because it has pleased God to make you a people for God's self. ²³ Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord your God by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. ²⁴ Only fear God and serve God faithfully with all your heart, for consider what great things God has done for you." Amen.

INTRO: Our second reading comes from the gospel according to Luke 14, verses 12-14. Jesus has been invited to a dinner party with those of a higher class in the community. Here's what he has to say to challenge his host. Listen:

"¹² Jesus said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers and sisters or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴ And you will be

blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” Amen.

We are listening, O God;
Speak to us!

Sermon: GETTING A GOOD RETURN ON YOUR INVESTMENT

Dr. Harris

Choir: Love divine, all loves excelling

Sir David Willcocks

*Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heav'n to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation,
Enter ev'ry trembling heart.*

*Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all thy grace receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve thee as thy host above,
Pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love.*

*Finish then thy new creation:
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heav'n we take our place,*

*Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!*

Prayers of Thanksgiving & Pastoral Concern

***Hymn: We are God's people**

No. 472

1. We are God's people, the chosen of the Lord,
born of the Spirit, established by the word;
our cornerstone is Christ alone, and strong in him we stand:
oh let us live transparently,
and walk heart to heart and hand in hand.

2. We are God's loved ones, the bride of Christ our Lord,
for we have known it, the love of God outpoured;
now let us learn how to return the gift of love once given:
oh let us share each joy and care
and live with a zeal that pleases heaven.

3. We are the Body of which the Lord is head,
called to obey him, now risen from the dead;
he wills us be a family, diverse yet truly one:
oh let us freely give our gifts,
and so shall God's work on earth be done.

4. We are a temple, the Spirit's dwelling place,
formed in great weakness, a cup to hold God's grace;
alone, we die, for on its own each ember loses fire:
yet joined in one the flame burns on
to give warmth and light, and to inspire.

Benediction

***Threefold Amen**

Postlude: O love that will not let me go

Albert Peace

**Remain seated if you are more comfortable*

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We invite you to join us for lunch and the Annual General Meeting in our adjacent hall after the service.

All are welcome!

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OUR PURPOSE AS A CHURCH:

To become the hands, feet, voice and heart of Christ for each other and in the world.



Thank you for all the ways you contribute to our Armour Heights Community.

Scan here to make a donation through CanadaHelps:



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Kome Abel

Coming Events

Sunday, March 1

Lent 2 Sunday
AGM Meeting & Lunch, 12pm

Monday, March 2

Dance Fitness, 10:00am

Wednesday, March 4

Winter Study: “The Politics of Leadership”, 7:30pm in person & online

Friday, March 6

World Day of Prayer Service, 2pm
Youth Group, 7-9pm

Sunday, March 8

Lent 3 Sunday / Special Guest Preacher: The Rev. Dr. Ernest Van Eck, Principal of Knox College
Intergenerational Band Rehearsal, 12noon

Monday, March 9

Dance Fitness, 10:00am

Wednesday, March 11

Winter Study: “The Politics of Leadership”, 7:30pm in person & online

Saturday, March 14

The Great Armour Heights Baking Club: “Pi(e) Baking”, 1pm

Sunday, March 15

Lent 4 Sunday
Intergenerational Band Rehearsal, 12noon

Monday, March 16

Dance Fitness, 10:00am

Wednesday, March 18

Winter Study: “The Politics of Leadership”, 7:30pm in person & online

Sunday, March 22

Lent 5 / Intergenerational Worship
Nowruz Celebration after worship



Armour Heights Presbyterian Church

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“Discover the vitality of faith”

GETTING A GOOD RETURN ON YOUR INVESTMENT

1 Samuel 12: 19-24. Luke 14: 12-14

I started ministry here at Armour Heights church in August 2017. In November that same year we were holding a Christmas Bazaar at the church. There were many people coming and going from the church and wider community around the church. I was getting to know people and it was very busy. I was approached by a man with a thick accent and broken English. He was clearly new to Canada. He needed to speak to me urgently. He told me he was familiar to the former minister and he provided me with a few details suggesting he knew Rev. Bill and Armour Heights well enough. I told him it was a busy time right now but he was insistent it was urgent. I took him to my office and told him I could spare 5 minutes before I went back out to be with everyone else.

He told me a sad story of himself and his family trying to make a go of it in Canada, working multiple jobs and nursing various health concerns. He was sincere, intense, and detailed in the story he told me. He also promised to bring his family to meet me and other church members on Sunday. But what he needed now was a little help with transportation costs to and from work and help to pay his month's rent until the next paycheque came in. Here's where I was vulnerable: I wanted to deal with this quickly in order to get back out doing the rounds with our people; I wanted to believe this man's story was true and to help him in some way; and even if he wasn't altogether honest, he clearly needed some help. And so, I committed some cash to him and even though he wanted more, I gave him what I had and committed nothing more. Plus, I got his promise to come to the church Sunday with his family so we could meet them all.

Of course, not only did he never come back, but I never got any money back even though he promised to pay it back. Now, let me say that this

has happened to me several times before, and I bet it has happened to some of you too. Sometimes we have been taken advantage of because people have pulled at our heartstrings, maybe at a little guilt at our privilege, and maybe a little bit at some feeling of obligation at our duty as Christians to be generous and giving to those in need. But even as people have been in need, we have also felt taken advantage of. Sometimes people have also resented us for our privilege or good fortune, and our sense of guilt and obligation have been used against us leaving us feeling complicated, resentful and defensive too.

It's not easy figuring out our motivations, our obligations, and our overall feelings when it comes to sharing, giving and serving other people.

And this is as true for us as a church as it is for us as individual persons. Why do we reach out to people? Why do we welcome people? What expectations do we have of any return on our investment of time, generosity and care? Have we ever been disappointed and even hurt because for all our sacrifice and service we have sometimes received little in return in terms of gratitude, appreciation and some tangible giving back?

The truth is, even as we sometimes claim to want to give expecting nothing in return, this is not the honest truth. In any meaningful exchange of generosity and service we always hope for some return whether we admit it to ourselves or not. We want to be lifted up within ourselves and feel good about what we're doing, and this also comes with some giving back from those helped by their words of thanks, their money and their volunteer time. That's also how we build community and relationships in community. It has to be a two-way street in some way. Just giving one way without anything back is no way to survive and thrive as a church. What can you give back for all

you receive and how may you give to others inviting them to give back too?

But having said all this, the world around us has changed, which also means our church has changed too. After the 2nd world war here in Canada, churches exploded with people and young families starting to build their lives. Churches were the social hubs for Sundays and nothing else was open for business or available for activity for individuals or families. People put their time, money and participation into churches, and budgets were based on donations from members and friends of the congregation. Whether for social reasons or spiritual ones, churches were the places to be and people put their money and time into building new churches as much as caring for older ones.

But several generations later, we live in a very different world. Let me highlight a few of those differences.

- 1) A lot happens in our world on a Sunday commercially and socially, and churches are no longer a central social hub for most people.
- 2) People themselves who have been in Canada over a generation are far more fluid spiritually speaking and spiritual community is no longer a central priority for most 2nd or 3rd generation Canadians.
- 3) Immigrants and refugees are more eager to participate in church, whereas only a small minority of 2nd or 3rd generation Canadians are ready to do so. If you don't come to church primarily for social reasons, it has to be because you are a spiritual seeker. That's not the majority of Canadians. But newer immigrants and refugees come from situations and places of the world where spiritual need, faith, hope and love from God in community are urgent necessities for themselves and their families.

4) People's financial resources are more splintered and stretched over various groups, charities and memberships. Church is not going to be the central focus of giving for the vast majority. And new Canadians or those with fewer resources come to church with their heart and need, but little money.

5) Finally, people with resources also have busier lives and few people, working or retired, have as much time to allocate to the church above other competing demands on their time. People have less time to give and this undermines not only the working of the church but the building of community too.

OK, so then, what can we expect realistically in terms of serving and getting back as church? How do we build meaningful community here with a new understanding of our current reality which is a more diversified community with more fractured resources of money and time, in person, and now ever more so, online?

This is the right moment to dive into our scriptures in search of some revelatory guidance. In our first reading, we have the prophet and judge - Samuel, confronting the people with their request to have a king anointed to rule them. They are not happy with a political system where God is king and judges like Samuel rule them. But wanting a king rather than accepting God as king is also a rejection of God as Samuel sees it. Nonetheless, the word of God Samuel hears within himself is to give way to the will of the people. Even though God and Samuel may be hurt and feel rejected, God continues to be committed to the people whatever they decide. "Give them what they want" Samuel hears God saying to him. "Give the people what they want even if you have serious misgivings about it."

Why? What is God's motive for giving the people what they want even if it's not the best decision? Here's what Samuel tells them: "God will

not cast away God's people... because it has **pleased** God to make you a people for God's self." There it is - God's core motive. Even though the expectation of the covenant is that the people give back to God as God gives to them, the reality is that God's heart is in the pleasure of the giving. It is all about love. Love is its own reward and its own driver. Even when there is disappointment or a lack of reciprocity, love keeps us in the relationship hoping time and commitment will bring some benefit too.

Now, please don't get me wrong. This is not a formula for staying in a relationship that lacks reciprocity, or is abusive or demeaning of your humanity or self-esteem. Absolutely not! It's more of a parent-child relationship or a family member relationship where your commitment has to adjust your expectations to the reality that there are limits and disappointments. There is also the reality of seeing bad consequences of choices being made but allowing the person you love to make them and being ready to support them however things turn out. This is God too with us and with all humanity in a world being turned upside down everyday. But the key is in the motivation. If love does not give us the pleasure and fulfillment in itself, then any expectation of some return, named or unnamed, that does not pan out will lead to resentment and bitterness. We need to feel clear and good that we are acting out of love in what we do outside any response of the person so served – truly difficult but essential if it's love.

And love has to be the biggest single motive for what we do not only in our personal lives, but also in church if we want to flourish as persons in community. In the case of my opening example, I have no regrets giving away money the times I have because I did it for the right reasons. Yes, I was taken advantage of, and yes, between my sense of compassion, obligation, and guilt in my privilege, I did what I did. But I also had to remind myself that love and love alone has to be the final motive in my giving. Sure, I hoped the man would come to church with

his family, and sure, being paid back in terms of offering to the church or to me personally would have been nice. But desperation makes people do all kinds of things. Have I become more vigilant and smarter about what people ask of me and us as a church? Absolutely! But this should not shut down our compassion for people in their need either. Let us never lose love in the face of deception or betrayal. That would be a tragedy for our identity as the hands, feet, voice and heart of Christ for each other and in our world.

And this brings us to our second reading from the gospel. Here, Jesus actually becomes intentional in challenging people to give to those where you expect nothing in return. Why? There are two reasons actually and Jesus shares these reasons throughout the gospel. First, if you expect nothing in return, whatever you may get back is always received as a gift rather than an expectation of payback. Isn't it so much more energizing of the love in you and the joy in you too, to receive a gift rather than a debt repaid? Imagine if we saw everything we experienced and received in church as a gift. How would that inspire and lift up our spirits personally and our togetherness too?

Second, if you don't expect anything back you focus on the gift that is the opportunity to give. When you see people helped and served it pleases your heart as God is described as being pleased simply to love and to share. You don't need anything back to experience an abundance. But of course, any giving back is always a wonderful gift too. It's a bonus!

OK, so, on this Annual General Meeting Sunday as we ponder our constantly changing and changed reality as church, what may we be called to learn and internalize about being church in a new way because of our new circumstances too?

We are being called to love without strings attached, visible and invisible to us. We serve people and we serve each other and our motivations have to become purified. We need to do what we do and engage as we engage because we want to grow and practice our loving. Service in love should be its own reward when it's pure. When we give to each other or give back to the church it should not be seen as payback for what we have received, either. It should be seen as a gift of love for love experienced and felt.

But finally, this also makes us open and welcoming to those who are among us who are in need materially, socially, emotionally and spiritually. We are, as the great St. Augustine declared 1500 years ago: a community for those in need of healing and forgiveness rather than a society of the holy and righteous. We all recognize our need and that's why we're here. We need to receive love but we also need to exercise love in order to heal and be made whole. Each of us is called on a journey of healing toward wholeness growing in our learning and practice of what it means to love without strings attached. I am less vulnerable to expecting some tangible return even as I am a little wiser about the way desperation makes people behave in the world. At the same time, I experience so much more how so much in my life is a gift given and received. That opens me up to so much more fulfillment and joy.

What about you? Is what you give here a gift of love which gives you pleasure in and of itself without strings attached? And is whatever you receive not simply a return of your investment but a gift given to you in love? May we grow in the joy and pleasure of love here and may we take this way of being into the rest of our lives too.

Amen.