



ST. ANDREW'S
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

February 22, 2026

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was famished. - Matthew 4:1-2

A scribe then approached and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. - Matthew 8:19-20

Dear Members and Friends of St. Andrew's:

Friday February 6, 2026 was like any other day in my life of ministry. I got up, got the kids to school, and went about my work. I had a funeral later in the day, but I had also scheduled the gas company to come change our meter around the same time. My wife and I planned for her to deal with the gas company while I took care of the funeral. We didn't plan for anything unusual happen, but then, you typically don't. On my way to the committal, however, I received a panicked text from her: "We have no heat or hot water!" It seems there was an issue with our gas pressure, and they had to switch our gas off. It was already shaping up to be one of the coldest weekends of the year. I completed my work at the graveside and rushed home. We received no answers and were uncertain about how to follow up after the gas company workers left; we had just a "blue ticket" and a rapidly cooling home.

As the Property Committee took matters into their own capable hands, Katie and I made the somewhat rushed decision to go stay with some friends back in Walkerton, not realizing that we were headed directly into the heart of a blizzard which was tearing its way through southwestern Ontario. Remember that one? We certainly do! What should have been an hour-and-a-half drive turned into four hours, but we made it to our friends' house safe and sound by 10:30 that night. Unfortunately, we were also completely stormed in. The snowbanks were four cars high, and the ploughs were struggling to move through the snow which was still actively falling. I had no way to get back to the church for Sunday morning.

So, Saturday morning, I began making calls. Typically, a Presbytery has a list of people who are available for pulpit supply. I went down the list, contacting each of the thirteen names on it, but every single one was booked up for Sunday morning. Finally, I remembered we have our own resident retired United Church minister, so I called up Phil, who was more than happy to come to my rescue. I could at least rest secure in the knowledge that my church service was in good hands.

Sunday morning came and went, and by the evening the roads had cleared up enough for us to creep our way back into the city. We returned to the house to check on the cats, who we had holed up in the minister's study with food, water, litter boxes and a space heater, and we spent the night at a hotel just down the street. Finally, Monday afternoon, we got someone in to resolve our heating issue. By about 1:00 p.m., the gas was back on, and by nightfall the house was warming up. Our little adventure was over. We were glad to be home. We'd been just under four days without our beloved house, but those four days were enough to remind us of what that house means to us.

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I don't deal well with being away from home in the best of circumstances, but being forced out of house and home without warning – that's something else entirely. It makes me think of the many people in this world who do not have a home of their own to live in at all. If I am brought to the brink because I can't go home for four days, how must it feel to be years without a house, without a family, without a country? This is why homelessness is an issue that we are called to have such compassion for. It is no small matter to be without a home. Many of us don't fully understand what it *really* means to be houseless, truly, but one person who did understand was Jesus of Nazareth. His perfect compassion is matched by an intimate knowledge of the suffering for which we are meant to exercise our own compassion.

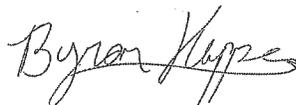
I thought a lot about Jesus between the 6th and the 9th of February. Lent is a time in which we are metaphorically “with Jesus in the desert”. Before beginning his ministry, Jesus went out into the desert for forty days and forty nights, a deeply symbolic time of preparation. Lent is our “forty days in the desert with Jesus”. We choose to go without certain things during this time as a symbolic reminder that Jesus went without. But Lent is not meant to be the end of our time of deprivation, and indeed his forty days in the desert were not the only time in which Jesus went without. As Jesus said to the scribe who intended to follow him: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Jesus' entire ministry was a period of homelessness, and his warning to us is that being a follower of Christ is itself a state of being without a home in the world.

“The foxes and birds of the natural world have more of a home than I do, and if you follow me, you will be like me, without a home in a world that does not understand you.” Jesus' radically itinerant ministry ended at the cross. We, too, are called to take up our cross with Jesus, but in almost every case, none of this is meant to be taken literally. Our “Christian homelessness” does not mean that we can never own a house, but it does mean that there are certain natural instincts that we choose to ignore. In the animal kingdom, amongst the foxes and the birds, the instinct for self-preservation helps God's creatures to survive; but in human beings, this instinct carried to the extreme with no conscience and no care for the wellbeing of others becomes what we might call gluttony and greed. Many Christians have homes, but those homes are extensions of Christ's hands and feet, meant to be opened up to those who need them when possible. If we were merely animals of the natural world, we would hoard our goods and defend ourselves from others; instead we share our wealth, and open our doors to others. That is what it means to be a follower of Christ in this world; to be without a home in this world.

Lent is a time in which we are reminded of how lightly Jesus walked upon this earth, and we are called to walk lightly with him. Easter is a reminder of the eternal promise of the resurrection; we do not make our permanent home here on the earth because we know that there is more beyond this life that we are preparing for. We remember that future life to come, the life of the resurrection, in those who have already passed from this earth into the next life. We would invite you to share your Easter Offering this year in the memory of any and all of those who have passed, as our special offering this year will go towards the initial setup of the “Memorial Tree of Life” wall of commemoration.

I invite you to join us this Lenten season for another journey through the desert with Jesus. By the time Easter Sunday is upon us, it will be spring, the cold and snow of winter will be long behind us, and the bright heat of summer will be ahead! Come and join us in being the hands and feet of Christ in the world in this season of contemplation, reflection, and ultimately of renewal!

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Byron Kappes". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

The Reverend Byron Kappes