

July 12, 2020
St. Albert United Church

COMMUNITY WELCOME <https://youtu.be/QdL7SoCJ9zU>

Tawow, Bienvenue, Welcome to St. Albert United Church on this Sunday as we gather through the wonder of virtual means.

As we come together, we acknowledge that we do so in the traditional lands of Treaty 6 First Nations and a significant trading community of the Métis Nation. Let us come before the Creator as we offer our prayers, hear holy story, and sing sacred songs.

We also affirm all are welcome to share fully in our life and work regardless of age, race, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, belief, economic circumstance, ability or background. St. Albert United Church: a place where EVERYONE has room to grow.

If you have a concern regarding someone who is ill, grieving or in need, or would like to chat please inform the ministers.

Note that for the songs/hymns there is a link for the words and music. Simply copy and paste.

We gather, cultivating space for everyone...

LIGHTING A CANDLE:

This candle dances with the presence of the Spirit, reminding us of the warmth of the community in which God calls us to gather and the light that shines with wisdom, insight, and clarity for us in our time of worship.

Written by Peter Chynoweth. **Gathering**, Pentecost 1 2020, page 33. Used with permission.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come.

Come softly.

Come singing.

Come sorrowing or in joy.

Come, prayer-filled and in wonder.

Come now.

Come worship, you, whom God made for love.

Written by Peter Chynoweth. **Gathering**, Pentecost 1 2020, page 33. Used with permission.

GATHERING PRAYER:

O God,

We gather together in Your presence with expectation,
hungry for an encounter with You,
eager to hear Your Word.

Open our eyes and ears to the presence of Your Holy Spirit.

May the seeds of Your Word scattered among us this morning
fall on fertile soil.

May they take root in our hearts and lives,
and produce an abundant harvest
of good words and deeds.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ,
our teacher and our Lord.

Amen.

~ Written by Christine Longhurst, Posted on re:Worship

OPENING HYMN: MV 174 “Soil of God, You and I” (Holy Ground)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OwHZD4W3iI>

TIME FOR ALL AGES:

Animated Video Story: “Parable of the Sower”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tb7bvF5Ucrk>

SONG: “Parable of the Sower”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8WZTQv2rhE>

We listen, attentive to the voice of Jesus

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

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The biblical writers understood family to be the foundational unit of society and religious experience, and they understood this particular family (beginning with Abraham and Sarah) to be the foundation of ancient Israelite society and religion. As such, these stories explore not only the complications of domestic ties, they also explore the connection between family dynamics, social customs, and covenantal life.

God chose Jacob even before his birth, a choice that was clearly not based on Jacob's merits or achievements. Indeed, this is one of many stories about siblings (see also Genesis 4; Genesis 21; Genesis 48; 1 Samuel 16; Luke 15:11-32) in which God acts contrary to the social custom of favoring the firstborn.

Amy Merrill Willis, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Lynchburg College, Lynchburg, VA

A Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures:
Genesis 25: 19-34

The Birth and Youth of Esau and Jacob

¹⁹ These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, ²⁰ and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. ²¹ Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. ²² The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?"^[a] So she went to inquire of the LORD. ²³ And the LORD said to her,

“Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples born of you shall be divided;
the one shall be stronger than the other,
the elder shall serve the younger.”

²⁴ When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵ The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. ²⁶ Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob.^[b] Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

²⁷ When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. ²⁸ Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Esau Sells His Birthright

²⁹ Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. ³⁰ Esau said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!” (Therefore he was called Edom.^[c]) ³¹ Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” ³² Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?” ³³ Jacob said, “Swear to me first.”^[d] So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

One: Herein we seek wisdom. **All: Thanks be to God.**

As we ponder the parable of the sower, this invites us to reflect on a number of questions:

- What does it mean to be good soil, prepared to receive the word of the kingdom?
- How do we assess what kind of shape our soil is in?
- What would we need to do for the seed to be able to take root in our bodies and souls?
- How will we know if this is happening?
- And how might we nurture good soil in those around us?

While we set about cultivating good soil, we are not without hope. It is true that seeds landing on hard or rocky ground stand less of a chance of gaining root and thriving but it does, sometimes, happen. There are remarkable pictures of trees growing out of rocks and flowers that push up through the pavement. These tenacious plants offer signs that the word of the kin(g)dom will continue to find a way to grow even on the days when we feel beaten down, or overcome by thorns, or at our rockiest.

Holly Hearon, **Professor Emerita of New Testament** Christian Theological Seminary Indianapolis, IN

A Reading from the Gospels:

Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-33

The Parable of the Sower

13 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ² Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And he told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. ⁶ But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ Let anyone with ears^[a] listen!”

The Parable of the Sower Explained

¹⁸ “Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. ²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away.^[a] ²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing.

²³ But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

One: Herein we seek wisdom. **All: Thanks be to God.**

SILENT REFLECTION:

We take a few moments to reflect on all we have heard.

HYMN: VU 503 “When Seed Falls on Good Soil”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3Yr1WfvO9U>

MESSAGE: “Seeds of Love Planted in the Soil”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDhaQO0WJoA>

SOLO: “The Parable of the Sower and the Seed” (Take Care of Me)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2bVgSWb7mA>

PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE: LIKE A SEED

For all the blessings of this life,

we give thanks to You, Creator God.

For families, friends, colleagues, neighbors, and strangers,

who nurture us, that the love of God may grow within.

That Your love, your Word, like a seed,

may grow to produce in us, good fruit.

May your love be like a seed, taking root and growing strong.

For the leaders of various nations and cities,

that they may lead with strong hearts and gentle hands and generous spirits,
with compassion and mercy, with wisdom and grace.

May they reflect your will guiding all their actions and decisions.

May your love be like a seed, taking root and growing strong.

For those who serve in harms way,
those who live in dangerous places,
those who live in areas of war and strife,
those who live in fear,
those who worry about employment, bills, food,
and struggle just to find dignity in life.
May your grace bring peace and safety to all people, one to another.

May your love be like a seed, taking root and growing strong.

For those who suffer from any illness or dis-ease—
of mind, body, or spirit.
Restore these, and all those we carry in our hearts, to fullness of health—
health as only you, O God, can bring.
May your mercy shower each of us with healing mercy and love.

May your love be like a seed, taking root and growing strong.

For those who are dying, and for those who have died.
Send forth your comforting love.
Give solace to those who mourn.
Console those who grieve.
May your grace surround us
like a mantle upon our heads,
a shawl upon our shoulders,
a hand, to hold our hand.

May your love, be like a seed, taking root and growing strong.

Amen

— written by Terri and posted on **RevGalBlogPals**. <http://revgalblogpals.blogspot.ca/>

SHARING OF GIFTS

It is very important that we remember to continue to share our gifts of time, connection, prayer, talent and resources with God's people. Please, consider continuing to support agencies and associations which have relied on your financial support prior to these changing world circumstances. We recognize that during these difficult times, personal finances may be severely diminished. However, please consider contributing financially as you are able to support St. Albert United Church's ministry. Expenses continue even with the suspension of services and operations.

Please check the church website for ways in which you can support ministry with time, talents and resources.

(www.stalbertunited.ca)

SHARING OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S WORK

Reach out in a variety of ways to your family, friends, and fellow congregation members—connect with and support each other.

Please check the church website for updates and information.

(www.stalbertunited.ca)

HYMN: "As We Go Now"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SLDuffqjzU>

BLESSING:

If there is righteousness in the heart,

If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character.

If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home.

If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.

If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

So let it be.

(Scottish Blessing)

https://www.faithandworship.com/Celtic_Blessings_and_Prayers

MUSICAL POSTLUDE

