

**Applewood United Church
An Affirming Community
and Westminster United Church
Joint Worship, July 30, 2023**

Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

Centering Music: "Come and Fill Our Hearts" - MV 16

Come and fill our hearts with your peace.
You alone, O God, are holy.
Come and fill our hearts with your peace,
Alleluia!

Call to Worship:

One: In the seed that lies unseen, resting, cold, and still, God is –

All: and hope grows.

One: In the possibilities that await us, known, unimagined, God is –

All: and life grows.

One: In our hurt and emptiness, masked, buried, overlooked, God is –

All: and healing grows.

One: In this time of worship, singing, praying and being, we come to know this God who is –

All: and we grow.

One: We gather to worship and remember that even in the most barren of times, God is at work.
May the Spirit be our guide and strength.

Wetaskiwin Writers (Gathering Pentecost 1 2023, p. 38)

Opening Hymn: "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus" - VU 357

Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear,
things I would ask him to tell me if he were here:
scenes by the wayside, tales of the sea,
stories of Jesus, tell them to me.

First let me hear how the children stood round his knee,
and I shall fancy his blessing resting on me;
words full of kindness, deeds full of grace,
all in the lovelight of Jesus' face.

Tell me, in accents of wonder, how rolled the sea
tossing the boat in a tempest on Galilee!
And how the Master, ready and kind,
chided the billows and hushed the wind.
Into the city I'd follow the children's band,
waving a branch of the palm tree high in my hand;

one of his heralds, yes, I would sing
loudest hosannas! Jesus is king!

Show me that scene in the garden of bitter pain;
and of the cross where my Saviour for me was slain.
Sad ones or bright ones, so that they be
stories of Jesus, tell them to me.

Opening Prayer: (all together)

Loving God,

Your love for us is hidden and shown every day.

You shimmer like a pearl in the love we experience;

You flourish in our community;

You bubble up, yeast-like, in our midst.

**Gather us into the net of love
which holds us as one large family
with all creation.**

**As we come together today,
show yourself here, among this people,
and teach us to be the love that is so needed
to bring your realm to fulfillment.**

Amen.

From Seasons of the Spirit worship resource, 2005.

Time of Wonder

Hymn: "Small Things Count" - VU 361

Small things count, so Jesus said:
cups of water, crumbs of bread,
small things done because we're kind
count as big things in God's mind.

Small things make the big things grow:
grains of yeast inside the dough,
puffs that fill a big balloon,
notes that make a happy tune.

Every hair that's on our head,
every sparrow, Jesus said,
God takes care of, counts and knows,
God loves us from top to toes!

Sung Response: "Open our Hearts" - MV 21

Open our hearts, open our minds.
Open our lives to you O loving God.
Open our hearts, open our minds.
Open our lives to you O loving God.
Open our hearts.

Scripture Readings: *The Inclusive Bible*

Romans 8: 26-39 - The Spirit intercedes for us when we cannot pray.

The Spirit, too, comes to help us in our weakness. For we don't know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit expresses our plea with groanings too deep for words. And God, who knows everything in our hearts, knows perfectly well what the Spirit is saying, because her intercessions for God's holy people are made according to the mind of God. We know that God makes everything work together for the good of those who love God and have been called according to God's purpose. They are the ones God chose long ago, predestined to share the image of the Only Begotten, in order that Christ might be the firstborn of many. Those God predestined have likewise been called; those God called have also been justified; and those God justified have, in turn, been glorified. What should be our response? Simply this: "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Since God did not spare the Only Begotten, but gave Christ up for the sake of us all, we may be certain, after such a gift, that God will freely give us everything. Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? Since God is the One who justifies, who has the power to condemn? Only Christ Jesus, who died—or rather, was raised—and sits at the right hand of God, and who now intercedes for us! What will separate us from the love of Christ? Trouble? Calamity? Persecution? Hunger? Nakedness? Danger? Violence? As scripture says, "For your sake, we're being killed all day long; we're looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered." Yet in all this we are more than conquerors because of God who has loved us. For I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, neither heights nor depths—nor anything else in all creation—will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Savior.

Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52 - Five parables: mustard seed, yeast, treasure, pearls, net.

Jesus presented another parable to the crowds: "The kingdom of heaven is like the mustard seed which a farmer sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the biggest shrub of all—it becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come to perch in its branches." Jesus offered them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast a baker took and mixed in with three measures of flour until it was leavened all through."

"The kingdom of heaven is like a buried treasure found in a field. The ones who discovered it hid it again, and, rejoicing at the discovery, went and sold all their possessions and bought that field. "Or again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant's search for fine pearls. When one pearl of great value was found, the merchant went back and sold everything else and bought it. "Or again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collected all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishers hauled it ashore. Then, sitting down, they collected the good ones in a basket and threw away those that were of no use. This is how it will be at the end of time. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the just and throw the wicked into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and the gnashing of teeth. "Have you understood all this?" "Yes," they answered. To this Jesus replied, "Every religious scholar who has become a student of the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who can bring from the storeroom both the new and the old."

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Reflection: "Surprised by God" Rev. Irene Ty

Hymn: "Holy Spirit, Hear Us" - VU 377

Holy Spirit, hear us,
help us while we sing;
breathe into the music

of the praise we bring.

Holy Spirit, shine now
on the book we read;
light its holy pages
with the truth we need.

Holy Spirit, prompt us
when we bow to pray;
speak within and teach us
what we ought to say.

Holy Spirit, help us
daily by your might,
what is wrong to conquer,
and to choose the right.

Offering Invitation

Gift of Music

Hymn of Dedication: "For the Gift of Creation" - VU 538

For the gift of creation, the gift of your love,
and the gift of the Spirit by which we live,
we thank you and give you the fruit of our hands.
May your grace be proclaimed by the gifts that we give.

Offering Prayer:

All: All that we have is from you, Creator. With these gifts, we seek to be like you: creating a world where love is known, sharing the goodness of beauty and kindness, blessing our neighbours with our faith in action. Bless these gifts and may they be a sign of our co-creating ministry in your name. Amen.

Written by Wendy MacLean, Gathering, Summer 2023, page 50. Used with permission.

Prayers of the People:

Receive our prayers as we sing the ancient words Jesus taught us

The Lord's Prayer (Sung) - VU 959

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil
for the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever.

Closing Hymn: "Travel On, Travel On" - VU 647

Travel on, travel on, there's a spirit that is flowing,
a spirit that is flowing night and day.

Travel on, travel on, with the spirit that is flowing,
the spirit will be with us all the way.
Travel on, travel on, with the river that is flowing,
the spirit will be with us all the way.

Travel on, travel on, there's a spirit that is growing,
the spirit grows like flowers night and day.
Travel on, travel on, with the spirit that is growing,
the spirit will be with us all the way.
Travel on, travel on, with the flower that is growing,
the spirit will be with us all the way.

Travel on, travel on, there's a spirit that is playing,
the spirit plays like music every day.
Travel on, travel on, with the spirit that is playing,
the spirit will be with us all the way.
Travel on, travel on, with the music that is playing,
the spirit will be with us all the way.

In the kingdom of heaven is our end and our beginning,
the road that we must travel every day.
Travel on, travel on, to the kingdom that is coming,
the kingdom will be with us all the way.
Travel on, travel on, to the kingdom that is coming,
the kingdom will be with us all the way.

Commissioning /Blessing

Sung Blessing: "When You Walk From Here" - VU 298 sung twice

When you walk from here,
when you walk from here,
walk with justice, walk with mercy,
and with God's humble care.