

**Applewood United Church  
An Affirming Community  
Joint Worship for July 9, 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: "Gather Us In" MV 7**

Gather us in, ground us in you.

Gather us in, ground us in you.

Gather us in, gather us in, ground us, ground us in you.

**Call to Worship and Opening Prayer**

One: Come on in if you are weary,

**All: bring your tiredness and your worries.**

One: Welcome if you are excited and full of energy,

**All: bring your joy and your liveliness.**

One: In this time of worship, we celebrate

God's presence in all our lives, all the time -

**All: when we feel worn out and when we feel energized,  
when we feel burdened and when we feel we have lots to share.**

One: Come in to worship, come in to share,

**All: come in to be lifted in body, mind and spirit.**

One: Let's pray together:

**All: Creator God,**

**you call us to worship and to work together this day.**

**We answer with voices raised in song and prayer,  
with hearts open to the transforming possibilities  
of life when we follow your way.**

**Help us to know that your way of love and justice  
is a path worthy of our time and our effort.**

**Give us the wisdom and grace to come to you  
when we feel weary, to share our burdens and our joys.**

**We pray in the name of the One whose yoke is easy,  
and burden is light – Jesus the Christ. Amen**

**Opening Hymn: "Come In, Come In and Sit Down" VU 395**

Come in, come in and sit down,  
you are a part of the family.  
We are lost and we are found,  
and we are a part of the family.

You know the reason why you came,  
yet no reason can explain;  
so share in the laughter and cry in the pain,  
for we are a part of the family.

Come in, come in and sit down,  
you are a part of the family.  
We are lost and we are found,  
and we are a part of the family.

God is with us in this place,  
like a mother's warm embrace.  
We're all forgiven by God's grace,  
for we are a part of the family.

Come in, come in and sit down,  
you are a part of the family.  
We are lost and we are found,  
and we are a part of the family.

There's life to be shared in the bread and the wine;  
we are the branches, Christ is the vine.  
This is God's temple, it's not yours or mine,  
but we are a part of the family.

Come in, come in and sit down,  
you are a part of the family.  
We are lost and we are found,  
and we are a part of the family.

There's rest for the weary and health for us all;  
there's a yoke that is easy, and a burden that's small.  
So come in and worship and answer the call,  
for we are a part of the family.

Come in, come in and sit down,

you are a part of the family.  
We are lost and we are found,  
and we are a part of the family.

**Prayer for Reflection and Revelation:** “Rhythms of Grace” by Sam Hargreaves/engageworship.org

One: Jesus, Prince of Peace,

**All: teach us to walk in your rhythms of grace.**

Holy God, forgive our impatience with everyday life.  
We rush around, irritated at delays,  
frustrated with things and people  
which do not move at the pace we would like.

One: Jesus, Prince of Peace,

**All: teach us to walk in your rhythms of grace.**

Holy God, forgive our impatience with answers to prayer.  
Sometimes we treat you like a vending machine,  
or assume to know your will and your best for us.  
Help us to trust your timing and your kindness.

One: Jesus, Prince of Peace,

**All: teach us to walk in your rhythms of grace.**

Holy God, forgive our impatience with your coming again.  
You are not slow, you are patient,  
and you long for all to come to you willingly.  
May we live in holy anticipation of your return.

One: Jesus, Prince of Peace,

**All: teach us to walk in your rhythms of grace.**

Thank you that you are gracious and compassionate,  
slow to anger and rich in love.  
You are patient with our mistakes  
and forgive our sins.

We receive your peace afresh today.

One: Jesus, Prince of Peace,

**All: teach us to walk in your rhythms of grace.**

**Sung Response:** “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying” VU 400

Lord, listen to your children praying,  
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;  
Lord, listen to your children praying,  
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

**Scripture Readings:**

Song of Solomon 2:8–13      *NRSV*

The voice of my beloved!

Look, he comes,  
leaping upon the mountains,  
bounding over the hills.

My beloved is like a gazelle  
or a young stag.

Look, there he stands  
behind our wall,  
gazing in at the windows,  
looking through the lattice.

My beloved speaks and says to me:

‘Arise, my love, my fair one,  
and come away;

for now the winter is past,  
the rain is over and gone.

The flowers appear on the earth;  
the time of singing has come,  
and the voice of the turtle-dove  
is heard in our land.

The fig tree puts forth its figs,  
and the vines are in blossom;  
they give forth fragrance.

Arise, my love, my fair one,  
and come away.

Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30      *The Inclusive Bible*

Jesus said:

“What comparison can I make with this generation? They are like children shouting to others as they sit in the marketplace, ‘We piped you a tune, but you wouldn’t dance. We sang you a dirge, but you wouldn’t mourn.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He is possessed.’

The Chosen One comes, and they say, ‘This one is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ Wisdom will be vindicated by her own actions.”

Then Jesus prayed, “Abba, God, Creator of heaven and earth, to you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and clever, you have revealed to the youngest children. Yes, Abba, everything as you want it to be.”

Jesus continued,

“Everything has been handed over to me  
by Abba God.

No one knows the Only Begotten

except Abba God,  
and no one knows Abba God  
except the Only Begotten –  
and those to whom the Only Begotten  
wants to give that revelation.  
Come to me,  
all you who labour and carry heavy burdens,  
and I will give you rest.  
Take my yoke upon your shoulders,  
and learn from me,  
for I am gentle and humble of heart.  
Here you will find rest for your souls,  
for my yoke is easy,  
and my burden is light.”

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

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**Reflection:** Traveling Lightly

**Hymn:** “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say” VU 626

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
'Come unto me and rest;  
lay down, O weary one, lay down  
your head upon my breast.'  
I came to Jesus as I was,  
weary and worn and sad;  
I found in him a resting place,  
and he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
'Behold, I freely give  
the living water; thirsty one,  
stoop down, and drink, and live.'  
I came to Jesus, and I drank  
of that life-giving stream;  
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
and now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
'I am this dark world's light;  
look unto me, your morn shall rise,

and all your day be bright.'  
I looked to Jesus, and I found  
in him my star, my sun;  
and in that light of life I'll walk  
till travelling days are done.

### **Introduction to the Offering**

#### **Gift of Music**

**Hymn of Dedication:** "Grant Us, God" VU 540  
Grant us, God, the grace of giving  
with a spirit large and free,  
that ourselves and all our living  
we may offer faithfully.

#### **Offering Prayer:**

**All: We bring our gifts to you, God.  
Here is the work of our hands,  
and here is the love of our hearts.  
Accept them and use them,  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

#### **Prayers of the People**

Loving and Sustaining God,  
we bring our thanks today for the bounty of the earth,  
for the rich diversity found in creation,  
for the miraculous ways that life sustains life,  
and all is interconnected.

We thank you for the goodness that can reside within the human heart,  
and the expression of that goodness in word and deed.

We give thanks, God, for those who work to lessen the burdens  
that others may carry – loneliness, hopelessness, worry.

One: God, hear our prayer.

**All: And in your love, answer.**

We know, Compassionate God, that there are many burdens  
that can weigh down hearts, lives and communities.

And so we pray for those carrying the burden of health concerns,  
waiting for tests or test results, receiving treatment or waiting  
for treatment, living with new diagnoses or waiting to be diagnosed.

We pray for all those carrying the burden of grief and loss today – loss of

health, loss of a dear friend or family member, loss of independence, loss of employment or housing.

One: God, hear our prayer.

**All: And in your love, answer.**

We offer our prayers, God, for those whose who are burdened because we have shoved their concerns to the margins of our society, and we pray for the unhoused and the hungry, the ones who suffer from mental illnesses including addiction and depression, we pray for members of the 2SLGBTQIA + community, facing increasing intolerance and hate even in our country, we pray for Indigenous people still working through the generational trauma of the '60's scoop' or residential schools.

Give us the wisdom to know what burdens us, God, so that we may be free to have the energy and insight to act with justice and for hope for all your people and all your creation.

One: God, hear our prayer.

**All: And in your love, answer.**

### **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: "What A Friend We Have in Jesus" VU 664**

What a friend we have in Jesus,  
all our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry  
everything to God in prayer!

O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
all because we do not carry  
everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged;  
take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful,

who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness;  
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,  
cumbered with a load of care?  
Christ the Saviour is our refuge;  
take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Do our friends despise, forsake us?  
Are we tempted to despair?  
Jesus' strength will shield our weakness,  
and we'll find new courage there.

### **Commissioning /Blessing**

**Sung Blessing:** "When You Walk From Here" VU298  
When you walk from here,  
when you walk from here,  
walk with justice, walk with mercy,  
and with God's humble care.

### **Rev Joanne's Reflection**

It's the traveling time of year, when families pack up for vacations, trips or just a day away at a park or beach. I remember well preparing for even one day away with four children – snacks, strollers, drinks and diapers, each parents with a backpack, sometimes the older kids also laden with bags of one sort or another. I also remember what a joy it was, as my daughter and three sons grew, to be able to head out for a day's adventure without all those extra burdens.

I'm sure that those aren't the kinds of burdens that Jesus is talking about in this passage from the gospel of Matthew assigned for this week. In the first century of ancient Jerusalem, there were many burdens that Jesus' audience would have carried. There was the yoke of occupation by the Romans, with extra layers of taxes and laws, there was the yoke of Jewish laws, which could restrict lives and left many on the margins, there was the burden of simply trying to provide enough food and shelter for families in a time when there was not plentiful resources. Of course there would also have been the very human burdens of worry and illness and injustice that are very much still a part of our lives today.

Our passage begins as Jesus describes the community that he sees – children whose music is not understood, whose tune is not heard, a community that does not react as it should. John was described as possessed because he lived an ascetic life and spoke both fiercely and unwaveringly about our need for redemption. Jesus lived a very different life, and spoke in a different way, but he is still called a glutton and a drunkard because he ate and drank and connected with those who carried some of the heaviest burdens that their society could hang upon them.

I'm sure there were those in the crowd that day that had heard those descriptions of both John the Baptist and Jesus, themselves. Perhaps they were overheard in the marketplace or while traveling the

roads, perhaps even as they gathered at the synagogue for worship. Here Jesus gives them the opportunity to be honest with themselves – were they like the children, calling out when the responses they encountered were not what was expected? Were they like those who could not hear the messages that John or Jesus brought to them? Were they pipers, were they singers? Were they the ones who refused to react?

How about our churches – and our own lives, today? Are we the ones who call people into the dance of faith? Are we the ones with whom others can feel safe to bring their worries, their fears, their losses, their burdens? Or are we standing on the sidelines, not getting too involved, and ready to judge others without looking too closely at the message they might actually be bringing us? For centuries members of the 2SLGBTQ+ were not openly welcomed in our churches, or openly given roles as religious leaders, neither were women. Their unique perspectives and insights are still not welcome in all places of worship, and yet they add so much to our understanding of a loving and just God.

I think it is important that we see Jesus so quickly shift from these parable-like teaching comparisons to prayer. I believe it is an important reminder that no matter how we speak, or what the topic, God is close at hand. When we call out the hypocrisies around us, God is present, when we seek to help others to understand God's way, God is nearby. I also think it is important for us to see just how naturally and easily Jesus turns his attention to praising God, to being in conversation with the One he knows intimately, and who knows him in the same way. Jesus offers us that same relationship with God, that same path to knowing and being known.

What will be the result of such relationship? Rest, a laying down of burdens, a chance to step aside from what weighs us down. Such wonderful words of comfort and care and hope - "Come to me, all you who labour and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Words offered not to the powerful and influential, not to ones who would not dance or sing or engage with the people, but to those who are truly wearied by the injustices of their world – as in ours. Words offered to those who seek a different way, who seek to have their music of life heard and heeded, those with whom Jesus ate and drank and prayed.

Jesus yoke is love – love for God, love for neighbour. Jesus' burden is relationship with God that can lighten our loads, and make our journeys less cumbersome. Thanks be to God who allows us to lay our troubles down, and seek to travel more lightly, more lovingly, and more justly. Amen