

# Glebe-St. James United Church

**Second Sunday after Pentecost**

**July 12, 2026**

*Please note: the livestream camera only captures the chairs at the front of the church. Sitting in the pews or at the back will keep you off camera. During the theme conversation, only the backs of children's heads are shown. – The Worship Team*

## Gathered by God

### Preparing Our Hearts for Worship

Children of the Heavenly Father

arranged by Dan Forrest and Douglas E. Wagner  
on a traditional Swedish folk tune-based hymn

### Welcome

Ruth Burnett-Cole

In the name of the Holy Mystery, who is Wholly Love,  
we welcome you to Creator's House. Thanks be to God!

Good morning and welcome, everyone, to our summer worship service at  
Glebe-St. James United Church in central Ottawa on Sunday, July 12.

My name is Ruth Burnett-Cole and I am one of the Licensed Lay Worship  
Leaders here at Glebe-St. James.

We're so glad you're here today. Whether you're a first-time visitor or a  
longtime member, whether you are joining us in person or online, you are  
welcome and we hope you feel at home.

We are an Affirming Community of Faith in the United Church of Canada - a  
place of faith, love and community. We are committed to creating a safe and  
inclusive environment where people of all ages, backgrounds, and identities  
feel loved and supported.

Thank you for being here.

## Announcements

Wayne MacWhirter

Next Sunday we are again at Glebe-St. James. Joanne Tanner, a Licensed Lay Worship Leader from Rideau Park, will be presiding. On July 26<sup>th</sup> we will be gathering at Southminster United.

If you are interested in walking the labyrinth on July 19<sup>th</sup>, please check in with Judy Wolanski

## Land Acknowledgement

Ruth Burnett-Cole

My friends, we are meeting on land cared for by Algonquins of the Anishinaabe Alliance from time immemorial. We are guests on land never surrendered nor ceded. It is incumbent upon us to care for the land and its inhabitants, in a way that honours their deep history in this place.

Summer was a busy time in most communities. Storytelling was put away until the winter months. It was a time for growing crops, harvesting fruits and vegetables and preparing for winter. It was also a time for traveling between communities and, today, for celebrating culture at Pow Wows. We are blessed in that Indigenous communities welcome outsiders to these celebration spaces. Watch the news for one happening in your area.

## Candle Lighting Dance with the Spirit

MV 156

**Dance with the Spirit early in the mornin',  
walk with the Spirit throughout the long day.  
Work and hope for the new life a-born-in',  
listen to the Spirit to show you the way.**

## Call to Worship

Time calls us to this place  
**to find comfort, to find caring, to love one another.**  
Time is a gift we are given each morning we rise.  
**It is our responsibility to use it wisely.**  
It is also our responsibility to use it gently.  
**To be, rather than always "to do".**

We are human creatures  
**and we come to this place to honour our Creator.**  
Come, sit, listen and most importantly BE in this place.  
**We have come, answering God's call.**

### **Opening Prayer**

With your bread, you feed us, Gracious God!  
With your spirit, you fill Creation!  
With your love, you change the world!  
With your Christ, you bring new life!  
**You are in the words we express.**  
**You are in the songs we sing.**  
**You are in the love we share.**  
**Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen!**

**Hymn**    Come Let Us Sing

VU 222

- 1    Come, let us sing to the Lord our song,  
      we have stood silently too long;  
      surely the Lord deserves our praise,  
      so joyfully thank God for our days.**
  
- 2    O thirsty soul, come drink at the well;  
      God's living waters will never fail.  
      Surely the Lord will help you to stand,  
      strengthened and comforted by God's hand.**
  
- 3    You dwell among us and cause us to pray,  
      and walk with each other following your way;  
      our precious brothers and sisters will grow  
      in the fulfilling love they know.**
  
- 4    Deserts shall bloom and mountains shall sing  
      to the desire of all living things.  
      Come, all you creatures, high and low,  
      let your praises endlessly flow.**

## **Sign of Peace**

Family of faith, God's grace is good news.  
God's grace is worth celebrating!  
So in the spirit of joy and abundant gratitude,  
we are going to celebrate this gift by  
passing the peace with our neighbours.

Peace be with you.

**And also with you.**

## **Hymn Peace for the Children**

MV 149

**Peace for the children, peace, peace.  
Peace for the children we pray.  
Following the path of One of peace,  
we work for healing, we work for peace;  
peace for the children today.**

**Peace for the planet, peace, peace.  
Peace for the planet, we pray.  
Following the path of One of peace,  
We work for healing, we work for peace,  
Peace for the children today.**

## **Listening for Wisdom**

### **Theme Conversation** What Helps Things Grow?

Props: A few seeds (sunflower or bean seeds), a small pot with soil, and a small watering can or cup of water.

Good morning, everyone!

I brought something very tiny today. Can you see what it is?  
(Hold up a seed.)

Does anyone know what this is?  
(Allow answers.)

That's right! It's a seed.

Is it big or little?

(Children answer: "Little!")

Can everyone make themselves as tiny as a seed?

(Everyone crouches down into a little ball.)

Wonderful! Now, if I just leave this seed sitting on the table... will it grow?

(Children answer.)

No! It needs some help

What do you think a seed needs?

(Encourage answers: dirt, water, sunshine, love, rain.)

That's right!

(Show the pot of soil.)

It needs good soil.

(Pretend to sprinkle in the seed.)

It needs water.

(Pretend to water it.)

And sunshine.

Can everyone stretch their arms up like the warm sunshine?

Beautiful!

Now let's all be seeds growing!

Start curled up small...

The rain comes...

(Wiggle fingers downward.)

The sun shines...

(Arms overhead.)

And slowly... slowly...

Stand up tall!

Stretch your arms out like beautiful flowers or strong trees!

Well done!

In today's Bible story, Jesus talked about a farmer scattering seeds everywhere. Some seeds landed on rocks. Some landed where weeds crowded them. But some landed in good soil, and those seeds grew into wonderful plants.

Jesus wasn't just talking about garden seeds.

Jesus said our hearts can be like good soil.

When we hear about God's love...

When we are kind...

When we share...

When we help someone who is lonely...

When we take care of God's beautiful Earth...

Those are all ways that God's love grows inside us.

Can you think of one kind thing you could do this week?

(Invite two or three responses.)

Those are wonderful ideas!

Every act of kindness is like planting another little seed of God's love.

Let's end with a prayer.

#### Prayer

Dear God,

Thank you for tiny seeds,  
and for sunshine and rain.

Help our hearts be like good soil,  
where love can grow.

Help us be kind,  
help us care for one another,  
and help us care for your beautiful world.

Amen.

#### Hymn      Little by Little *(Verses 1 and 2)*

TLUS 134

**Little by little by little.**

**Little by little by little.**

**Little by little by little I know,**

**The tiniest seed will grow.**

**Habits of peace and justice,**

**habits of peace and justice,**

**habits of peace and justice:**

**tools to change our world.**

**Little by little by little.  
Little by little by little.  
Little by little by little I know,  
The tiniest seed will grow.**

### **Prayer for Wisdom**

Written in bygone ages, but still relevant,  
heard by countless saints of the faith;  
but still a life-changing witness,  
your Word finds us,  
your Word tests us,  
your Word inspires,  
and we thank you, Living God. Amen.

### **Scripture**

Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23

Wayne MacWhirter

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up. 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. But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. If you have ears, hear!"

### **Gift of Music**

### **Reflection**

Ruth Burnett-Cole

We can almost picture the scene.  
The crowds have become so large  
that Jesus climbs into a boat,  
pushes out a little way from the shore,  
and begins to teach.

The water carries his voice across to the gathered people.  
It is less like a lecture hall and  
more like a conversation with the landscape itself.  
And Jesus begins with something everyone in that crowd would recognize.  
"A sower went out to sow."

Most of us have heard this parable many times.  
We know the ending.  
We know about the path, the rocky ground, the thorns, and the good soil.  
We know that Jesus later explains that the different soils represent different  
responses to God's word.  
There is wisdom there.  
We all know moments when our hearts have been  
distracted, shallow, anxious, or open.  
The parable certainly invites self-reflection.

But perhaps there is another invitation hidden within it.  
Because before Jesus explains the soils, he tells the story.  
And stories often have more than one layer.  
To hear this parable as Jesus' first listeners would have heard it,  
we need to picture the farming they knew.

This was not modern agriculture.

A Galilean farmer did not drive a tractor pulling a precision seed drill.  
Fields were small and irregular,  
bordered by footpaths that villagers had walked for generations.  
Beneath the thin layer of topsoil there were often shelves of limestone.  
Thorn bushes, cut back after harvest,  
could send up new shoots with surprising speed.  
Nor did farmers always plow before sowing.  
Often they scattered seed first—casting it broadly across the whole field—  
and only afterward plowed it into the soil.  
As they threw the seed, some naturally landed on the paths.  
Some fell where hidden rock lay just below the surface.  
Some landed among dormant weeds.  
Only later would the plow turn much of it into the earth.

To us, the sower may seem careless.  
To Jesus' listeners, the sower was simply generous.  
The sower does not ration the seed.  
The sower does not calculate whether one square metre is worthy  
while that one is hopeless.  
The sower scatters everywhere.  
And perhaps that is our first clue about the Kingdom of God.

God's grace is astonishingly abundant.  
It falls on people who seem ready.  
It falls on people who seem distracted.  
It falls on communities that appear promising.  
It falls on places others have given up on.  
God does not begin with scarcity.  
God begins with generosity.  
That feels important in a world  
that often teaches us to think differently.  
Our culture constantly asks whether people deserve our time, our  
compassion, our investment.  
We calculate return on investment.  
We decide who is worth helping.  
We worry there won't be enough.  
Jesus tells a story about a God who throws seed with open hands.  
That is not wastefulness.  
That is love.

And then there is the harvest.  
Thirty, sixty, one hundredfold.  
For us, those numbers may simply sound impressive.  
For first-century farmers, they would have sounded almost unbelievable.  
In the ancient world, a harvest of seven or eight times what was planted was  
considered quite good.  
Tenfold was exceptional.  
Thirtyfold?  
Sixtyfold?  
One hundredfold?

This is not ordinary farming.  
This is the language of holy abundance.  
Jesus is describing God's dream.  
The Kingdom of God is not simply about surviving.  
It is about flourishing.  
Enough for everyone.  
Enough for neighbours.  
Enough to share.  
Enough to heal what has been broken.  
That changes how we hear the parable.  
Perhaps Jesus is not only asking, "What kind of soil are you?"

Perhaps he is also asking,  
"What kind of world are you helping to cultivate?"  
Because soil is rarely just an individual matter.  
Healthy soil is created.  
It is cared for.  
It is protected.  
Anyone who gardens knows this.  
Good soil doesn't simply happen.  
It is enriched with compost.  
It is watered.  
It is protected from erosion.  
It is tended year after year.

Communities are like that too.  
People flourish when they live where justice grows.  
Children flourish where they are safe.  
Families flourish where housing is affordable.  
People flourish where healthcare is accessible.  
Creation flourishes where rivers run clean and forests remain standing.  
Faith flourishes where questions are welcomed,  
where diversity is celebrated,  
where every person knows they are beloved exactly as they are.  
None of these things happen by accident.  
They are cultivated.

We are invited to become cultivators of God's future.  
That is part of the vocation of the church.  
In the United Church,  
we often speak about justice, reconciliation, inclusion,  
and care for creation.  
Sometimes people wonder whether these concerns distract us from the  
Gospel.  
But perhaps they are exactly what this parable points toward.

If God longs for a world where life flourishes abundantly,  
then anything that impoverishes people or creation  
is rocky ground.  
Whenever racism limits human dignity,  
there are stones beneath the surface.  
Whenever poverty chokes opportunity,  
there are thorns.  
Whenever fear or prejudice hardens hearts against our neighbours,  
there is a path worn smooth by generations of exclusion.  
The Gospel does not simply ask individuals to become better people.  
The Gospel invites communities to become better soil.

That is holy work.  
And it is hopeful work.

Because the remarkable thing about soil is that it can change.  
A rocky field can be cleared.  
A compacted path can be broken open.  
Thorns can be removed.  
Compost can renew exhausted ground.

Gardeners know this.  
Farmers know this.  
God certainly knows this.

No field is beyond hope.  
Neither is any community.  
Neither is our world.

That may be the most encouraging part of this parable.  
Jesus never tells us to identify the bad soil and walk away.  
Instead, he keeps sowing,  
again and again,  
generation after generation.

Even when the world seems resistant,  
even when justice feels painfully slow.  
even when peace seems impossible,  
God keeps sowing hope.

And perhaps we are called to do the same.  
Every act of kindness is another handful of seeds-  
every word of welcome.  
every stand against injustice,  
every meal shared,  
every tree planted,  
every refugee welcomed,  
every child encouraged,  
every prayer offered,  
every time we choose hope over cynicism.

It may not look like much.  
Neither does a handful of seeds.  
But Jesus reminds us that God's abundance  
often begins with very small things.  
A seed.  
A story.  
A community gathered by the lakeshore.  
A church on a summer Sunday.

Who knows what God may grow?  
So perhaps this week the question is not simply, "What kind of soil am I?"  
Perhaps it is also:  
"What kind of field are we becoming together?"

Will people who come after us find ground where compassion grows easily?  
Will children inherit communities where diversity is celebrated?  
Will the earth itself be healthier because we lived here?  
Will our congregation be known as a place where God's extravagant welcome  
is visible?

The sower has already gone out into the field.  
The seed is already falling.  
God has not given up on this world.  
Not then.  
Not now.  
Not ever.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.

## Responding in Thanksgiving

**Hymn**     We Plough The Fields

VU 520

1 We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land,  
but it is fed and watered by your almighty hand;  
you send the snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain,  
the breezes and the sunshine, and soft refreshing rain.

All good gifts around us  
are sent from heaven above;  
we thank you, God, O holy God,  
for all your love.

2 You only are the maker of all things near and far;  
you paint the wayside flower, you light the evening star;  
the winds and waves obey you, by you the birds are fed;  
much more to us, your children, you give us daily bread. R

3 We thank you then, O Maker, for all things bright and good,  
the seed-time and the harvest, our life, our health, our food;  
accept the gifts we offer for all your love imparts,  
and, what from us you long for, our humble, thankful hearts. R

## **Invitation to Give**

Now is the time in our service, we gather our offerings  
for the work of bringing about the kin-dom in this place.

## **Offering Hymn** Your Work, O God, Needs Many Hands

VU 537

- 1 Your work, O God, needs many hands  
to help you everywhere,  
and some there are who cannot serve  
unless our gifts we share.**
  
- 2 Because we love you and your work,  
our offering now we make:  
be pleased to use it as your own,  
we ask for Jesus' sake.**

## **Offering Prayer**

Generous God, throughout the ages you invite people to follow the path of faith-filled giving. We all give in the ways we can. Some of us are able to offer time, helping in a variety of situations.

Others have skills and gifts that are useful in your kin'dom. Some of us can give financially. We know it is the spirit in which this is offered that is most important to you. Receive our offerings and use them to build up your glorious reign. Amen

## **Prayers of the People** O Holy

Pat Mayberry

O Holy, O Blessed, O God, hear our prayer.  
O Holy, O Blessed, O God, hear our prayer.

## **Prayer of Jesus**

**Our Mother and 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, forever and ever. Amen.**

## **Sent by the Spirit**

**Hymn Grateful**

**MV 182**

*Refrain:*

**Grateful for the life you give us,  
thankful for your Holy Son,  
joyful in your Spirit flowing over all,  
O God of Love.**

**Grateful for the Bread of Heaven,  
thankful for your Holy Word,  
joyful in your mercy flowing,  
we will praise you.**

- 1. You are more than we imagine,  
Ancient, Holy, Living Lord\*.  
Even when we doubt your presence  
you are faithful to your Word.**
- 2. May our lives proclaim your justice,  
may our voices sing your praise.  
May our hands work in your service  
to the glory of your name.**

## **Sending Forth**

For the sowing to be effective,  
the seeds must be scattered broadly and in quantity.  
Go into your world, sowing the love of God  
by scattering your love unconditionally  
far and wide among all your neighbours.

And may the blessing of God—Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit—  
go with you, remain with you, and shine through you,  
today and always. And so we sing...

## **Sung Amen**

VU 974

## **Music for the Journey**

## **Music to Send Us Forth**

Postlude on CORONATION

arranged by Jason D. Payne

# ***End of Worship | Beginning of Service***

Welcome to Glebe-St. James United Church.  
Thank you for joining with us for our morning worship.

## **Musical Acknowledgements**

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