

Welcome / Announcements / Land Acknowledgement

As we gather for worship in Jesus 'name, we remember that we do so on the traditional and unceded territory of the lək'wəŋən and the WSÁNEĆ. We acknowledge their stewardship of this land throughout the ages. As we pray, reflect, and celebrate in this place, we do so as guests lamenting injustice and asking God to lead us along paths of reconciliation – inspiring new relationships of respect and solidarity.

➤ *O let the power fall on me*

Call to Worship

God's Word is a lamp to our feet;
and a light to our path.

God's Word is made visible in Christ;
in him we are rooted in truth.

God's Word is revealed through The Holy Spirit;
and lived out in faithful service.

Come and listen for God's Word in this time of worship.
We wait to receive the Word of Life.

➤ *song. 434 For the beauty of the earth*

† Gathering Prayer / [Words of Hope](#)

Generous and ingenious God, we praise you for the beauty of your creation, for rivers that flow, for willows that weep, for the soaring songs of birds and the intricacies of all that grows around us. Draw us close to yourself this morning. Feed our hearts and souls that we too might grow in your Spirit and care ever more deeply for your world and your people. Renew us in the depths of your holiness. Confront us and surprise us with the joy of your presence and your grace as we come to worship and praise you. Encourage what you have begun in and among us.

Merciful God, you have made us in your image, but our knowledge is imperfect, our love inconstant, our obedience incomplete. Forgive us and help us to turn our lives toward you. Shine your light in the dark places of our lives, where you desire to make us whole. We bring you our foibles, our faults, our weaknesses and our wounds. In your mercy and lavish grace, forgive what we have been, amend what we are and direct what we will be. Forgive us and renew us, by your grace and your love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

[Hear the good news! The prophet Isaiah shares God's words to us: Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you](#)

not perceive it? I alone am the one who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. Praise God who uses and accepts our very human lives in the unfolding story of new life and salvation. In Jesus Christ we are forgiven people. Thanks be to God.

† Prayer for Understanding

Holy God, let us come to this Word open to being surprised. silence our own agendas. Banish our assumptions. Cast our casual detachment. Confound our expectations, and clear the cobwebs from our ears to penetrate the corners of our hearts as we listen to your word. Help us to hear your voice of truth and grace. Amen

Scripture

Isaiah 55: 8-13 OT 685

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Psalm 65: 9-13 Responsive

You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it;

the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it.

You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness.

The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

Romans 8: 1-11 NT 157

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law – indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 NT 13

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 the 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. Let anyone with ears listen!"

"Hear then the parable of the sower. 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. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 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. 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. 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."

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Message: Sow What?

He might not have been the sharpest knife in the drawer, but he managed to have a significant impact on this part of the world. Walter came from Edinburgh, Scotland, and had served in the army. Around 1850, he decided to become a colonist, and purchased some land from the Hudson's Bay Company. But in order to be a settler; a colonist, you had to bring people to settle so he purchased the help of some men to go on ahead and start clearing land. When he finally arrived in Sooke, things weren't going well. But he had no idea what he was doing. Walter

earned some notoriety for shooting a cow at Clover point, thinking it was a buffalo. He was losing money so he got a job as a surveyor. How hard could it be? But he didn't actually know how to survey, and eventually quit. He went to Hawaii, and came back with a bunch of seeds, that he thought he'd plant on his property.

Sow what you might ask. Well they were flowering shrubs.

And sow them he did. Captain Walter Grant was the first independent settler on Vancouver Island. His seeds grew really well, producing hearty shrubs with magnificent yellow flowers.

That handful of seeds became the Scotch Broom invasion that we all see in the early summer. Those beautiful yellow flowers adorning the sides of roads and cliffs.

All his fault. Some of us were travelling to Duncan to attend Presbytery near the end of June, and the Malahat was awash in yellow. All because of a handful of seeds planted in Sooke.

Scotch Broom grows well in poor soil. Each plant can produce up to 18,000 seeds. They can lie dormant for 80 years, even surviving drought and fire. One seed pod can snap open and the seeds fly where the wind or water takes them, and they have travelled to the Gulf Islands and all over the southern island. While they are pretty, they are an invasive species that can impede the growth of trees, and destroy native ecosystems like Gary Oak woodlands. And they are a fire hazard. Double wammy.

Sow, thanks Captain Grant. That one little act of sowing seeds has had a lasting impact.

And so we have today's gospel reading about the sower who sowed seeds.

Jesus has gone to sit by the lakeshore, to pray, to catch his breath, to gather his thoughts, or maybe just to be alone and listen to the waves. He has encountered hostility, is likely at odds with his family which can be deduced from some other passages and the Pharisees are certainly out to get him. He knows what outcome awaits him. But there are those who are aching to listen to him and to be in his presence.

Jesus was used to teaching in the temple as rabbis did. A rabbi would sit to teach while the others would stand to listen. But being by the lake it made sense to get into a nearby boat to sit and teach to those who had gathered. And he taught them with parables, stories they had to ponder, to reflect on.

A sower went out to sow his seeds, Jesus tells them. One way that people have reflected on this is to ask themselves what kind of soil they are. Am I rocky soil, fertile soil, thorny or rocky? But I don't think this is the question we need to be asking.

I would suggest we look at ourselves as workers in the field trying to prepare the soil. We get our hands dirty sometimes, cut ourselves on thorns and maybe trip on a stone or two. We get muddy and dirt gets under our finger nails. Being the gardener can be tiring; even frustrating sometimes. I'm sure you'd agree.

It's not necessarily about a great harvest to come if you do it right either. So - sow - what are the seeds that you are holding in your hands? What do you imagine Jesus wants to grow and have take root in our garden of communities, our communities of faith and or where we live?

Jason Byasee - who until recently taught at Vancouver School of Theology, wrote about this passage asking "What wild unexpected seeds might you be holding in your hands? In the parable of the sower, the planter flings seeds everywhere, without regard for where they land." Some seeds turn out to be duds, or wilt, or damp off. Damping off is where the seed might germinate but then just fizzles out and dies. We don't always reap what we sow. Think back to Walter. He would have had no idea what the outcome of his seeds would have had.

The sower scattered seeds recklessly, carelessly, maybe even wasting some. God sows seeds in our lives, in our families, our community and our churches. Sometimes we help. Sometimes we hinder.

I read of a story where someone prepared the soil well, fertilized, composted, and did everything right. They planted rows and rows of squash. They watered, tended and weeded, but the outcome was nothing special. However some seed blew away or fell and landed in an unexpected corner of the yard. And that is where an amazingly huge squash grew to the gardeners' surprise. A seed that grows into an unexpected plant like that is called a volunteer plant. In this case a volunteer squash.

Volunteer seedlings and plants can be seen all over the place. I think of the wild poppies in fields or by the ocean side here. Or maybe you've seen volunteer calendula or dandelions. Sometimes a dandelion will decide to grow and bloom in some crack in a driveway.

Even on my fourth-floor balcony I've seen volunteer plants such as nasturtiums hitch a ride and show up among my plants. One year I had come to the conclusion that my honeysuckle that I'd kept in a big pot on my balcony had come to its end. So, in the fall I cut it back to within about 10 inches from the base. I figured that in the spring I'd be able to just pull the roots from the pot and compost it.

But in the spring, it was covered with leaves and now a year later, it is about 6 feet tall and just finished a month of amazing blooms.

Apparently, it is not always for me to say when something is done.

Nor is it for me to always know what is going to grow either. In the same way, God helps us to bloom even when it seems impossible. And we can unknowingly help others to bloom, grow and thrive as well.

Jesus asks us to fling the seeds we have with generosity, and recklessness! Seeds of change are always taking root around us, within us and yes - in our churches.

The Church has grown and changed in so many ways in over 2,000 years. The garden of our faith keeps growing. God's people have scattered and flung seeds that have been both good and bad. You never know what will take root. That is up to God. God says to Isaiah, my ways are not your ways!

The first 300 years of Christianity were vastly different from what we now experience. It was illegal to be a Christian. Jesus' followers met in homes and these communities were led by both women and men. There were secret signs to indicate if you were a Christian. If you made half the sign of a fish in the dirt, and if the person you were talking to complete the sign, you knew you were in the safe presence of another Christian.

Then the Emperor Constantine made it legal, and a series of patriarchal Church councils impacted the church in a way that made women's roles more hidden. Some scriptures were deemed not worthy of being included in what we now know as the bible.

Eventually church buildings were made. There were no pews or benches. The plague happened in the Middle Ages, and churches were seen as places of safety and refuge. Most people couldn't read, and scriptures were not available to even read, so stories of the bible found their way into church buildings with carvings, windows, paintings and so on. The buildings were used to teach. When I was a child we lived in a Christian culture. I went to church with my little straw hat with the elastic that pinched under my chin, my little white socks and gloves. But the age of Christendom that we all once knew has passed. - at least in its dominance. The seeds of Christendom flung seeds into laws, morality and much more, but the garden is changing.

And so we are called to fling seeds of faith wherever we are called to. We need to always remember the sneakiness of God too. You never know what God has in mind. When I was a student at VST about 25 years ago I spent some time on East Hastings at First United seeing how they ministered to their community. I remember seeing the pews being used as a safe place for homeless people to sleep during the day.

But just in the last month or so, they have pulled the entire building down. They will rebuild, but it won't be focused on a sanctuary. It will have housing and specific spaces to tend to the needs of those they care for. In the meantime, their ministry continues in other spaces.

God's sneakiness shows up in unexpected places along with a mysterious Holy presence that can surprise us.

Christianity is still here, and we are called to fling the seeds of God's love and nourishment, wherever we can. We can trust that those volunteer plants will take root sometimes even despite us! Even if we don't quite get it right.

Whenever I'm driving around Victoria, I am always encountering people begging at street corners - perhaps more now than ever. You probably know the situation of sitting there waiting for the turn signal to let you turn. I love to chat with whoever is there. It's just who I am. Recently my daughters were in the car with me when this happened. I rolled down the window to say hi and reached into my glove compartment to pull out a granola bar. I handed it to the fellow and asked his name, and then I asked if he'd like a pair of socks. His face lit up and he said yes! So, I reached down the side of my door and whipped out a pair of socks and handed them to him. My daughters laughed at this surprise. You always keep socks there Mom? Why yes, I do. And the fellow took off his socks that he said belonged to someone else and in the space of that moment put on the new ones and put his shoes right back on.

My daughters were delighted at this and how crazy their mom continues to be.

But you never know what seeds you sow. God's sneakiness endures. Who knows how that affected that man, or the woman whose socks he had on, or even someone in a car behind me. Seeds of change are around us. We are called to fling those seeds, to sow them with abandon. The question we all need to ask, is "Sow what?" --- Rev. Cathy Victor

➤ *song 674 in the bulb there is a flower*

Offering and Prayer

We see growth in the gardens around us and remember that the seed of God's Word bears fruit in the each life it touches. The gifts we offer today help to sow the seeds of God's Word throughout the world God loves. In compassion, let us share what we have that others may grow in God's Spirit. Let us bring our offerings to God.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow 306

God of growing seeds and souls, we bring you our selves, our time, and these gifts, which we offer in thanksgiving for your kindness to us. Bless and multiply them to add to the abundance of your love at work in the world. Make them seeds of new life to bring new hope and to inspire an ever deepening faith in the souls they touch in Jesus 'name. Amen.

† Pastoral Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

Let your Spirit loose now, Creator God, and us with it, that we may go from here with grace, with joy, with courage and compassion. Use us to fling your seeds of love with generosity and abandon.

Renew us with the depths of your holiness to imagine, to dream and live into new ways of being your people in this time and place. Shepherd of our souls, come and hear our prayers as we place ourselves and others in your care.

We come to you- seeking your touch: Where we are weak- strengthen us, where we are wounded - heal us, where we are wandering - guide us, and where we are hard of heart - disturb and challenge us. Help us to cherish all those we meet and care for.

Empower us to be the 'face of love 'to one another, as well as to those we avoid.

We thank you for the gifts of this life, and of this week for the things, events and people that have moved us to joy, for the signs of your grace and the beauties of creation , for our friends and families, our work and our leisure, but more than all these things, we thank you for the life of Jesus, your risen one, bursting into our lives with welcoming grace and newness.

His love impels our prayers for others, in the silences we remember those who ache for loved-ones lost to them for now, - but gathered to you forever... Those who live in fear... Those who live in the midst of violence and long for peace... Those who are faced with difficult situations...

Those struggling with addiction... Those who are without work or a place to live... Those who are lonely... As well as those who are surrounded by family and friends, those who are ill in body, mind, or spirit, ... Those who are close to death.... Those whom we know and care for...

and even those whom we find it hard to care about... who together need the blessings we ask... May thankfulness for your love and mercy, erupt within us, into uncontainable joy, poured out, and overflowing, so that all those that we encounter this week may be blessed with your lavish grace and love. We ask all these things through Jesus the Christ, who taught his friends to pray, saying...

... Our 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen

➤ ***665 Lord Jesus you shall be my song***

Blessing

Go out into the world as people of promise. God chooses you for unexpected outpourings of grace. Go out in hope and in confidence. Go out in joy and be led forth in peace. And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands! May the Maker's blessing be yours, encircling you round, above you and within you. May the Son's blessing be yours; the wine, the water, the bread, and the stories to feed you - to remind you. May the Spirit's blessing be yours; the wind, the fire, the still small voice to comfort you, to disturb you.... Amen

➤ ***Jump with joy 406***