

Welcome/Announcements/Land Acknowledgement **April Watt** (worship elder)

As followers of Jesus, we are compelled to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God. It is our love of God and neighbour that leads us to acknowledge that we gather with gratitude on traditional and unceded Coast Salish Territory of Lkwungen people. We pray that past and present injustices can be reconciled as we commit ourselves again to just and respectful relationships.

□ Come, Holy Spirit (Gaither)

Call to Worship

Come, people of God. Let us gather with hearts overflowing with delight and thankfulness.

We are a company of faith blessed by God.

God's name is to be celebrated in all generations.

With joy and gladness, we praise God forever and ever.

We gather to worship God.

□ Praise, I will praise

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□ Gathering Prayer / the Lord's Prayer / Words of Hope

Merciful God, whose goodness fills our world, we give you praise.

The wonders of your creation are all around and fill our lives beyond our deserving.

We marvel at your creative power and are grateful for the place that you have given to us within your creation. We gather today to acknowledge your greatness, rejoice in your love and celebrate your blessings.

Be with us as we lift our hearts in adoration and as we confess our frailty...

I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven, and to you my siblings in Christ, that I have sinned by my own fault, in thought, word, and deed. I pray that God Almighty might have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life.

May Almighty God have mercy on you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins and give you time to amend your life.

Amen.

I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven, and to you my siblings in Christ, that I have sinned by my own fault, in thought, word, and deed. I pray that God Almighty might have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life.

May Almighty God have mercy on you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins and give you time to amend your life. We pray together as Jesus encourages us to do ... ***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***

It is the grace and power of God that draws us together, that inspires us to be gracious in our responsiveness to the needs of others, to be powerful in the practice of love as the foundation for faithful living. In a spirit of gratitude, we relax and rejoice in the presence of God.

□ Now the green blade rises

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□ Prayer for Understanding Mary Dimech

Loving God, open our eyes and our ears to the wonder of your Word so that we may be changed as we grow in understanding. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Scripture Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24 responsive/displayed

O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

Romans 8:12-25 (NT 158)

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh -- for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ – if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 (NT 14)

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and then went away. So, when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field."

He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children

of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

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

Message

There are lots of ways to deal with weeds. You can carefully tease each one from the soil and dispose of it in such a way that it won't reassert itself – this is a painstaking process that has its advantages and disadvantages like all other methods. You could take Steve's approach which is to dig them back into the earth hoping to return the nutrients to the soil – besides what we can't see is something we need not worry so much about – and this does work, for a while anyway. You could do what many gardeners and farmers have been doing for several decades and spray chemicals to reach a short-term sense of success. In the long run however, the weeds we are trying to kill develop a resistance to our poisons – they evolve. In fact, I discovered that more than 300 species of weeds now resist all herbicides – it seems that many chemicals are proving more dangerous to *our* health than to the weeds. Another approach to weeds is to learn to live with them.

Matthew's gospel offers us a tale of weeds – wheat and weeds – with Jesus weaving these agrarian images into a parable about the kingdom of God. One account for the general public and another for those who know the secret handshake – the straight-ahead version for the crowd and the annotated version for the disciples – outsiders/insiders – those with ears to hear and those without.

For the insiders the message is clear: never mind that there seems to be a lot of weeds in the world right now – learn to live with them. Hang in there and be patient because when the last day comes the wheat will be vindicated and the weeds will go up in smoke. I suppose it was a comforting message at the time but now I am not so sure. Matthew might be clear that there are only two types of people in the world – wheat and weeds – good and evil – but that kind of clarity escapes most of us most of the time. We have encountered both kinds in ourselves, in our neighbours and in the world – a mixed planting. Can we find wheat and weeds anymore – is it that simple? Or have they grown together for so long that a hybrid has developed that is neither one nor the other? And at the harvest time – what will happen then – am I wheat or weed? Blessed or cursed?

The parable doesn't answer that question, at least not directly. It encourages us to wonder – to explore the question with our hearts as well as our heads – to embrace the

mystery of its message. However, according to Matthew this parable is no mystery. He lets us in on Jesus' explanation, and it seems pretty straightforward at the surface. Jesus offers an interpretive equation in which, not surprisingly, wheat equals good and weeds equals bad. Everything in the story corresponds to something else with nothing left over.

Maybe Jesus tells the parable to the crowd instead of explaining it as he does for the disciples to avoid arrest. Perhaps it is just a way to sort out his listeners – those who “get it” from those who don't. Some say that Jesus never explained the parables at all, but that those who recorded his words, like Matthew, could not bear their ambiguity so they took the liberty of making a few additions – a few improvements – with the intention that no one who heard them later would misunderstand.

Whatever the explanation it is curious how Jesus has the householder respond to those who ask whether they should gather the weeds. The householder tells them to allow the weeds and the wheat to grow together until harvest time, at which point the labourers will gather the weeds and burn them. Removing the weeds too soon would cause harm to the growing wheat.

Apparently, the weeds are something called dandelion – tares – a plant related to wheat but one that is poisonous in the end, causing blindness and even death if too many of its small black seeds get into the bread dough. Usually when I allow weeds to grow – or just don't find time to deal with them – there is little danger involved. For me it is more about the look of the flowers. For true gardeners it is to ensure the best yield of vegetables – not threatening to life or limb.

Sometimes it is difficult to ascertain which plants are weeds – and people can have different opinions on the matter. When I have put flower seeds in little corners of my garden beds I often can't quite tell if what is growing is a seedling flower that I want to nurture or a weed that I should uproot. I usually leave them when I'm unsure – it is a risk I can live with. Sometimes plants I have tried to get rid of, other people may not see as weeds. Weeds are defined as *plants that do more harm than good* so there is some degree of interpretation involved. Most of the time I see blackberries as a weed – especially if I find them invading my tomatoes – but when I smell that pie baking it is a different story!

Perhaps it is the same with people – we can be so quick to judge – to decide that someone is good or bad, wheat or weed – and we chop them down or dig them out just in case – we “ghost” them on social media. Meaning to be good servants, we go out to do battle with the weeds and end up standing in a pile of wheat.

In the story before us allowing the wheat and weeds to grow together seems to pose an unnecessary risk but that is what the sower tells us to do: leave the weeds and the wheat alone – let them both grow together. Maybe a pure crop, a neat field and an efficient operation are not the Sower's primary goals. What if growth is more important

than perfection and the risk of fat weeds is worth it to harvest fat wheat? When we, as the zealous labourers in God's field, try to help out a little – to improve on God's plan – we are reminded that our timing could be off and that our judgment may be impaired – that God does, after all, own the field.

Hear another parable of the wheat and the weeds from Barbara Brown Taylor¹...

One afternoon in the middle of the growing season, a bunch of farmhands decided to surprise their boss and weed his favorite wheat field. No sooner had they begun to work, however, than they began to argue – first about which of the wheat-looking things were weeds and then about the rest of the weeds. Did the Queen Anne's lace pose a threat to the wheat, or could it stay for decoration? And the blackberries? They would be ripe in just a week or two, but they were, after all, weeds – or were they? And the honeysuckle – it seemed a shame to pull up anything that smelled so sweet.

About the time they had gotten around to debating the purple asters, the boss showed up and ordered them out of his field. Dejected, they did as they were told. Back at the barn he took their machetes away from them, poured them some lemonade, and made them sit down where they could watch the way the light moved across the field. At first, all they could see were the weeds and what a messy field it was, what a discredit to them and their profession, but as the summer wore on, they marveled at the profusion of growth – tall wheat surrounded by tall goldenrod, ragweed, and brown-eyed Susans. The tares and the poison ivy flourished alongside the roses and the milkweed, and it was a mess, but a glorious mess, and when it had all bloomed and ripened and gone to seed the reapers came.

Carefully, gently, expertly, they gathered the wheat and made the rest into bricks for the oven where the bread was baked. And the fire that the weeds made was excellent, and the flour that the wheat made was excellent, and when the harvest was over the owner called them all together – the farmhands, the reapers, and all the neighbours – and broke bread with them, bread that was the final distillation of that whole messy, gorgeous, mixed-up field, and they all agreed that it was like no bread any of them had ever tasted before and that it was very, very good. Let those who have ears to hear, hear.

Amen

□ Soft rains of spring flow

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☐ Offering and Prayer

¹ Barbara Brown Taylor, The Seeds of Heaven: Sermons on the Gospel of Matthew, "Learning to Live with Weeds: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, p. 36-37.

God sent Jesus into the world so that we would know God's great generosity and compassion for us. May the gifts we offer today bear witness to the saving power of this extravagant love in our lives.

□ Praise God from whom all blessings flow

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To you, O God, we joyfully present our offerings. Through them, faith will counter unbelief, hope will counter despair, fellowship will counter loneliness, and mission will counter self serving. Bless these gifts, O God, in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Amen

Congregational Meeting

- [Presbyterians Sharing video](#)
- 2024 Financial Statements
- Update regarding service times and the relationship with Hollydene Church

□ Pastoral Prayers

Holy One we give thanks that you are so good – that your mercies last forever. We give thanks for the whole creation and that you spoke from earliest days, calling us into faith and service. We give thanks that you come to us in Christ Jesus, bearing our sins and healing our brokenness. We give thanks that we belong to a community of faith supported and nourished by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

Most loving God, you have put it in our hearts to pray for one another. Hear our prayers, correct their errors, and bless all that is wise and loving.

We pray for the young and the strong – all who are full of joy and high hopes. We pray for the elderly, the weak, and all who are utterly weary or disheartened.

We pray for the wise and the generous – those who are looking for new challenges. We pray for the foolish and the selfish, and those who evade their responsibilities.

We pray for peacekeepers and peacemakers – all who work for justice and peace throughout the world. We pray for the hostile and the treacherous, and all who will resort to violence today.

We pray for the well housed and well fed, and those who share their good fortune. We pray for the homeless and the hungry – for all whose plight is ignored.

We pray for the patient, the merciful, and all who will make new friends today. We pray for the hasty and the judgmental – those who will create misery in their wake.

We pray for the healthy and the buoyant, and those who share their joy. We pray for the dying and the sad, and those who weep inconsolably.

We pray for the faithful and the loving – all who worship with delight. We pray for the faithless, the cynical, and all who find life a drag and a drain.

We pray for our loved ones and our friends – all those whom we will meet today. We pray for strangers and enemies – those who think evil of us.

Loving God, we pray you will bring the day nearer when our prayers and our deeds will work in perfect harmony – when we will be a blessing to all whose lives touch our own. Amen

□ We cannot own the sunlit sky

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Blessing

May the sowing of good seed lead to the growing of sturdy belief. Allow the Word to sink in, the Spirit to nurture, the Christ to tend. And may faith flourish as we go in the grace of the living Lord, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit. Amen

□ Go now in peace

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