



Pioneer Pastoral Charge  
Sunday July 19, 2020  
Presence

Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister

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**Candle Lighting:** *The light of Christ... God around us,  
among us, within us.*

***Coming together***

God invites us to gather.

**We gather in our various places and spaces to  
worship the Holy One who is present in all.**

God invites us to come as we are  
for the sake of who we may yet be.

**We come to learn how the Holy One calls us  
into new ways of being and doing.**

God invites us to journey in awe and in trust.

**We set our feet on the path God sets before us**

We remember the Holy One in our midst  
who blesses and commissions us to  
live for the good of all.

Holy God, wherever we are today, together and  
apart, and draw us into your waiting presence  
where we can learn how to wait as you wait:  
eagerly, hopefully, joyfully, for our holiness to grow.

**Amen**

***Hymn:*** 🎵 MV#12 Come Touch Our Hearts

Scripture is our song for the journey, the living word  
passed on from generation to generation to guide  
and inspire. **God calls us to be doers of the word  
and not hearers only.**

*This week our Genesis story skips us ahead a little bit. You may remember that twins Esau and Jacob were competitors, totally different in gifts and skills. Jacob bartered with Esau for the birthright usually given to the first born son. Now we are moving past the moment where Rebekah and Jacob deceive Issac into officially naming Jacob as the recipient of the Birthright. Esau loses his temper and threatens his brother, Jacob runs away because he knows he was wrong. God finds him.*

### **Genesis 28:10-19** The Message (MSG)

10-12 Jacob left Beersheba and went to Haran. He came to a certain place and camped for the night since the sun had set. He took one of the stones there, set it under his head and lay down to sleep. And he dreamed: A stairway was set on the ground and it reached all the way to the sky; angels of God were going up and going down on it.

13-15 Then God was right before him, saying, “I am God, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. I’m giving the ground on which you are sleeping to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will be as the dust of the Earth; they’ll stretch from west to east and from north to south. All the families of the Earth will bless themselves in you and your descendants. Yes. I’ll stay with you, I’ll protect you wherever you go, and I’ll bring you back to this very ground. I’ll stick with you until I’ve done everything I promised you.”

16-17 Jacob woke up from his sleep. He said, “God is in this place—truly. And I didn’t even know it!” He was terrified. He whispered in awe, “Incredible. Wonderful. Holy. This is God’s House. This is the Gate of Heaven.”

18-19 Jacob was up first thing in the morning. He took the stone he had used for his pillow and stood it up as a memorial pillar and poured oil over it. He christened the place Bethel (God’s House). The name of the town had been Luz until then.

### ***Scripture opened, God invited: Prayer for Grace***

Holy One,

We cannot hide from you.

No matter where we go or what we do,  
you know us and are with us,  
waiting for us to listen, to see you, to follow you.

In our good times and in our bad times,  
in our ups and in our downs:

in those times when we make decisions  
that are not focussed on loving

**you are beside us, God.**

When we are running away,  
when we are afraid we have made mistakes

**you are beside us, God.**

When we are feeling proud and self-satisfied,  
When we are frustrated and feel held down,  
when we are wracked with guilt or shame:

**you are beside us, God**

Holy God, who guides us with compassion and into  
hope remind our hearts and heads  
that we have the strength to follow you.

Push us toward new possibilities.  
Steady us in your new ways.  
Open us up to the miracle of moments of transformation, inviting us to new life.  
Be beside us still as You accompany us into new faithfulness. Aware of your presence and call.  
**Amen.**

### ***Words of assurance.***

God is the One.  
God is the One who has promised to walk with us.  
God is the One who has promised to teach us  
God is the One who persistently seeds words of care and compassion and love in us, and patiently waits for us to nurture them.  
God is the One. God always has been  
God always will be. **Thanks be to God!**

### **Matthew 13:24-30** The Message (MSG)

24-26 [Jesus] told another story. "God's kingdom is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. That night, while his hired men were asleep, his enemy sowed thistles all through the wheat and slipped away before dawn. When the first green shoots appeared and the grain began to form, the thistles showed up, too.

27 "The farmhands came to the farmer and said, 'Master, that was clean seed you planted, wasn't it? Where did these thistles come from?'  
28 "He answered, 'Some enemy did this.'

“The farmhands asked, ‘Should we weed out the thistles?’

29-30 “He said, ‘No, if you weed the thistles, you’ll pull up the wheat, too. Let them grow together until harvest time. Then I’ll instruct the harvesters to pull up the thistles and tie them in bundles for the fire, then gather the wheat and put it in the barn.’”

36 Jesus dismissed the congregation and went into the house. His disciples came in and said, “Explain to us that story of the thistles in the field.”

37-39 So he explained. “The farmer who sows the pure seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the pure seeds are subjects of the kingdom, the thistles are subjects of the Devil, and the enemy who sows them is the Devil. The harvest is the end of the age, the curtain of history. The harvest hands are angels.

40-43 “The picture of thistles pulled up and burned is a scene from the final act. The Son of Man will send his angels, weed out the thistles from his kingdom, pitch them in the trash, and be done with them. They are going to complain to high heaven, but nobody is going to listen. At the same time, ripe, holy lives will mature and adorn the kingdom of their Father. “Are you listening to this? Really listening?

### ***Message/Reflection:***

When we have been in worship together, I have asked “Where do you meet God?” The responses

that are shared are many and varied: in seas and lakes; in wide open fields; on hills and in valleys; in the person who shared food; in the person who challenged me to have a conversation with a stranger; in family; in friends; the light of hope in the worst of circumstances.

We don't always recognize God's presence with us. Sometimes our circumstances blind us to the Holy standing with us. Sometimes our frustrations make us look past the obvious and we miss the love of God guiding us through the maze.

Right now, life feels like a Maze. One that we have been dropped into the middle of. We can't even follow our entry path back to where we were comfortable. We're not sure if we are trying to find the centre or the exit. We feel blinded, scared, alone and lost.

But we aren't. God is with us. Standing behind us to catch, standing in front of us to lead us through, right beside us to hold us up when we falter.

Even though we're not perfect God is still here... even when we make mistakes, and questionable decisions and forget our faith.

Jacob teaches us that... many times in his life. Today we see him in a mess because he has lied and cheated and been disloyal to his Father and his brother. He didn't listen to the warnings. He kept thinking about himself and his needs.

Today we meet him as he runs away. Now he really is alone. No family, no friends. In this lonely place he tries to sleep with only a stone for a pillow. And God comes to him. God doesn't leave him alone. Jacob is given a vision of Angels going up and down from heaven... perhaps a reminder that even Heaven works together as a team to make things happen.

God comes to Jacob, this man who has not been his best, and reminds him that he has a role to play. As was foretold to his Mother, Rebekah, he is to be the beginning of a great nation of people. God promises Jacob that he will never be alone and that God will be with him.

God does not appear to punish Jacob, but forgives him and gives him another path to travel another chance to make better decisions.

This encounter with the presence of God inspires Jacob. He recognizes that even in this place of self exile, God is there. So he creates an altar to God using the stone pillow and symbolism of holy oil, a place to remember where God's presence was felt so strongly and names it "God's House", Bethel.

In today's Parable, Jesus once again speaks to the Farmers. Last week we heard the stories of God's persistence in sowing seeds even when the soil wasn't ready for them. This week we see a crop growing, and growing well. But then something slips

in and some thistles – spiky weeds – infiltrate the field. So what do you do? Do you plow the whole field under because of the thistles? Or do you wait and separate the good and bad seed at the harvest time?

Here again we see the presence of God. Jesus/God sows the seeds of care and love and tends to the crop. But despite even the best efforts of God, something slips in – maybe it's a need for power, maybe it's fear, maybe it's that human tendency to want to get more for ourselves... whatever it is it is not supposed to be there.

Jesus was making a point to the people that he was speaking to that listening to the wrong messages gets us into trouble, that there may be times when God may have to get tough to get us back on track.

But here is something to consider, even as Jesus uses this metaphor to say that God will keep the good crop and discard the weeds, weeds are not always bad. It depends on the circumstances and how we deal with them. For some Dandelions are weeds, for some thistles are weeds, but both of these weeds are also edible, adding nourishment in the lives of others and the weedy dandelions are a necessity for bees to continue to thrive and pollenate fruit so that we can be healthy too.

It could be said that Jacob was a weed: making bad decisions to gain his own power, but God didn't



discard him. He was uprooted and transplanted to a new land where he would be the beginning of something God had planned.

Fear and anger and power are not always bad things if they are used wisely. It is what we do with them that makes them weeds or not.

God teaches us the wisdom. God teaches us to stop and listen and consider what it is that we are to be doing. That little thing that we have that sometimes we name as the weed of guilty conscience, is also named as intuition. In one instance it acknowledges that we are or have been making unwise decisions, in the other it stops us before we do that making us listen for the right choices.

In our current living, we are finding ourselves bombarded with messages of care for self and care for others. We can easily find ourselves scared and fearful and angry. Jacob's story shows us that that could very easily get us lost in the desert.

But we also know that God is watching us. Waiting to tap us in the heart again and say let's start again, I have a plan for you.

God is with us... among us, around us, within us. The Holy is in creation, on the streets, in the people needing help and support. Are you listening for God to guide you through this time of trouble and upheaval? Where are you experiencing the

presence of God today? God is always with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

### ***Offering Invitation***

God of love and all people, through your gift of story, you offer many ways to grow our souls.

You ask us to make choices that are honest

You ask us to grow well and

to provide nourishment to the world

You ask us to grow around the weeds,  
moving past them to be and do better.

As we hear your story today, may we respond with graciousness, compassion and humility  
loving with abundance as you do. **Amen.**

### ***Hymn: ♪ VU#497 Nearer my God to thee***

#### ***Prayers of God's people for God's people***

Jacob used the symbol of oil to mark the place where God's presence was the closest to him.

It was not the only place where he would meet God.

We gather together in our separate places  
to meet you O God.

Our hearts join together across space,  
through closed walls and doors  
to be united in you.

Our symbol is light and love always with us  
Wherever we are.

In this time of prayer and connection with you  
we remember the strength you offer us.

Today we remember those who are ill.

Those who struggle mentally and physically

to be their best.

Those who are weak, Those who are hurting.

May your presence be with them,

may you give them the courage they need

to be on their journey.

**Hear our prayers**

We remember those who are helping.

Those who offer care at all levels

in our health care systems.

The teams of people who clean facilities

The teams of people who offer medical knowledge

The teams of people who are exhausted by the  
burden of caring too much with too little.

May your presence be with them

May you give them the courage they need

to be on their journey.

**Hear our prayers**

We remember those who are afraid, who are angry,  
who are in the forefront of an ever changing world  
that needs direction and compassion.

We recognize those who must make the toughest  
decisions.

We recognize the weight of caring for so many.

We recognize the struggle to balance a spinning  
world that feels out of control.

May your presence be with them

May you give them the courage they need

to be on their journey.

**Hear our prayers**

We offer our prayers, selfishly, for ourselves.  
But God, we pray that you will  
help us look beyond our needs and our wants  
to those who need more.  
Open our minds to be the nourishing, caring people  
that the world is in need of.  
Open our hearts to love our neighbours, all of our  
neighbours and all of your people, near and far.  
May your presence be with us. May you give us the  
courage we need to be on our journey.  
**Hear our prayers. Amen.**

### ***αBlessing***

In spirit, we have gathered with God.  
With spirit, we grow and go into God's world.  
Like Jacob, let us open ourselves to God's  
presence and continue on the road God has placed  
us on. Like the wheat field, let us grow tall and full of  
God's grace so that all God's people may be fed  
May the grace of Jesus the Christ, and the love of  
God, and the strength of the Holy Spirit  
be with all of us, today and always. **Amen.**

### ***Changing the Christ Candle:***

The light of Christ, shining into all the corners of the earth,  
showing us where we are and where we are meant to be.  
The Spirit of God. Breathe it in...and know that God is with us  
wherever we go.

### ***Hymn: ♪ MV#174 Soil of God***

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