

June 20, 2021
The Seed Cracked Open: Gathering Again for the First Time



“They tried to bury us but they didn’t know we were seeds.” - **Mexican Proverb**

“What shape waits in the seed of you to grow and spread its branches against a future sky?” - **David Whyte**

“I have come to believe that there is more grace in becoming wheat than there is in pulling weeds.”
- **Michael Flynn**

“If you tend to a flower, it will bloom, no matter how many weeds surround it.”
- **Matshona Dhliwayo**

“A weed is but an unloved flower.”
- **Ella Wheeler Wilcox**

“As you get older, you find that often the wheat, disentangling itself from the chaff, comes out to meet you.” — **Gwendolyn Brooks**

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRELUDE: *GCC Village Band*

INTROIT: “A New Day” by Mary Alice Amidon, arr. Peter Amidon

GREETING/WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Good morning and welcome! My name is Elisa Lucozzi and I am pastor to the beloved community that is Guilford Community Church. We’re so glad you have joined us this morning for our first in person service together and your first service in person together in 15 months. I want to extend a special greeting to anyone who is joining us online via YouTube this morning and let you know although you might not be here in person with us this morning you are most definitely here in our hearts this morning.

Let us keep creating new ways of being church because we know that being church has nothing to do with a building and everything to do with loving each other. Let us gather to be the church in a new way with a welcome wide enough for all.

REGATHERING RITUAL

At the table before you came to sit down you are invited to write - a gratitude for something perhaps you had taken for granted before, a part of yourself you have been able to embrace, one small piece of wisdom or seed of hope that has now come into bloom. As a symbol of that I would like to invite you to bring a single flower of any kind to worship on Sunday and perhaps to write down what your flower symbolizes. I'll invite people to come up and offer a flower.

LIGHTING OF CANDLES AND SILENT MEDITATION

CALL TO WORSHIP: inspired by Psalm 150 – “The Message”

Hallelujah! Praise God in His holy house of worship,
praise Him under the open skies;

Let every living, breathing creature praise GOD!

Praise Him for His acts of power,
praise Him for His magnificent greatness;

Praise Him with a blast on the trumpet,
praise by strumming soft strings;

Let every living, breathing creature praise GOD!

Praise Him with castanets and dance,
praise Him with banjo and flute;
Praise Him with cymbals and a big bass drum,
praise Him with fiddles and mandolin.

Let every living, breathing creature praise GOD!

Let every living, breathing creature praise GOD!

Hallelujah!

OPENING HYMN: #414 “This Is a Day of New Beginnings”

PRAYER OF INVOCATION/OPENING PRAYER

“The Seed Cracked Open” By Hafiz
It used to be that when I would wake in the morning
I could with confidence say,
“What am “I” going to do?”
That was before the seed cracked open.
Now Hafiz is certain:
There are two of us housed in this body.

Doing the shopping together in the market and
tickling each other
while fixing the evening's food.
Now when I awake
All the internal instruments play the same music:
"God, what love-mischief can "We" do
For the world, Today?"

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Gracious God, in the fields of our lives, we strive to be fruitful, but we fall short. We get so comfortable that we sleep when we need to be vigilant about the errors in our own lives and the injustices around us. We are so casual about wrongdoing that it creeps into our lives and threatens to overwhelm the good we do. We do not pay attention to the unjust systems which shape our lives, that we must work to transform so that your Beloved Community may come to be. Forgive us. Keep us awake so that we can plant your seeds of love and nourish them to grow.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

May your love bloom in us. In Christ Jesus we are a radically renewed community. Old things are done away with, all things become new. We are agents of grace and reconciliation and our seeds of hope, faith and justice grow. So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

CHILDREN'S STORY

PRAYER FOR THE CHILDREN

CHILDREN'S HYMN: "From the Seed in the Ground" by Connie Kaldor

SCRIPTURE: *Carl Hirth*

2nd Corinthians 5: 1-17

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling— ³if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked. ⁴For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ⁶So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord— ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one

from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Mark 4:26-32

He also said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

³⁰He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: Hymn #617 “Write These Words in Our Hearts”

SERMON: “Cracked Open”

PASTORAL PRAYER: “Blessing That Holds a Nest in Its Branches” by Jan Richardson

The emptiness
that you have been holding
for such a long season now;
that ache in your chest
that goes with you
night and day
in your sleeping,
your rising—
think of this
not as a mere hollow,
the void left from
the life that has leached out
of you.

Think of it like this:
as the space being prepared
for the seed.

Think of it
as your earth that dreams
of the branches
the seed contains.

Think of it
as your heart making ready
to welcome the nest
its branches will hold.

—Jan Richardson

ANTHEM: “I Still Have Joy” by Danny McCrimmon and Joseph Calvin Jackson

INTRODUCTION TO PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: *Curtiss Reed and Cathryn Griffith*

This is the time in our service where I invite your prayers – prayers of concern or sorrow, prayers of celebration and joy. If you have something or someone you would like our gathering to pray for you can type it into the comments section that accompanies this live feed if you are joining us online this morning.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Gardener of our Hearts, there are so many little things we do not want to grow:

A mean thought
disputes between family or friends
silence in the face of injustice
Another cancer cell

Gardener of our Hearts, there are so many little things that reveal your kingdom on earth every day but a mustard seed is easy to drop, easy to lose, easy to miss.

We miss it again and again.

Give us small faith. Give us humble hearts. Give us small vision.

And so, we pray that you would inspire us
to commit to and act on
the small difference we can make:

May we bring peace
through small acts of gentleness
and reconciliation;

May we bring abundance
through small contributions
and collaborations;

May we bring safety
through small acts of consideration
and acceptance;

May we bring wholeness
through small acts of care
and service.

Now let us say together the prayer that Jesus taught us using whatever words help us to embody its promise. May we bring about one small glimpse of the

(kingdom) of God, a kin-dom where all are well, all are fed and free, where all are whole, where all know love, where *all* are beloved.

Let us pray: Our Father, (Our Father/Mother, Our Creator) who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom (kin-dom) 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 trespasses against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom (kin-dom) and the power and the glory now and forever. Amen.

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: Hymn #278 “Hear our Prayer, Oh Lord”

OFFERTORY

CALL TO OFFERING

Jesus’ teachings give us many seeds to sow in this community and beyond. It is, however, through our offering that we can nurture these seeds so all may know the Gospel’s promise.

DOXOLOGY

PRAYER OF DEDICATION:

May the offerings brought this day be used as seeds, planted faithfully and nurtured lovingly so that God’s way may be realized anew in this world. Grant us the humility we need to plant and then tend your precious garden. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN: “My Life Flows on in Endless Song”

My life flows on in endless song; above earth’s lamentation
I hear the sweet, though far off hymn that hails a new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife I hear the music ringing;
It sounds an echo in my soul; how can I keep from singing?

What though my joys and comforts die? My Savior still is living
What though the shadows gather round? A new song Christ is giving.
No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that rock I’m clinging;
Since love commands both heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?

When tyrants tremble, sick with fear, and hear their death knells ringing;
When friends rejoice both far and near, how can I keep from singing?
In prison cell and dungeon vile our thoughts to them are winging;
When friends by shame are undefiled, how can I keep from singing?

I lift my eyes; the cloud grows thin; I see the blue above it;

And day by day this pathway smooths, since first I learned to love it.
The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, a fountain ever springing;
All things are mine since I am Christ's; how can I keep from singing?

BENEDICTION: by Ted Loder

Empower me
to be a bold participant,
rather than a timid saint in waiting,
in the difficult ordinariness of now;
to exercise the authority of honesty;
rather than defer to power,
or deceive to get it;
to influence someone for justice,
rather than impress anyone for gain;
and, by grace, to find treasures
of joy, of friendship, of peace
hidden in the fields of the daily
you give me to plow.

THREEFOLD AMEN: Hymn #29

POSTLUDE: *GCC Village Band*