

**Applewood United Church**  
**An Affirming Community**  
**Sunday, June 29, 2025**  
**Third Sunday after Pentecost**  
*(\* please stand in body or in spirit)*  
***Bold words are for all to share***

**Music for Gathering**

**Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements**

We understand that the land on which we live, work and worship is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. The territory is mutually covered by the “Dish with One Spoon” Wampum Belt agreement. In the spirit of reconciliation, we commit to building relationships with all created beings, those who were here before, those who have settled, and those who continue to settle on this land. We commit to partnering with our Indigenous neighbours in being stewards and caretakers of God’s Creation. Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we seek to live as reconciled people through our respect for, and our learning and understanding of, our Indigenous siblings.

**Centering Music:** “Come and Fill Our Hearts” MV 16

**Call to Worship and Opening Prayer:** *(responsive)*

One: We gather today to worship God.

**All: We come seeking comfort,  
inspiration, community, and insight.**

One: We come to open ourselves – body, mind and spirit -  
to the power of God’s presence in our midst.

**All: We have come offering up the seasons,  
the moments, and the turnings in our lives.**

One: We have come ready to be led by faith -

**All: we have come asking God to help us  
grow and learn in faith.**

One: Let’s pray together:

**All: Wondrous and Mysterious God,  
you touch our lives with healing, with hope,  
and with a yearning that your justice be done.  
We thank you for all the ways our faith is**

**bolstered, challenged, and affirmed.**  
**We thank you for Good News.**  
**May this time of worship nourish us**  
**with your promise of meaning and purpose.**  
**May we be empowered to carry your goodness**  
**and love into the coming week.**  
**We pray in Jesus' name,**  
**our Source and Saviour. Amen**

**Opening Hymn: "God of the Bible" MV 28**

**Prayer for Reflection and Revelation:**

Prayer of the Day *by Thom Shuman* <https://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>

Inspiring God,

Giver of words:

you speak  
and chaos is transformed  
into the starry skies of night;  
you whisper  
and the wind leaps  
to caress our cheeks on a summer's evening;  
you smile  
and all creation rejoices in delight.

Jesus Christ,

Uncomfortable Word:

you stand with society's castoffs  
outside the halls of respectability;  
you break bread with sinners  
and give them the seats of honor at your Table;  
you walk the darkened hallways of death,  
comforting those who are taking their last steps;  
and you call to us, saying,  
"Follow me."

Holy Spirit,

Word sifter:

by your touch  
    our anger can dissolve  
        into gentleness;  
by your presence  
    our enemies  
        can become lifelong friends;  
by your joy,  
    our envious spirits  
        can become generous hearts.

God in Community, Holy in One,  
set us free to be your servants,  
as we follow the voice of your son, Jesus. Amen

**Musical response:** "Holy One, O Holy One" MV 35 verse 1

**Scripture Readings:**

2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

Luke 9:51-62

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**Choir:** "Morning has Broken"

**Reflection:** Where faith can lead us

**Hymn:** "Spirit of the Living God" VU 376

**Invitation to the Offering**

**Offering of Music:** "A Place for Everyone" (Kyle Matthews)

**Hymn of Dedication:** "What Can I Do?" MV 191

**Offering Prayer (*together*)**

**All:** We bring our gifts to you, God.  
    Here is the work of our hands,  
    and here is the love of our hearts.

**Accept them, bless them, and use them,  
in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.**

### **Prayers of the People**

There is no joy that does not come from God's hand.  
There is no pain that does not echo in God's heart.  
Let us bring our thanksgivings and concerns  
before God in prayer.

God our Creator, our Source and our Centre,  
we bring our grateful hearts to our collective prayers today.  
We thank you for the blessings of summer – warmth and sunshine,  
blooming flowers and ripening fruits and vegetables,  
opportunities to share relaxing times with friends and family.

We pray for those adversely affected by the warmth and the weather,  
that they find places to be sheltered, that they find sources of healing.  
We pray for the people of Deer Lake First Nations, and other communities  
that have been evacuated in this wildfire season.  
May they find hope and support in their distress.  
We pray for those whose work is made more challenging in the summer months –  
construction workers on our roads, first responders and other care professionals,  
seasonal and migrant farm workers.  
May they know some peace, may they be held in high regard.

We thank you God for the relationships that support us and sustain us –  
who give us joy but can also challenge us:  
our families both given and chosen,  
our friends here at Applewood United,  
our friends in the community,  
our health care providers,  
our government representatives,  
all with whom we connect in this world,  
and those ones we have loved but who now reside with you.

We pray for all who are grieving today, all who have known loss,  
and we remember families in Iran and Gaza and Israel who have lost  
ones they love as bombs fly.  
May they know a measure of your peace, God, even in the midst of violence.  
We pray for families living in fear, and in transition,  
refugee families, displaced families, evacuated families.  
May we find the strength and purpose and the appropriate connections  
to bring them the help they need.

These things, generous God,  
that we have prayed for,  
give us grace to work for;  
and in the purpose of your love,  
answer our prayers and fulfill our hopes.

**The Lord's Prayer** (*said*)

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 trespasses,  
as we forgive them that trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,  
and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

**Closing Hymn:** "Will You Come and Follow Me" VU 567

**Commissioning/Benediction**

**Sung Amen** VU 974

**Music for Scattering**

*Our prayers today are based on prayers from "Celebrate God's Presence," © 2000, United Church of Canada Publishing House.*

**Rev Joanne's Reflection:**

Prayer:

Open our hearts as we contemplate your word, God, so that we may find new inspirations, new understanding, and new ways to follow the one you sent. Amen

Today's scriptures may not, at first glance, seem to have much that connects them. The end of the grand story of Elijah and Elisha with the wonder of waters parting and the scene of fiery chariots from heaven seems very far removed from Jesus and the disciples walking the dusty roads toward Jerusalem and being rejected by a Samaritan village or sharing snippets of

observations with those who would follow him. The portion of Paul's letter to the church in Galatia also appears disconnected with its emphasis on our freedom to serve God through love.

After some closer readings of these texts, a theme began to appear for me – one that may still resonate with us today, so many years after they were written. In each, there is sense that the faith in God is acting in and through the characters some way, leading those we read about in directions they may not otherwise have chosen.

First, we have the ending of the story of Elijah and his disciple Elisha. Elijah the prophet, a huge and important figure in the Hebrew scriptures, was compared to Moses, and with him appeared at Jesus' transfiguration. Elijah performed miracles, encountered God, and spoke out successfully against the worship of other Gods, principally Baal. He was a man of faith, open to God's call and devoted to God's way, as was his disciple, Elisha. Together and separately they travelled the land, their faith leading them into places and circumstances that have become part of our faith story, as well as the stories of those in the Jewish, Muslim and Baha'i communities.

Paul, writing his letter to the Galatian church community, traveling and encountering many different groups of fledgling Christians, was also a man of deep faith and conviction. He tackled issues that were prominent in his time for those people who were learning to live out their faith in God through Jesus. Paul's missions – and his faith – led him into new territory both physically and spiritually. Those to whom he wrote were also being led by their evolving faith into practices that were perhaps new to them and certainly led to new ideas.

Our gospel reading begins with a reminder of the faith that led Jesus to Jerusalem, that kept him and disciples on the road and kept them moving even when Jesus was not welcome. It was faith that God had a path for Jesus, faith that all would unfold as planned. I think it was faith that urged those fellow travelers and potential followers to speak with Jesus, and faith that would keep them traveling with him despite his responses to them. They may even have become part of the crowds that followed Jesus and were present at the entry to Jerusalem that we commemorate on Palm Sunday.

Our faith can lead us, too. Lead us to make tough decisions, take risks, stand up for God and stand firm against oppression. Our faith can help us to take a chance on living a new way, to take a chance and follow Jesus into a deeper relationship with God, and into a future that can be full of possibilities. May our faith continue to be deepened even as it is sometimes challenged, may we never be afraid to follow our faith into new adventures in body, mind or spirit. Amen