

Applewood United Church
An Affirming Community
Sunday, August 17, 2025
Worship with Westminster UC
10th 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:

One: We come into your presence, O God -

**All: answering your call, seeking connection,
sharing our lives and our worship.**

One: We cluster like grapes on the vine,

**All: seeking space for growth,
and seeking nourishment in this place.**

One: We gather as your people, God -

**All: budding with hope, yearning for our spirits
to be cultivated by your love and grace.**

One: We come to worship, so let us pray together:

**All: Creating God, you tend the vineyards of our hearts.
You prune us and shape us to embody your love.
Be with us in this time of worship today,
as you grow your compassion in us,**

as you nurture a passion for justice in us,
as you help us to flourish as your people.
This we pray in the name of the one who was
at home in vineyards and courtyards,
in quiet spaces and crowded ones,
and in the hearts and minds of those who
have followed and continue to follow him –
our teacher, leader and redeemer, Jesus Christ.
Amen

Opening Hymn: “Come, Children Join to Sing” VU 345

Prayer for Reflection and Revelation: A Meditation on Vines

Musical response: “Take, O Take Me as I Am” MV 85

Scripture Readings:

Isaiah 5:1-7 *The Inclusive Bible*

Psalms 80:1-2, 8-19 VU 794-795 Part Two

Luke 12:49-56 *The Inclusive Bible*

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

All: Thanks be to God.

Music for Meditation

Reflection: Vines, Grapes and God

Hymn: “Creator God You Gave Us Life” MV 27

Invitation to the Offering

Offering of Music: “Operator”

Hymn of Dedication: “Know That God Is Good” MV 104

Know that God is good, know that God is good,
know that God is good, God is good, God is good.

Offering Prayer (*together*)

**All: Generous Gardener God,
may the act of giving help each of us to grow.
May the gifts given allow compassion to grow,
justice to flourish and friendship to flower in this
community and beyond these walls. Amen**

Prayers of the People *sharing our 'vine' prayers*

Sung response: "May We but Wait" MV 175

The Lord's Prayer (*said*)

Closing Hymn: "Be Thou My Vision" VU 642

Commissioning/Benediction

*** Sung Amen VU 974**

Music for Scattering

Reflection: Vines, Grapes and God

Prayer:

God, the words you inspire have power -
power to create,
power to disturb,
power to heal.

Help us to hear your Word for us today as we reflect and contemplate. Amen.

We began our scripture readings this week with a love song – the song of a vintner tending their vineyard, a lovely image for a summer Sunday morning when we anticipate the harvest to come next month. This idyllic scene is not where we are left however, as the metaphor of vineyards and God's people turns from anticipated sweetness, refreshment and nourishment to rotten fruit – fruit that is more than unpleasant, it is potentially dangerous – and people that move away from justice and righteousness. It is still a love song, but instead conveys the

heartache that can be experienced when things do not turn out the way that we thought they might.

Our psalm continues this metaphor, calling upon God the gardener to tend the vineyard, tend the people, shine upon all to bring life, to bring peace, to bring flourishing as a vineyard would flourish. For the people who were first exposed to Isaiah's prophetic writings, and to the psalms, tending a vineyard was common work – known to many.

The care shown for the vineyard in the verses from Isaiah would have been familiar to the audience that heard them and would have immediately shown the deep care of the gardener. So the words of destruction, the plans that the gardener/God has for this vineyard seem shocking – painful, and very far from a song of love.

We might compare them to the opening words of our gospel reading – Jesus said to the crowds gathered to hear him, "I've come to light a fire on the earth. How I wish the blaze were ignited already!" and "Do you think I am here to bring peace on earth? I tell you the opposite is true: I've come to bring division." They seem harsh, and like Isaiah's image of an angry gardener God it seems very far from the image of Jesus as one who gives love and compassion, who, as I say every week at the conclusion of worship, is God's love song to the world.

We can all have moments when we are disappointed, when our lives take a turn we did not expect, when we anticipated a result that simply did not happen as we thought it would. Sometimes we must call out the truth, sometimes we abandon plans or even abandon hope.

Sometimes, perhaps, we need to be reminded that we are not alone in our struggles, that even the divine can seem frustrated and angry.

Certainly Jesus *seems* angry in our gospel reading today. We are told that the crowd he was teaching was a unruly, even trampling one another. He has set his face towards Jerusalem, and he knows what waits for him there. He tells them he is stressed, perhaps anxious about how much work he must accomplish. Perhaps he senses their complacency, perhaps he senses that they are not taking seriously the real change he represents. For whatever reason, Jesus reminds them that they cannot simply follow him. They must follow with a conviction that will bring division, and upset households, and bring change to people's lives. They will be disrupted, disturbed, and like that vineyard might feel uprooted and alone.

We know that Jesus does not stay in that angry space, we know that he continues to heal, to touch, to teach, and to lead. We know that God the gardener does not abandon us, despite

what we do. But these scripture stories can remind us that we *are* called to bear fruit that brings peace and justice to the world, we *are* called to follow the way God has given us even when – especially when – it may cost us.

Just as we spent time contemplating vines this morning, may we continue to feel God's presence urging us to grow, and to tend the vineyards of church and community here. May we find the love song that God has for each of us – a song that may encourage us, but also remind us that we have our own responsibility to bear God's justice and peace into the corners of our lives, and of the world.

May it be so.