

# WORSHIP ONLINE

Sunday, July 12, 2020



## This Sunday:

In Matthew, Jesus tries to instruct the disciples in the mysteries of God's realm. The parable of the Sower contains important challenges to disciples about understanding, perseverance, and maturity.

## Prelude: MV 135 "Called by Earth and Sky"

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Arrangement: © 2005 by Margaret Stubington.

Welcome to Prairie Spirit United Church in the summer!

My name is Paul DuVal, and I am always amazed at what a gift it is to be able to gather kindred spirits to share this time through the wonder of technology. At some point things will change again, and we will let you know well in advance. In the meantime we are glad you have chosen to spend this time with Prairie Spirit.

You are invited to join us for online coffee and conversation following the service using the link found in the Weekly Update.

Let us begin by saying together our Mission Statement.

## Mission Statement

**Prairie Spirit United Church is an inclusive community of faith, walking the path of Jesus as we worship God. We do this by engaging with our community, by offering our gifts to aid where we can and by telling our faith stories to all generations.**

And we are reminded there is a sacredness in our gathering  
and so we light this Christ Candle,  
symbolizing the presence of the Spirit in our midst,  
The warmth of community in which we gather,  
And the light that shines with wisdom, insight, and clarity in this time of worship.  
Let us offer a prayer for this day.

Let us pray.

Creator, you unite our hearts, minds, and spirits wherever we are.  
Touch us with hope, and grace, and blessing, today that in song, and in prayer and in our hearing of the word,  
pain might be healed, wholeness might be restored, and our courage might be inspired.  
In Jesus' name. Amen.

## Hymn: VU 660 "How Firm a Foundation" (verses 1, 2, and 5)

Words: "K" in John Rippon's A Selection of Hymns.

Music: Welsh folk melody, arranged by John Roberts (Henllan) in Caniadau y Cyssegr 1839 Public Domain.

How firm a foundation, you servants of God,  
is laid for your faith in God's excellent word!  
What more can be said than to you has been said,  
to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose  
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;  
that soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,  
I'll never no, never no, never forsake!"

"Fear not, I am with you; O be not dismayed!  
For I am your God and will still give you aid;  
I'll strengthen and help you, and cause you to stand,  
upheld by my righteous omnipotent hand."

## Readings

Psalm 119 is a long Psalm. In my bible it covers five pages, and 176 verses, in various ways writing about the blessing of a life lived in God, and the many ways God's presence is nurtured in us. This short passage celebrates God's word, or law, or Torah. Even in a life of challenge, God's way is grounding and sustaining.

### Psalm 119:105-112

119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.  
119:106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe your righteous ordinances.  
119:107 I am severely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to your word.  
119:108 Accept my offerings of praise, O LORD, and teach me your ordinances.  
119:109 I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law.  
119:110 The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts.  
119:111 Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.  
119:112 I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

The Gospel lesson today is the familiar parable of the Sower. As our Lenten Study Group found out, parables are tricky. They are often buried under layers of interpretation, and if the meaning seems too obvious, it probably is. Try to listen as if you have never heard this before and see what you learn.

### Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Many people loved Jesus. But some did not. His disciples found this strange. "Why doesn't everyone listen to you?" they asked. In reply Jesus told this story.

"Once there was a farmer who went out with a big bag of seeds. He scattered handfuls of them in every direction. Some seeds fell on the path. The dirt had been trampled hard by many feet so the seeds just lay there until birds came and ate it. Other seeds fell on rocky ground where the soil was thin. They sprouted but because the roots could not go deep, as soon as the sun came out, the plants shrivelled and died. Some seeds fell into rich soil, where they put down strong roots and grew up into healthy plants."

"We get it," said the disciples. "You scatter your words far and wide and hope they will sink in and grow. But why can some people hear and understand, while others cannot? Are some of us good soil and others bad? Or do we have a choice?" Jesus did not answer. Instead he told another story...

(an excerpt from p. 164 of Read, Wonder, Listen by Laura Alary)

## Hymn: “Thy Word”

by Amy Grant & Michael W. Smith

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Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet  
And a light unto my path  
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet  
And a light unto my path

I will not forget your love for me  
And yet my heart forever is wandering  
Jesus be my guide, hold me to Your side  
And I will love You to the end

When I feel afraid, think I've lost my way  
Still You're there right beside me  
Nothing will I fear as long as you are near  
Please be near me to the end

Nothing will I fear as long as you are near  
Please be near me to the end

And a light unto my path  
You're the light unto my path

## Reflection: “Where Have All the Flowers Come From ” - Rev. Paul Duval

For those of us in southern Manitoba, the middle of July is a little late to be talking about scattering seed. Except for some late seeding lettuce, radishes, or carrots, those of us who are gardeners, serious or otherwise, are a lot closer to looking forward to harvesting than we are to sowing.

But it's fair to say that many of us know a little bit about farming, and that makes this parable really interesting, and really perplexing. Farmers seeding today carefully weigh out the amount of seed they need, calibrate the seed drill to deliver the exact amount of seed per acre, seed in clinical straight lines, and never, never veer off the tilled, prepared field. And here is Jesus telling a story about a farmer who was apparently so careless that he couldn't even keep his seed on the tilled land.

Perhaps this is a clue that we are not really talking about a farmer and seeds after all.

If I understand the context of Matthew's Gospel, he is writing many years after Jesus' death in the context of a small church community that is isolated and perhaps persecuted, and wondering why the message that is so obvious to them is so hard for others to understand. The answer is that the word, the message, is like a farmer sowing grain. Some hear and understand, and some are either unable to hear or understand, or are preoccupied with too many other things and can't focus. The temptation is to see the different types of ground as different groups of people, some of whom “get” the message, and others who don't.

It's true the parable can be used to divide up people. To determine that some know the truth about the Realm of God, and some others are on the outs. But I have another question about the parable. How many of us have walked along a sidewalk and seen a clump of grass growing out of a crack in the pavement? Or been out on a hike and seen a jack pine growing out of a cleft in the cliff that couldn't have more than a handful of soil. Seeds are pretty resilient, God's truth is pretty resilient, and human beings can be both stubborn and resilient.

Last week I think I asked a question about disciples and growing up. I think I said something like a disciple begins to be mature when they can look inside themselves and determine what can be changed and what can't, and take responsibility for what we can control and change. A disciple grows up when they can identify the principles that will govern their life and focus on them in a disciplined way.

Today I think I have another bench mark. A disciple begins to grow up when we stop looking at others and wondering why other people don't get it, and trying to change other people. We grow up when we can look at ourselves, and perceive the hard places, and the stony ground, and the thistles in our own hearts. We grow up when we can understand the things that stop us from seeing God's truth, and more importantly from acting on it.

One more thing, those of us who try to be disciples, who try to share love and positivity in our lives, who live to change our community and our world for the better, sometimes we get discouraged.

Sometimes the seed we sow doesn't seem to catch. We don't get the results we have hoped for. It's important to remember that the sower of the parable didn't calculate results. The farmer scattered seed with great abandon without knowing where it went. He didn't have to know where the good soil was and neither do we.

This is a mystery said Jesus, that you may someday come to understand. And then he told them another story.

## Offering Invitation

For the building up of the community,  
 For sharing love with our neighbour,  
 For service to the common good,  
 Let us with thanks and compassion share what we can from the gift of our life, so that blessings might multiply, and grace might abound!

## Prayer of Dedication

**Giver of all things,  
 As people alive to your goodness,  
 We offer these gifts  
 And the giftedness of this community  
 To the service of human kindness  
 Here and in the world.  
 Amen.**

## Prayers of the People

Take a moment to name those things for which you are grateful today...

Or the beauty of flowers

Or you have been touched by contact with a special friend

Wherever you are there are blessings, you have already discovered them, or they will discover you later.

Take a moment to name those things about which you are fearful, naming them won't make them worse, it will put them out where you can see and hear them. We all have fears, some are small, some are overwhelming. Praying about them won't make them go away, but it might make them easier to live with.

Think of the people for whom you are concerned today, it's good to remember special people in times of need. It could be COVID-19, or racism, or climate change, or the economy. None of this will change overnight, but somebody must care about these things, or they will never change. If not us? Who?

Let us pray:

Creator, we offer you the delight of our lives, and we say thank you!

We bring the burdens of our hearts, and we ask for strength.

We name the concerns of our community and we ask your spirit to be among us.

We come caring for this world, yours and ours and we ask patience, courage, and hope.

We pray for ourselves, that we might continue to live out our mission of inclusion, nurture and transformation.

In Jesus' name who taught us to pray:

## The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father-Mother, who is in the heavens,**

**May your name be made holy,**

**May your dominion come,**

**May your will be done,**

**On earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us today the bread we need;**

**And forgive us our debts,**

**As we have forgiven our debtors;**

**And do not put us to the test,**

**But rescue us from evil,**

**For yours is the dominion, and the power,**

**And the glory forever.**

**Amen.**

## Hymn: MV 37 “Each Blade of Grass”

Words: © 2005 Keri K. Wehlander, [www.creativeworship.ca](http://www.creativeworship.ca).

Music: Anonymous, from The United States’ Sacred Harmony, 1799, adapted.

Arrangement: Linnea Good © 2005 Borealis Music, [www.LinneaGood.com](http://www.LinneaGood.com).

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Each blade of grass, ev’ry wing that soars,  
the waves that sweep across a distant shore,  
make full the circle of God.

Each laughing child, ev’ry gentle eye,  
a forest lit beneath a moon-bright sky,  
make full the circle of God.

Each silent paw, ev’ry rounded stone,  
the buzz that echoes from a honey’d comb,  
make full the circle of God.  
Each fire-brimmed star, ev’ry outstretched hand,  
the wind that leaps and sails across the land,  
make full the circle of God.

Each icy peak, ev’ry patterned shell,  
the joyous chorus that the dawn foretells,  
make full the circle of God.

Each cosmic hue, ev’ry creature’s way,  
all form the beauty of this vast array,  
making full the circle of God.

## Benediction

Let us go into this wondrous world,

**Not knowing what will happen,**

**Yet knowing we will be guided and encouraged.**

Let us go,

**Not knowing what good we do or what grace we share,**

**yet resolving to do good and offer grace where we can.**

Let us go, in the spirit of Christ, and the love of God

**Let us share spirit and love wherever we are.**

**Amen.**

## Postlude: MV 144 “Like a Healing Stream”

Words and Music: © 2003 by Bruce Harding, [www.evensong.ca](http://www.evensong.ca).

# Announcements

## PSUC responds to COVID-19

Although the provincial government has moved to Phase 3, at Prairie Spirit we are finalizing the report from the Ad Hoc Committee prior to making any further changes. The Oversight Council, under the direction of the Prairie to Pine Region, created an Ad Hoc Committee which is developing protocols and procedures for gradual re-opening of Prairie Spirit United Church. Some of our building partners and rental groups have expressed interest in returning and since their numbers are typically under 25, we are making arrangements to accommodate their requests while honouring government direction and our PSUC protocols. Essentially, the building continues to remain closed until further notice. This includes the suspension of in-person worship services and all mid-week groups/meetings.

While our church building is closed, staff will continue working from home. Our minister Rev. Paul DuVal is available. Emails and voice messages are being monitored regularly. To contact the church office, email [PrarieSpiritUC@shaw.ca](mailto:PrarieSpiritUC@shaw.ca) or call 204-832-1000. To leave a voice message, please press 1.

## Graduation 2020

This year we have seen GRAD 2020 signs spring up in neighborhood yards like flowers never-before witnessed.

St. James-Assiniboia high schools, like all other school districts, have celebrated grade 12 graduation in a variety of creative ways.

We extend CONGRATULATIONS to the graduates, parents, families, and teachers for enduring the challenges of COVID-19 over the past four months.

What a memorable milestone!

GREAT JOB!

May the future gift you with goodness.

## Have you been missing baking for Prairie Spirit?

We have decided to provide cookies for West Broadway and St. Matthews-Maryland Community Ministry. These inner city ministries have continued during the pandemic to provide bag lunches for large numbers of people. This is one way we can support their efforts in the community!

The next date is Monday, July 13.

Please bring your cookies to the church parking lot at noon. We need them wrapped in saran wrap, lunch bags, or tin foil in groups of 3.

If you would like to help or to arrange for pickup, please contact the church office. To contact the church office, email [PrarieSpiritUC@shaw.ca](mailto:PrarieSpiritUC@shaw.ca) or call 204-832-1000. To leave a voice message, please press 1.

## Announcements (cont.)

### Lemon Zest

When life gives you lemons, make ZEST.

We are in a heat wave. How nice that we don't need our shovels to get out of our driveways!

Everyone knows how important it is to keep our bodies hydrated at a time like this. The best choice is to drink water.

But sometimes we want a little kick, so lemon zest is a good addition.

Thoroughly clean lemons before use. If you don't have a reliable, safe produce-cleaning product, use a baking soda solution.

Dry the lemons and place them in the freezer.

Once frozen, use a coarse shredder or a zester.

Place 1 Tablespoon amounts of zest into a small zip bag, or wrap in plastic wrap - back into the freezer.

The next time you pour yourself a nice tall glass of water, add a zest packet.

You will not only feel refreshed, you will also be getting a bit of a nutritional boost.

Zest can also be added to baking, salads, vegetables, fish, or meat, for added flavor.

1 Tbsp. zest (6g.)

calories 3

carbs. 1 g.

fibre 1 g.

prot. 0 g.

fat 0 g.

Vit. C 9% of Daily Value

Plus - small amounts of calcium, potassium, and magnesium

Antibacterial properties

Antioxidant – may have antimicrobial and antifungal properties

May boost immune system

Flavonoids, Vit. C, and pectin may promote heart health by lowering cholesterol levels, and other risk factors of heart disease.

Skip the sugar... add lemon zest.

### Share Your News

If you have an announcement or life celebration you'd like shared in our Weekly Update, let us know. Email [PrarieSpiritUC@shaw.ca](mailto:PrarieSpiritUC@shaw.ca) or call 204-832-1000. To leave a voice message, please press 1. Please note that we would like all submissions by Wednesday each week.

# Announcements (cont.)

## Daily Reflections

For July and August, we are going to continue these daily spots, and try some experiments. Please offer feedback, let us know what you like, and what is not so helpful, give us your ideas what you would like to see, what your faith questions are, and how the church helps you be a better human being. Email [PrairieSpiritUC@shaw.ca](mailto:PrairieSpiritUC@shaw.ca).

Our Mission Statement says one of the ways we live our mission is by telling the stories of our faith to all generations. On Mondays, we will ask what that means. What are the stories that guided the lives of our previous congregations? What is the story we are creating anew together? Some of the stories come from the Bible; some of them come from our families. Let's have a conversation together.

On Wednesdays, the focus will be on personal faith and spirituality. Rev. Paul DuVal will share a theme from Rev. Richard Rohr, who has much wisdom to share about prayer and the inner journey.

On Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, Candace Maxymowich, our administrator, will share some thoughts of her own.

View our Daily Reflections on our website: <https://prairiespirituc.org/category/daily-reflections/>

## Ways to Continue Giving

Although we are unable to worship at the church, our expenses are continuing. Your continued financial support is welcome, needed, and encouraged. There are a number of ways in which you can continue to contribute financially to Prairie Spirit.

- Donations can be dropped off at the church mailbox or mailed in.
- If you'd like to go on PAR, the form can be found at:

<https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/par-brochure.pdf>

Please complete this form and mail it along with a voided cheque to Prairie Spirit United Church.

If you'd like to change your PAR givings, please email [PrairieSpiritUC@shaw.ca](mailto:PrairieSpiritUC@shaw.ca).

- You can make a donation to Prairie Spirit online through CanadaHelps.

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/prairie-spirit-united-church/>

(For step-by-step instructions on how to donate through CanadaHelps, visit our website:

<https://prairiespirituc.org/giving/>)

- You can also send an e-transfer to [PrairieSpiritUC@shaw.ca](mailto:PrairieSpiritUC@shaw.ca). You will need to create a security question. In the message box, please indicate which fund(s) you'd like your contribution allocated to.

## Prairie Spirit United Church

207 Thompson Drive Winnipeg, MB R3J 3E2

[PrairieSpiritUC@shaw.ca](mailto:PrairieSpiritUC@shaw.ca) • 204-832-1000

Office Hours: Tuesday - Friday • 9 am - 2 pm

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