

**East Durham Methodist Circuit:**  
**Online Service for 13th June 2021**

Prepared by Rev Dawn Brown and Ann Riding  
Reader (video): Freda Hearn

**Theme: It's Growing - Why?**

**Call to worship:**

The sun rises and sets but Your love O God **ever** rises and **never** sets.

The tides ebb and flow but your compassion O God **never** drains away.

The seasons turn in change with time, but Your faithfulness O God **never** grows old.

We bring to You all we are and all we might be and offer ourselves as living sacrifices of praise. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord **Amen**

**Hymn: All things bright and Beautiful** Cecil Frances Alexander **StF 100 / H&P 330**

**All things bright and beautiful,  
all creatures great and small,  
all things wise and wonderful,  
the Lord God made them all.**

1. Each little flower that opens,  
each little bird that sings,  
God made their glowing colours,  
God made their tiny wings. **All things...**

2. The purple-headed mountain,  
the river running by,  
the sunset, and the morning  
that brightens up the sky; **All things...**

3. The cold wind in the winter,  
the pleasant summer sun,  
the ripe fruits in the garden,  
God made them, every one. **All things...**

4 God gave us eyes to see them,  
and lips that we might tell  
how great is God Almighty,  
who has made all things well. **All things...**

**Prayers:** amended from Roots worship

**God of mystery, Sower, Saviour, Spirit:**

We worship you. And we ask you to give us eyes to notice where the seeds of your kingdom are growing, courage to show them to others, Faith enough to help nurture them and a heart that delights in their harvest.

**God of all:**

You do not force growth but nurture it,  
You do not start big but start small,  
You do not sow greedily but graciously,  
You do not hurry the harvest but hallow it ,  
Forgive us when we want too much too soon.  
Forgive us and accept the work of our hands.

**Living God:**

From a mustard seed to a tree, from I to we, in You we grow.  
In the mystery of the unseen, from brown field to green, by faith and not by sight, day  
by day and by night, in You we grow.  
Forgiven and freed, through word and deed, in You we grow.  
As we sow and reap, as we laugh and weep, in You we grow.  
May your kingdom come, Father, Spirit, Son, in You we grow.

**God of Grace and growth:**

You have called us to plant the seeds of Your kingdom in the fields of Your world  
and to trust You for their developing and flourishing. And so, we praise You:  
For the abundance of Your creativity,  
For the transforming of Your nature of Your spirit,  
For the power of small beginnings,  
For the mystery of hidden growth,  
For the harvest we are invited to delight in,  
We praise You in Jesus' name. **Amen**

We now say together this alternative translation of the Lord's Prayer

**God so holy, full of grace, make the world a better place.**

**Give us the food we need for today.**

**Forgive us our wrongs when we go astray.**

**Help us always to do good, and love others, like we should.**

**God we love You; we are Yours. Swing wide open heaven's doors. Amen**

**Hymn:      **Summer Suns are glowing**    William Walsham Howe      **H&P 361****

1. Summer suns are glowing over land and sea,  
Happy light is flowing, bountiful and free.  
Everything rejoices in the mellow rays,  
All earth's thousand voices swell the psalm of praise.

2. God's free mercy streameth over all the world,  
And His banner gleameth, everywhere unfurled.  
Broad and deep and glorious as the heaven above,  
Shines in might victorious, His eternal love.

3. Lord, upon our blindness Thy pure radiance pour;  
For Thy loving-kindness make us love thee more.  
And when clouds are drifting dark across our sky,  
Then, the veil uplifting, Father, be Thou nigh.

4. We will never doubt Thee, though Thou veil Thy light:  
Life is dark without Thee; death with Thee is bright.  
Light of Light! shine o'er us on our pilgrim way,  
Go Thou still before us to the endless day.

**Reading: Psalm 65: 9 – 13**      New International Version

<sup>9</sup> You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it.

<sup>10</sup> You drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops.<sup>11</sup> You crown the year with your bounty and your carts overflow with abundance.<sup>12</sup> The grasslands of the wilderness overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness.<sup>13</sup> The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing.

**Meditation on Growing:                      Ann Riding**



Like many of you I have a lawn mower, although I don't need one now, this one is special.

It is a child's or junior version, old, battered, bashed and loved, just like me in many ways.

65+ years ago my Grandfather (Pappa Mac) bought the lawn mower and I spent hours cutting the family lawns with him.

I was treated to conversations about plants and gardening, how to make the grass look striped both horizontally and diagonally, how seeds and plants grew and spread and so many other things.

It was great fun. Now the family think I should ask The Repair Shop to fix it, yes, it would look better without the bumps and bashes but what about the memories?

As I have watched my brothers and sister, my cousins, my children and now my grandson playing with it I often thought how we grow in life.

We start like the mustard seeds and the wheat in Jesus' stories

Small and insignificant then planted in the darkness but nurtured by sun, rain, etc and eventually become something. Just like us when God nurtures us, and loves us and we change into his kind of person.

Growing with God is life changing, but like the lawn mower long lasting. The road can be bumpy, long and difficult but the end result is something and someone very special.

So we must remember it is not just plants and trees that grow it is people as well -  
**GROW IN THE LOVE OF GOD**



**Hymn: Yes God is good**

John Hampden Gurney **H&P 363**

1. Yes, God is good; in earth and sky,  
From ocean depths and spreading  
wood,  
Ten thousand voices seem to cry,  
“God made us all, and God is good.”

2. The sun that keeps his trackless  
way  
And downward pours his golden flood,  
Night’s sparkling hosts, all seem to  
say,  
In accents clear, that God is good.

3. The merry birds prolong the strain,  
Their song with every spring renewed;  
And balmy air, and falling rain,  
Each softly whispers, “God is good.”

4. I hear it in the rushing breeze;  
The hills that have for ages stood,  
The echoing sky and roaring seas,  
All swell the chorus, God is good.

5. Yes, God is good, all nature says,  
By God’s own hand with speech  
endued;  
And man, in louder notes of praise,  
Should sing for joy that God is good.

6. For all Thy gifts we bless Thee,  
Lord,  
But chiefly for our heavenly food;  
Thy pardoning grace, Thy quickening  
word,  
These prompt our song, that God is  
good

**Reading: 2 Corinthians 5: 6 - 10 & 14 - 17** New International Version

Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. For we live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

**Hymn: I am a New Creation**

Dave Bilborough

**StF 553**

1. I Am a new creation,  
No more in condemnation,  
Here in the Grace of God I stand.  
My heart is overflowing,  
My love just keeps on growing,  
Here in the Grace of God I stand.

And I will praise You, Lord,  
Yes I will praise You, Lord,  
And I will sing of all that You have done.  
A joy that knows no limit,  
A lightness in my Spirit  
Here in the Grace of God I stand.

**Reading:**

**Mark 4: 26 – 34**

New International Version

**The Parables of the Growing Seed and the Mustard Seed**

<sup>26</sup> He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup> Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. <sup>28</sup> All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. <sup>29</sup> As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

<sup>30</sup> Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? <sup>31</sup> It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. <sup>32</sup> Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

<sup>33</sup> With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. <sup>34</sup> He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

**Message:**

**It’s Growing, Why?**

I am in no way a great gardener, as a matter of fact, I know very little about gardening at all. I am always amazed at people who have ‘green fingers’. At times I can’t even keep artificial flowers alive! Yet when we gaze around us, we are taken by the beauty that surrounds us. Whether in a garden, or in the park or just growing in nature. It’s breath-taking.



To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow! Charlie Brown often has powerful little thought provoking statements that get us thinking.

But what makes the garden grow? How does it grow? And how does that help us to believe in tomorrow?

There are moments in our lives where good things grow up that we are unaware of. Some of these things are planted by God, some are things we have sown. There remains a secret hidden power in all of it.

Our Gospel reading today makes us realise that the garden is growing. It keeps growing, bringing a brighter, better and more beautiful tomorrow than any of us can imagine. Let's learn from the parables!

Jesus teaches us that God Himself scatters the seeds.

He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground.

God's Voice scatters life-giving Seed all over the earth. God is pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh.

Our Psalm reading praises God's graciousness to the creation and to us.

For the Israelites, they believed that abundant rain was evidence that God was visiting the earth to water and enrich it. The rain was called "the river of God." Grain grew as the earth softened with showers. This was the blessing of God. Not only does God provide rain, He drives a cart that is so overloaded with abundance of produce that it falls off as He drives by. Causing the meadows and the valleys to shout for joy and sing!

God does not hold back on His blessings! Even those who do not know Him benefit from His gracious gift of life! He makes the rain to water the fields and sun to shine on everyone. There are blessings all around us waiting for us to just reach down and pick them up. God is scattering seed everywhere.

God scatters the seeds and makes them grow in secret.

Jesus teaches us, "Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how."

There are things that God has planted in our lives that we may have forgotten or do not really know are there. They are secretly growing for a future purpose. God has prepared everything that you and I need and it will be there when we need it.

Looking back on life, have there not been moments when you have come to unexpected places and God has already prepared what you have needed? It's there!

Throughout scripture we have many examples of how God works.

The manna from Heaven when the Israelites were wandering in the desert. The manna was there every morning. They went to sleep and got up and God's mercies were there, new every morning! Without fail.

Our Salvation plan is that God sent His Son to pay the price for our sin, even before one sin had entered our lives. All prepared beforehand, in readiness.

We need to be aware that progress is slow.

It is not a Jack and the Beanstalk story, all this takes time. It does not happen overnight.

It moves through various stages, no stage can be removed, no stage can be skipped, each stage takes time and is needed to produce the harvest. Some stages look like nothing is happening, other stages are terrible and looks like there is no hope and then there are stages that are breath taking.

We should rejoice in the small progress that we experience. The promises of God come up like plants in stages. We can hold onto the promises of God. We sometimes want to control the process. Instead, faith embraces God's way and rejoices in the perfection of each stage.

Give it time. God's Word will not return void. Believe. Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, tells us to have the confidence and live in Faith. We plant the garden because we believe in tomorrow. Compelled by the Love of Christ, making us a new creation, the old has gone and the new has come!

And as we had seeds planted within us, so God uses us to plant seeds in others. Don't waste the season in between sowing and harvest time. God has planted some things and is using us to plant. The seeds are sure to come up, but there is other work to do in the meantime. We need to let God work in secret and use us to tend the soil, making sure no weeds come up. Providing us with some fertilizer and keeping the soil good and moist. Seeds have been planted and they are going to come up. There are things we can do while you wait.

Worship while you wait.

Work for God while you wait.

Witness about Jesus while you wait.

Wonder at the glory of God while you wait.

So we can keep growing, as God continues to care for us. **Amen**

### **Prayers for the world:                    GROWING**

**G** God our Father we come to You in prayer for the world You created and all those who live there.

**R** Realising how much You have done for us we ask that You hold all peoples in Your heart no matter who or what they are they are all precious in Your sight.

**O** Our world has been damaged so much by the human race that You must despair at times. We ask that You instil the love of preservation in our hearts and lives for the future.

**W** You must wonder what on earth we are thinking about as go on our life's journey At times we fight each other, abuse each other, carry out acts of terrorism and expect people to accept this as the norm Please Lord sow the seeds of peace everywhere.

**I** You gave us inventive minds Lord. Help us to use them for the good of humankind to find vaccines and medicines for this dreadful virus that has consumed us, treatments and cures for cancers and other ailments that we suffer from, so that we can grow in health and vitality

**N** Nature can also be cruel, causing disasters suddenly and unexpectedly. Be with all those who are affected by any disaster, look after the victims and their families and give them hope

**G** Gracious Lord we ask Your blessing now on all those whom we know and love whether it be family or friend, work colleague or acquaintance, Church family or members of the local community.

We think of all who are ill, grieving, depressed or in despair and those who just don't know what is going to happen day by day. Keep them and us safe in your loving arms and grant us your peace.

As we think of all that has happened in the world this week, we ask these prayers in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit **Amen**

**Hymn:** **One more step along the world I go** Sydney Carter **StF 476 / H&P 746**

1. One more step along the world I go,  
One more step along the world I go;  
From the old things to the new,  
Keep me travelling along with you:

**And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.**

2. Round the corners of the world I turn,  
More and more about the world I learn;  
All the new things that I see  
You'll be looking at along with me: **And it's from...**

3. As I travel through the bad and good,  
Keep me travelling the way I should.  
Where I see no way to go,  
You'll be telling me the way, I know: **And it's from...**

4. Give me courage when the world is rough,  
Keep me loving though the world is tough;  
Leap and sing in all I do,  
Keep me travelling along with you: **And it's from...**

5. You are older than the world can be,  
You are younger than the life in me;  
Ever old and ever new,  
Keep me travelling along with you: **And it's from...**



**Blessing:**

Go in peace to love and serve in God's world. It is beautiful and you are part of it.

It is our sacred commission to help God love it and the people to inhabit his wonderful creation **Amen**

