

# Order of Service 12/07/2020 Pentecost 6

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## Prelude

Opening verse: Listen! A sower went out to sow... (Matthew 13:3)

## Greeting, Welcome and Introduction

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,  
be with you all.

*And also with you*

Welcome to worship with Brunswick Uniting Church. Welcome today to people across the Presbytery of Port Phillip West where this service is being shared.

Today we hear and reflect upon the parable of the sower and we get the next installment in the family tree of Abraham and Sarah.

Here in Brunswick and in many other parts of the presbytery we have gone back into lockdown this week. To mark this return, all the different parts of today's service have been recorded in or around people's homes – the four walls which delineate the ground of our being, the fields of our lives for the moment. And it is into these places that the sower scatters the seed of his word today, the word of the kingdom, the divine reign of love. May that word take root and grow in you today.

## Greeting from Presbytery ministers

Rev Narelle Collas  
Rev (Deac) Jeanne Beale  
Rev Linley Liersch

## Song

**Now the green blade rises** (TIS382)

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- 1. Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,  
Wheat down in the dark earth many days has lain;  
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:  
Love has come again, like wheat that springs up green.*
  - 2. In the grave they laid him, Love whom men had slain,  
Thinking that he never would awake again,  
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:  
Love has come again, like wheat that springs up green.*
  - 3. Up he sprang at Easter, like the risen grain,  
He who for the three days in the grave had lain;  
raised from the dead my living Lord is seen:  
Love has come again, like wheat that springs up green.*
  - 4. When our hearts are saddened, grieving, or in pain,  
then your touch can call us back to life again –  
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:  
Love has come again, like wheat that springs up green.*
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## Candle Lighting and Call to Worship

Jesus went out and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow." (Matt 13:1-3)

In our separation from one another, I invite you to light a candle.  
Holy Spirit, fire of love,  
burn within us, and unite us  
as Christ's living body  
through the walls and across the distances that divide.  
May the gospel seeds of grace, compassion, peace and hope  
be sown in our hearts  
and grow to fruitfulness through our worship today.

Let us worship God

## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and respect  
the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation,  
the traditional custodians of this land  
since time immemorial.  
We are learning that the land  
is not ours to own, but to look after;  
and that if we listen,  
we may hear in it the calling of the eternal Spirit.  
**Responding to this call, we commit ourselves  
to work for justice, reconciliation,  
and care of the earth.**

Charlotte

## Prayers of Adoration and Confession

*Breathe...*

God of the harvest,  
we worship you in our isolation.

We bring you faith like the land:  
sometimes lush and ripe for harvest,  
sometimes drought parched, scorched and lifeless;  
sometimes rich and fertile,  
sometimes stony, thorny and picked over by hungry birds.

Hear the praise we sing from the hungry ground of our faith, such as it is today.  
Hear the love we have for you our creator, our redeemer, our sustainer  
as we long for the planting, the growth and the harvest of your reign of love in us and in the world.

Forgive the failings of our faith, our hope and our love:  
our lack of understanding and perception,  
our falling away from you amidst the distractions of life.

*pause*

Bring forth from our hearts and our communities the harvest of Christ your Sower – the harvest of compassion, wisdom, love, justice, peace and hope.

We pray to you the Source of our life,  
through Christ the seed bearer,  
on the breath of the Holy Spirit  
who brings the rain and light of growth.

## Lord's Prayer

*Let us pray together in the words of Christ's teaching:*

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*Our Father in heaven  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive, as we forgive  
those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For yours is the kingdom,  
the power, and the glory  
for ever and ever,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen. Amen.*

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SONG: [The Lord's Prayer](#), musical setting by Dave Brown, PUBLIC DOMAIN

## Word of Grace

From the sea Christ speaks his word of hope.  
On the land the sower sows his seeds of grace.  
May those seed words take root in you and grow to bear much fruit.  
For by the grace of God, our sin is forgiven.  
***Thanks be to God.***

## Genesis 25:19-34

**Kirsty Brown**

These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?" So she went to inquire of the Lord.

And the Lord said to her,  
"Two nations are in your womb,  
and two peoples born of you shall be divided;  
the one shall be stronger than the other,  
the elder shall serve the younger."

When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

### Esau Sells His Birthright

Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!" (Therefore he was called Edom.) Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

## With the Children

Joel, Tess, Rafa, Sofia

We continue the story of Abraham's family and learn the story of the birth of twins Jacob & Esau

## Song

### When a grain of wheat (MV125)

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*When a grain of wheat, into the ground has fallen  
Into the cold ground, and lies waiting for the Spring,  
And lies in waiting for the Spring; this fallen grain  
Will rise to life, this fallen grain will rise to life.*

*Hit to tsu bu no mugi wa o chi keru  
Chino ue ni ma ta ha e i zu ru  
Ha ru a machi tsu tsu ma ta ha e  
i zu ru ha ru o machi tsu tsu*

*When a grain of wheat, into the ground has fallen  
Into the cold ground, and lies waiting for the Spring,  
And lies in waiting for the Spring; this fallen grain  
Will rise to life, this fallen grain will rise to life.*

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SONG: [When a grain of wheat](#), words Toyohiko Kagawa; English translation Frank Y Ohtomo  
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## Gospel Reading

Ken Morrison

### Matthew 13:1-17

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!"

Then the disciples came and asked him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He answered, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.'

With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says:

‘You will indeed listen, but never understand,  
and you will indeed look, but never perceive.  
For this people’s heart has grown dull,  
and their ears are hard of hearing,  
and they have shut their eyes;  
so that they might not look with their eyes,  
and listen with their ears,  
and understand with their heart and turn—  
and I would heal them.’

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.

## Reflection – A sower went out to sow

Jesus says, “A sower went out to sow.”

We call it the Parable of the Sower, but the story is actually more about the ground into which the seed is sown. And, friends, we are that ground. The parable asks us, how are we growing? Are our lives good soil for the gospel seed?

I imagine Jesus as that sower scattering handfuls of seed through his teaching and actions: seeds of blessing for the poor and the grieving and the meek and the persecuted and the peacemakers, seeds of instruction in living and praying, seeds of love’s demand, seeds of God’s merciful way. Cast into the field of our hearts.

I imagine him scattering seeds of compassion, seeds of loving power, seeds of freedom and renewal and life’s transformation.

Love is scattered and sown through the gospel;

hope and peace scattered and sown;

compassion, healing and forgiveness scattered and sown;

justice, wisdom and freedom scattered and sown;

a new vision of creation, true Sabbath rest, radical divine hospitality scattered and sown;

all these seeds of God’s reign scattered and sown.

Yes, the kingdom of heaven, the reign of love, is near, Jesus has planted it in our hearts.

So what happens now? Next comes the germination and the growth ... as long as it rains, and as long as the soil is fertile. But what if our lives are in drought? What if the ground of our spirits is stony, weed infested, unproductive, full of doubts and distractions, pressured and confined by locked-down isolation? I was moved by a picture that I once saw of a Mallee wheat farmer. He was out in the field working with his family and their massive machinery. The land around them was an absolute dust bowl, scorched by the drought – a red, bare, dry, lifeless, barren desert landscape – the red dust was swirling around them in clouds, the sun cutting shafts of light through it. Do you know what they were doing? ... Sowing seeds.

You look and you think what could possibly grow there? Is this sustainable agriculture?

It’s a gamble. That land looks like nothing could ever grow, but the sower sows the seeds ... in hope ... takes a calculated risk based on the promise of rain. But finally, it is an act of faith and hope. The sower entrusts the seed to the ground.

And we are that ground. Christ entrusts the seed of the gospel to us, he has faith that the scattered seed will bring forth a harvest. The sower places faith in us. The question is, do we have faith in the sower?

You know, Jesus, if the kingdom is so close, if we are on the verge of love’s harvest, why does it feel like things are going backwards? It’s hard not to feel discouraged as the virus forces us back into lockdown,

as hardship takes firmer hold on the most vulnerable in our society, as our world hardens further into negative sniping and ideological division. The soil for the kingdom's growth seems pretty rocky and weed infested. Where is this harvest going to come from, Jesus?

Do we have faith in the sower? Are we satisfied with this strategy for growing the divine commonwealth of love: chuck seed around willy-nilly and hope for the best?

This parable is originally told to address the experience of the first Christians. They were not a thriving growing community back then. Some of their number had taken up the gospel seed with great enthusiasm, but when they felt the world turning against them, they fell away. Others drifted away because they found the teaching of Christ too arduous, and the lure of wealth more attractive and secure than the poverty of the Christians.

But the Parable of the Sower says, what you're experiencing is God's way – seeds scattered and sown. Some will be snatched away, some will germinate but shrivel under the heat of persecution, some will be choked by the cares and lures of life. But listen and look into your heart. The sower's seed is planted there. Let that love grow, let the hope flourish, let the faith flower and fruit. Yes, there will be rocks and weeds and hungry birds, but there will also be a harvest, a harvest more than plentiful enough to satisfy the sower.

Let us pray.

Send the rain of your Holy Spirit  
to drench the soil of our hearts, dear God.  
Fill the dry dams of our hope,  
bring forth the green growth of your reign  
from the dormant seeds  
in the dusty pasture of our lives.  
Make us a fertile hearted community bringing forth a harvest of plenty.  
In the name of Christ the sower. Amen.

## Lament

In today's gospel reading Jesus laments the dullness of heart that leads people to stop listening and seeing the healing truth of love. We join him in that lament.

### LAMENT for a people with a dulled heart

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*Why do we listen and fail to hear?  
Why do we see and not perceive?  
We have turned away and our heart has grown dull  
Heal us, help us to grieve  
Heal us, help us to grieve*

*Ooh... Ooh... Oh... Oh...  
Ooh... Ooh... Oh... Oh...*

*Why do we listen and fail to hear?  
Why do we see and not perceive?  
We have turned away and our heart has grown dull  
Heal us, help us believe  
Heal us, help us believe*

*Ooh... Ooh... Oh... Oh...  
Ooh... Ooh... Oh... Oh...*

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SONG: [Lament](#), by Shawn Whelan, 2013, written for the BUC Boundless Plains series, used with permission.

## Offering

We have an offering time during our services not just to collect money for the work of the church and the care of the poor, but as an expression of our faithful desire to join in with God's mission to the world, an expression of our self-giving in response to God's gift of loving grace to us.

And so, we give thanks for all that we have received, for the seeds of love planted in our hearts, and we pray for generous hearts to share all that we can with all in need, be it money, time, work or prayer.

Living God, we offer our lives to you. Bless us in our giving. Amen.

## Prayers of the People

Peter McKinnon

Defy the old dragon,  
defy fear.  
The world may rage  
and quake,  
But I shall remain singing,  
in perfect peace.

- Johann Frank (poet)

Our God, who holds all things together - our world cracks  
and we are falling through the fault lines:

unfettered power  
mindless prejudice  
poverty  
pandemic  
a climate struggling for breath

You scatter your seeds,  
but the ground is hard;  
we search for fertile soil in beauty and grace and joy,  
but we are struggling.  
Yet we know that we live in Kairos, your time, the opportune moment,  
and, for the most part, things are working toward the good.  
Here is your world:  
heal us in our brokenness.

We are your church, charged with the care of souls,  
but we stumble down unknown avenues,  
connect in unfamiliar ways,  
seek to love and support when, we ourselves  
struggle to find your face.

Remind us again, that you have not left the table,  
that it is still set, the bread broken, the wine awaiting us.  
We are your church:  
hold us on the journey.

And life appears to continue:  
the trucks still rumble, the children scoot, the coffee brews -  
but we hardly feel like a community;  
most everyone we meet is fighting a hard battle within.  
May each one of us 'add our light to the sum of light'.

'We are like islands in the sea,  
separate on the surface, but connected in the deep.'  
Bless the space between us.

Remind us that spring is coming  
And with it, the sweet scent of wattle and the bright buds of new growth,  
Let us not miss it.

As the poet tells us:  
'Hope is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all.'

We are your people,  
people of good heart who persist in hope.  
Alight on us, Holy Spirit,  
And lift us up.

The old dragon shall not prevail,  
and we shall go on singing.  
This is 'our year of living dangerously' - may we live dangerously well,  
Amen.

(inspiration drawn from William James, the film 'The Year of Living Dangerously',  
Judith Valente and the Benedictine 'Rule')

## Notices

Saide

Good morning I'm Saide. Please keep up to date with news and information on our website and through the Olive Press.

- If you know of someone who needs extra support during this renewed time of lockdown please let Ian or Gwen from the Compassion team know.
- The Olive Press includes an invitation to participate in the Community Life Survey conducted by the Synod each year. Please respond to the two questions included with the notice by tomorrow.
- Thank you to the many people who have been offering Bible readings, prayers and the Acknowledgement of Country from your homes, the church and other beautiful spaces. I'll be preparing the August & September roster soon, if you want to participate please let me know. Details are in the Olive Press.
- The Climate Action Group is meeting today at 11:45 to receive and discuss feedback from the Church Council in relation to the Draft Climate Action Plan.
- And finally you are welcome to join Ian for a post worship Zoom Chat at 10:30. See our Facebook Group page for the link.

## Sending Song

**You are salt/Bring forth the kingdom** - verses 1-4 (AOV2-4)

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*1. You are salt for the earth, O people: Salt for the Kingdom of God!  
Share the flavour of life, O people: Life in the Kingdom of God!*

*Bring forth the Kingdom of mercy, Bring forth the kingdom of peace;  
Bring forth the Kingdom of justice, Bring forth the City of God!*

*2. You are a light on the hill, O people: Light for the City of God!  
Shine so holy and bright, O people: Shine for the Kingdom of God!*

*3. You are a seed of the Word, O people: Bring forth the Kingdom of God!  
Seeds of mercy and seeds of justice, Grow in the Kingdom of God!*

4. *We are a blest and a pilgrim people: Bound for the Kingdom of God!  
Love our journey and love our homeland: Love is the Kingdom of God!*

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SONG: You are salt for the earth, by Marty Haugen, © 1986 GIA Publications, from As One Voice 2,  
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## Blessing and Sending

In our isolation:

God bless us to be fruitful,

God bless us to be peaceful

God bless us to be loving

within and beyond the walls that enclose us.

In the name of

the Seed maker,

the Seed sower,

the Seed grower,

the Source, Word and Spirit of Love.

Amen

## Credits

### Ministers

Rev Ian Ferguson

### Liturgist

Rev Ian Ferguson

### Presbytery Ministers

Rev (Deac) Jeanne Beale

Rev Narelle Collas

Rev Linley Liersch

### Acknowledgement of country

Charlotte Lee

### Bible readings

Kirsty Brown

Ken Morrison

### Children's time

Tess Alston

Joel, Rafa and Sofia Hallinan

*with predictions from:*

Oscar Batch

Greta Drimmel

Clementine Loynd

Hudson Coath

Hoth Benny

Clara Hall

Harriet Loynd

Rowan Drimmel

### Prayers of the people

Peter McKinnon

### Musicians

Shawn Whelan

(co-ordinator)

Natalie Sims

Daniel Whelan

Maggie Somerville

Catherine Leslie

### Notices

Saide Cameron

Ray Cameron

### Production

Ray Cameron

Saide Cameron

Ian Ferguson

Jane Allardice

Closing verse: "Let anyone with ears listen!" (Matthew 13:9)