

Theme: Rooted in Faith - Growing in Leadership

All worship elements, including the hymns, prayers and sermon, are provided as suggestions. Please feel free to use and adapt them to align with your particular context.

Order of Service

Prelude

Christ Candle

As we light this candle, may it be a reminder that Jesus walks with us daily, illuminating our hearts and minds. May the warmth of this flame mirror the warmth of Christ's love growing within us and empowering us to lead with purpose and compassion.

Welcome

Acknowledging the Traditional Territory

Announcements

Call to Worship

One: Let us gather in your presence, O God.

All: **With open hearts, we come, ready to receive your word.**

One: As you scattered the words of scripture and story around us, may it find good soil.

All: **May your word take root in us, yielding a harvest of faith and leadership.**

One: Rooted in faith, may our worship reflect the deep love that grounds us.

All: **May our worship here today, inspire us to embrace your transformative work in our lives.**

Opening Hymn

VU 412 This is the Day *or*

MV 135 Called By Earth and Sky

Prayer of Gathering

Let us pray: Gracious God, as we gather in your presence, unite our hearts in a spirit of fellowship and worship. May our time together be a reflection of your love, and may we open our hearts to receiving the wisdom and grace you offer us this day. Amen.

Act of Covenant between Community of Faith and Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council (see attached)

Mission and Service Stories (formally Minute for Mission). Found here: <https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service/mission-and-service-stories>

Presentation of Offering

Offering Prayer

Generous God, as we present our offerings before you, we dedicate these gifts with grateful hearts. May they be used to further your work in the world, sowing seeds of love, compassion, and transformation. Bless these offerings and multiply their impact for the glory of your divine realm. Amen.

Offertory Sung Response

MV 191 What Can I Do? *or*

"We Offer" Kingsbury/Bowman (attached).

Prayer for Wholeness and Renewal (or Prayer of Confession)

Merciful God, we humbly come before you, acknowledging the times when we have fallen short. We confess the moments when our words and actions did not reflect the love and compassion you call us to embody. Grant us the courage to change our actions, the grace to amend our ways, and the strength to walk more faithfully in your light.

Assurance of Forgiveness (or Assurance of Pardon)

In the boundless grace of God, receive the assurance that, through Christ, our shortcomings are forgiven, and we are offered a path of renewal and redemption. Amen.

Hymn

MV 156 Dance with the Spirit *or*

VU 570 Jesus' Hands Were Kind Hands *or*

"No Matter" - Kingsbury/Bowman (attached)

Ministry with Children *or* Time for the Young at Heart *or* Learning Together

See attached for a full story.

Scriptures:

Isaiah 43:18-19

Psalm 1: 1-3 (VU 724)

Ephesians 3:14-19

Hymn/Anthem.

"Deeply Rooted in the Promise". Kingsbury/Bowman. See attached music and lyrics. An audio file can be found here: <https://youtu.be/OG736UI8v8E>

Gospel – Matthew 13:1-9 The Parable of the Sower (NRSVA)

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. 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!’

Message: "Rooted in Faith - Growing in Leadership"

See attached for a full sermon script.

Pastoral Prayer and Lord’s Prayer

Loving God, hear our prayers for the world and for one another.

For the Church, may we be rooted in your Word, growing in love, and boldly leading with compassion. Strengthen our unity and guide us to be a source of light and hope in our communities.

For those in positions of leadership, grant them wisdom, empathy, and a commitment to justice. May their decisions reflect your love for all people and creation.

For those facing adversity, illness, or uncertainty, surround them with your comforting presence. Grant healing to the sick, hope to the despairing, and courage to those in need.

For our communities, inspire us to be agents of positive change, working towards justice, equality, and peace. May we sow seeds of love and understanding in our interactions with one another.

For the earth, our common home, guide us to be responsible stewards, caring for the environment and the resources you have provided.

For those who are mourning, comfort them in their grief, and remind them of the hope we have in you.

We offer these prayers, trusting in your mercy and grace, as we pray together as we were taught, saying **Divine Creator, Our Holy Parent, Our Mother and Our Father....**

Closing Hymn

VU 603 In Loving Partnership We Come *or*

VU 584 Through the Heart of Every City - *if the tune is unfamiliar, consider using the tunes HYFRYDOL (VU333) or ABBOTT'S LEIGH (VU104)*

Benediction *or* Blessing and Sending Out

One: As we depart, rooted in faith and growing in leadership,

All: **May the seeds we've sown bear fruit in abundance.**

One: Let us go forth with love, compassion, and a bold spirit,

All: **Embracing the new things God is doing, making a difference in the world.**

Postlude

Attachments:

An Act of Covenant Between Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council and the Communities of Faith within Bermuda-Nova Scotia Region

(These prayers are intended to be said during worship at the Regional Annual Meeting of Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council, and in worship the same week at the Communities of Faith within the Bermuda-Nova Scotia Region, so that we may annually renew our covenants with our Region.)

Introduction:

Christ's body is composed of many parts. Christ has many ministries. Some are easy, others are difficult. Some are straightforward, while others challenge us deeply. Some bring acclaim, while others may bring discomfort. Yet, through Christ, we find the strength to fulfill all these roles.

To be said in the Communities of Faith (in unison):

We the people of X Pastoral Charge / Incorporated Ministry / Community of Faith renew our covenant of mutual responsibility with the **Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council of the United Church of Canada**

We commit to seeking God in every aspect of our lives, living in harmony with God and one another.

We will discern God's will through prayer, Scripture, and fellowship, embracing diverse means of hearing God's voice.

We will celebrate God's presence in worship, music, milestones, and sacraments.

We extend an open invitation for others to join us in our journey with God.

In all our endeavours, we dedicate ourselves to glorifying God and serving the well-being of God's creation.

We offer ourselves anew to God, committed to living in covenant as God's people and the living body of Christ.

To God be all glory, praise, honour, and thanksgiving, now and forever. Amen.

We Offer

Valerie Kingsbury

Christopher Bowman

$\text{♩} = 88-100$

System 1: Chords: D⁷, G, G/B, C(sus2), C, C/E, D, D/F#, G. Lyrics: We of - fer our hearts to che - rish one and all.

System 2: Chords: D/F#, Em, Bm⁷, C(sus2), C, D, D⁷, G(sus2), G. Lyrics: We of - fer our arms to brace a - gainst a fall.

System 3: Chords: D⁷/A, G/B, G, G/B, C, C^{major7}, D, D⁷/A, D⁷, Em. Lyrics: We of - fer our ears to lis - ten care - ful - ly.

System 4: Chords: C/E, Bm, G/B, Am, Am⁹, D, G(sus4), G. Lyrics: We of - fer our hands to build com - mu - ni - ty.

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D/F# G G/B C(sus2) C C/E D D/F# G

We offer our gifts to live abundant ly;

Detailed description: This system of music is in the key of D major (one sharp). It consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff contains the melody with lyrics underneath. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. Above the treble staff, the following chords are indicated: D/F#, G, G/B, C(sus2), C, C/E, D, D/F#, and G. The lyrics are: 'We offer our gifts to live abundant ly;'. The melody starts on a half note D4, followed by a quarter note E4, a quarter note F#4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a half note F#4.

D7/A G/B G G/B Am Em/A D7 G(sus4) G

that all the world might know respect and dig ni ty.

Detailed description: This system of music continues the piece. It consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff contains the melody with lyrics underneath. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. Above the treble staff, the following chords are indicated: D7/A, G/B, G, G/B, Am, Em/A, D7, G(sus4), and G. The lyrics are: 'that all the world might know respect and dig ni ty.'. The melody starts on a half note D4, followed by a quarter note E4, a quarter note F#4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a half note F#4.

a song for children of all ages

No Matter...

Valerie Kingsbury

Christopher Bowman

swing the 8th notes ♩ = 92

F Dm7 Gm/Bb Gm/C

No mat-ter who you are, no mat-ter what you do,
No mat-ter if you're old, no mat-ter if you're young,
**feel free to write additional verses with your singers... be creative!*

3 F Dm7 F/C Gm7 C

you're a spe - cial part of God's world.

Bb F/A Gm Bb Bb/C

No mat - ter if you're rich, no mat - ter if you're poor,
No mat - ter if you're short, no mat - ter if you're tall,

7 F Dm7 F/C C7 F

you're a spe - cial part of God's world.

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Ministry with Children

You'll harvest what you plant. (Object: some seeds to share)

Hello, everyone! I'm so happy to see all of you here today.

Have you ever heard the saying, "You reap what you sow"? It could also be said, "You'll harvest what you plant." It means that the things you do now can have an impact on your future. Let me explain with a little story.

Once upon a time, in a little village/town/community much like ours, there was a young girl named Sarah. Sarah loved flowers, so she decided to plant some seeds in her garden. Every day, she watered them, cared for them, and patiently watched for them grow. And you know what happened? Even though it took some time, they did grow! Her garden bloomed with the most beautiful flowers you've ever seen! Sarah's hard work paid off, and she felt so happy and proud.

Now, planting seeds isn't just about flowers. It's also about the things we do and say to others. When we're kind, helpful, and loving, we're planting seeds of goodness in the world. And just like Sarah's flowers, those seeds can grow into something beautiful.

But here's the thing: sometimes, we might plant seeds of anger, selfishness, or unkindness without even realizing it. Those seeds can grow too, but they don't make the world a better place.

So, let's think about the seeds we're planting every day. Are they seeds of kindness and love, or are they seeds of negativity? Remember, you harvest what you plant.

Now, I have a little activity for us to do together. I have some seeds here in my hand. These seeds represent our actions and words. I'm going to pass them around, and I want each of you to take one. As you hold your seed, think about one kind thing you can do today to plant a seed of goodness in the world. It could be as simple as smiling at someone, helping a friend, or saying something nice to a family member.

[Passes around the seeds]

Once everyone has a seed, let's take a moment to think about our actions and how they can make a difference. Then, let's go out and spread kindness wherever we go!

Remember, just like Sarah's garden, the world can be a beautiful place when we plant seeds of love and kindness. Thank you for listening, and let's make the world a better place together!

Let's pray:

Thank you, God, for loving us.

Help us plant seeds of your love.

In our hearts, and in the world.

Amen.

Deeply Rooted in a Promise

Valerie Kingsbury

Christopher Bowman

♩ = 104

C G C(sus2)/E F C/E C Am Em F Em⁷ Dm⁷ G⁷

As dis - ci - ples, we are grow - ing. Deep - ly root - ed in a prom - ise:

5 C G C(sus2)/E F C/E C Am Em F G C **Fine**

Life a - bun - dant for all peo - ple, walk - ing hum - bly with our God.

9 Dm *unison* C/E F C/E Dm⁷ C

As the seed in soil is plant - ed, nur - tured by the sun and rain,
Root - ed by the stream of wa - ter, there we find our souls re - freshed.
And with love as our foun - da - tion we will build a bet - ter world.

13 E Am E Am Dm⁷ G⁷ **D.C.**

so it is with all cre - a - ted, when in faith our lives re - main.
We can grow in - to our call - ing. When we do, our lives are blessed. *to refrain*
Liv - ing in - to Je - sus' vis - ion peace and just - ice are un - furled.

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Sermon: "Rooted in Faith - Growing in Leadership "

Good [morning/afternoon/evening]

Today we will explore a timeless story from Jesus —the Parable of the Sower. This story, found in the Gospel of Matthew can teach us about faith, growth, and leadership in the Church.

We're gathered here for worship as part of a tradition rooted in Jesus' teachings and scripture. But like the seeds in the parable, our understanding varies. Sometimes we get it, sometimes we struggle.

This parable is not just a lesson for us, it is also a guide for our journey. Today we will explore how faith takes root, grows, and bears fruit amid life's challenges. Through stories from our region, we'll discover how faith inspires leadership, builds community, and fosters love.

Jesus begins the Parable of the Sower by saying:

"A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up."

In this parable, like all parables, we find many possible meanings. In the parable, we can see ourselves as both the sower and the seeds. We can be the potential plants that sprout up from the seed, or we can be the ground that the seeds are growing in. The places for us to see ourselves in this parable are numerous, let's look at a few.

For instance, our actions, words, and deeds could be seen as the seeds we scatter in the world—God's love and message of hope. Sometimes, it may feel like our efforts are in vain, as the seeds fall on the path, but we don't lose heart.

A compelling story from our region demonstrates the power of sowing seeds of love, compassion, and service into the lives of students, resulting in real impacts like counselling support, addressing food insecurity, and fostering inclusivity and support for 2SLGBTQIA+ students. This narrative, by Robyn Brown-Hewitt, shares the transformative work carried out by The United Church Chaplaincy at Dalhousie University. Here is Robyn's story:

The UCC Chaplaincy at Dalhousie University serves over 25,000 students from 115+ countries, providing presence, hospitality, and advocacy. The UCC

Campus Minister, part of Dalhousie Multifaith Services, collaborates with diverse religious groups to support students' spiritual wellness. Recently, the focus expanded in three key areas:

1. **Counselling:** With mental health challenges on the rise, the Campus Minister counsels students facing various issues, from addictions to vocational crises.
2. **Food Insecurity:** As student food insecurity grows, the Chaplaincy organizes the Monday Night Meal, serving 1504 meals during Fall 2022 and Winter 2023.
3. **Affirming Ministry:** Recognized as Canada's first "Affirming Ministry," the Chaplaincy partners with DalOUT (Dal's Queer Student Society) for events like the Fall Retreat and PIE-Day fundraiser.

This ministry of The United Church touches the lives of 100's of young adults every year. Rooted in Matthew 25:31-40, we feed, visit, clothe and care for people, not because they'll become members of the church, but because they're hungry, lonely, cold, and suffering. This ministry exists outside the walls of a church building and beyond the boundaries of church membership. The future of the Chaplaincy is precarious as donations from congregations and Mission & Service Support Grants decline.

This ministry illustrates the idea of sowing seeds of faith and making a difference beyond the church walls.

In the parable Jesus continues:

"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."

As I said, we could be the ground in this parable, and yes, we could be the rocky ground. At times, the word of God takes root in us, but without depth, it withers under life's challenges. Yet, when the soil is receptive, the seeds grow, take root, and transform us.

This story from Sharon Lohnes about Beacon United Church in Yarmouth starting free monthly community meals exemplifies how the word of God took root in the congregation's heart, leading to the growth of a vibrant ministry that feeds hundreds

of people and fosters bonds of friendship and trust within the community. Here is Sharon's story:

At Beacon United Church in Yarmouth, we often host non-traditional summer services. At one of these services in 2017, we discussed community needs beyond our church, identifying food security as a top concern. The solution seemed clear: feed them. But how? We took a bold step, offering free monthly community meals.

Remarkably, donations quickly covered meal costs and more, allowing us to upgrade our kitchen. These meals forged genuine connections between Beacon and the community, fostering friendships and trust.

At our first meal in September 2017, around 40 people attended. Today, our monthly meals typically serve 150 to 250 individuals from diverse backgrounds. This success hinges on a dedicated team of volunteers from both the church and the community, committed to sustaining this vital initiative.

Jesus continues in this parable:

"Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them."

The thorns in this parable could be the distractions and worries that we all encounter in our lives. These distractions threaten to choke the growth of God's word within us. But, when the soil is cleared and we prioritize our faith, the seeds flourish.

This next story, shared by Rev. Catherine MacDonald about Stairs Memorial United Church in Dartmouth, illustrates how the congregation successfully overcame challenges by making strategic changes, such as replacing pews with chairs, adapting worship styles, and creating a welcoming environment that fosters community and inclusivity. Here is Catherine's story:

As an Intentional Interim Minister, my ministry at Stairs Memorial United Church was focused and time-sensitive. After discussions, the community settled on three goals: Connect to the Community & Outreach, Faith-Based Programs, and Make Better Use of the Building.

One example of progress occurred around the two-year mark when the Governing Body decided to replace pews with comfortable chairs to foster

community, especially with reduced attendance post-Covid. Memorial Fund money was used for the chairs, and a campaign led by the Transition Team and Governing Body allowed people to dedicate chairs in memory or celebration of someone. The new seating arrangement, with curved rows, brought everyone together during worship, even with smaller attendance. The choir and keyboard were relocated to the floor, and I preached from there, promoting a sense of unity. We occasionally rearranged the chairs to accommodate different worship styles, such as café-style setups.

Finally, in today's parable, we hear:

"But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Here, we find hope. We can be the good soil. When God's word takes root, we bear fruit—fruit that nourishes, sustains, and transforms. We become leaders, not just individually, but as a community, impacting our churches, our communities, and the world.

This next story, shared by the Spirit Glen Gardeners of Pictou United Church, embodies a community grounded in faith, flourishing in leadership, and bearing plentiful fruits of compassion and inclusivity. Through the creation of Spirit Glen, they demonstrate how a simple church lawn can be transformed into a sanctuary of reflection, restoration, and connection. Here is their story:

In 2016, a group of five Pictou United Church gardeners wondered how their church lawn could benefit the community. This led to the transformation of a well-manicured lawn into a contemplative garden, eventually named "Spirit Glen." The congregation warmly embraced the idea, contributing suggestions like a performance space, resulting in the creation of an elegant gazebo for worship services and concerts.

Spirit Glen became a welcoming gathering space during the pandemic, offering solace, meetings, rehearsals, counselling, worship, and more. Despite being a construction zone in 2019, it provided a magical setting for Christmas Eve worship in 2020 under a starry sky.

With entrance signs inviting visitors to "rest, reflect, restore," Spirit Glen offers various amenities, including a sandstone finger labyrinth, a water feature made of local grindstones, a Little Free Library, benches, a Ponderings

Door, and a Garden Journal. The garden's atmosphere is broadly spiritual, appealing to all.

Thanks to grants and donations, including those from Embracing the Spirit's Innovation and Growth Grants, Spirit Glen was made accessible with a brushed concrete pathway, handrails, and benches. Even a fallen black walnut tree was repurposed into a live edge bench.

Now, Spirit Glen invites everyone to celebrate creation through sensory experiences like touching textured foliage, listening to nature's sounds, tasting fruits, admiring art, and smelling herbs and flowers. Located at the corner of James and Faulkland Streets, Spirit Glen is open to all, all year round.

Today, we are called to be part of the new thing God is doing in our Region. Our scriptures declare that God is about to do a new thing, and we are invited to perceive it.

How are you perceiving God's word growing in you today? How are you rooting your faith in God's word?

In Ephesians, we are reminded to be rooted and grounded in love. As we cast seeds and receive them, let love be our foundation. Love for God, love for one another, and love for the world.

As we move forward, let us be the Church—bold, connected, and evolving. May our roots go deep, and may we bear fruit abundantly, reflecting the love and grace of God.

May the seeds we scatter and receive today bring forth a harvest of faith, leadership, and transformative love. Amen.