

## ***Recognizing That Food Is Sacred: Seed Service***

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*This service was developed using seeds as a concrete symbol celebrating the sacredness of food. The United Nations has declared 2016 the International Year of Pulses. So for 2016, wherever there's a reference to seeds, feel free to adapt the service to use pulses (e.g., chick peas, kidney beans, black-eyed peas, lentils) instead.*

*In the weeks leading up to the service, invite members of the community to collect and bring seeds [or dried beans] that are of significance to them, seeds of every shape, size, and colour. These may be seeds they are waiting to plant, seeds from food that they have eaten, or seeds from their gardens.*

### **Words of Welcome**

This service focuses on one of the principles of The Seven Principles of Food Sovereignty. These are:

1. Focus on Food for People
2. Value Food Providers
3. Localize Food Systems
4. Put Control Locally
5. Build Knowledge and Skills
6. Work with Nature
7. Recognize That Food Is Sacred

The service will focus on the seventh principle: "Recognize That Food Is Sacred."

The United Church of Canada is encouraging congregations to explore these seven principles as part of its Seeding Life: Breaking Ground for Food Justice campaign. For more information about the campaign, resources, and ways to get involved, visit [www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/seedling-life-breaking-ground-food-justice](http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/seedling-life-breaking-ground-food-justice).

### **Call to Worship**

Taken from the earth...

**like lumps of clay.**

Made from the soil...

**like lumps of clay.**

Moulded and fashioned...

**like lumps of clay.**

Worked and re-worked...

**like lumps of clay.**

People of God, look around you!

Look and see what God has made—

[fellow earth creatures]...

**creations of beauty!**

The birds of the air,

the fish of the sea...

**creations of joy!**

Every star, every planet,

every atom, every quark...

**creations of love!**

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As part of this love-given, joy-filled,  
beautiful creation,  
let us give thanks to the Potter  
who gave us life and form—  
**Alleluia. Alleluia! ALLELUIA!**

Extrait du sol...

**telle une motte d'argile.**

Composé de terre...

**telle une motte d'argile.**

Moulé et façonné...

**telle une motte d'argile.**

Œuvré et retravaillé...

**telle une motte d'argile.**

Peuple de Dieu, regarde autour de toi !

Observe et vois ce que Dieu a fait –

[créatures de la Terre]–

**Œuvres de beauté !**

Les oiseaux du ciel,

les poissons de la mer,

**Œuvres de joie !**

Chaque étoile, chaque planète,

chaque atome, chaque quark...

**Œuvres d'amour !**

Et nous, parcelles de cette création – don d'amour,

exultation de joie, éclat de beauté –

rendons grâces au Potier

qui nous donne forme et vie.

**Alléluia. Alléluia ! ALLÉLUIA !<sup>1</sup>**

### Opening Hymn

"Joyful, Joyful We Adore You" (*Voices United* 232)

"Holy, Holy, Holy" (*Voices United* 315)

"We Plough the Fields and Scatter" (*Voices United* 520)

"It's a Song of Praise to the Maker" (*More Voices* 30)

### Opening Prayer

Creating God, provide us with all that we need to grow into who you have created us to be:

As the womb of the earth nourishes seeds,

may we be nourished by this gathered community and the assurance of your holy presence.

As the sun provides energy, leading seeds to transformation,

may we find the courage to embrace new life through the example of Jesus.

As water refreshes and replenishes growing seedlings,

may we be restored by the movement of the spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Bott, while at St. Andrew's U.C., Maple Ridge, B.C. (richardbott.com). Traduction et adaptation: D. Fortin / MiF. First published in *Gathering Pentecost 2, 2015* and reproduced with permission of Richard Bott.

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In times of drought,  
when we cannot feel your warmth or taste your goodness,  
protect us from harmful attitudes and actions that may secure our well-being at the cost of others, and  
lead us again to abundant life.  
Amen.

### Learning Together

#### *Sacred Mandala*

*(Arrange a collection of seeds [or dried beans] of various shapes and sizes on the communion table with a few examples of what the seeds produce. Please note that this is not a Children's Time but could be used as one; adapt accordingly to meet the needs of the people in your congregation.)*

How do you define sacred? *(Share with the congregation your definition of sacred; perhaps something awesome that reminds you of God's presence.)* What for you is set apart, respected, cherished, awesome? Why? How does it point to God's awesomeness?

Seeds are sacred. Seeds are a constant reminder that God is always creating in ordinary and extraordinary ways.

*(Explore with the children/congregation why seeds are awesome. The conversation could include time describing what seeds are...)*

- Seeds (although small) are filled with hope and the promise and potential for new life.
- Seeds are vulnerable, and many seeds are reliant on the love and nurture of the rest of creation.
- Seeds are powerful and have the ability to bring new life and transformation.

*(And provide examples of what seeds do...)*

- Share examples of how different seeds grow in different conditions (e.g., have a seed that sprouts in water and a seed that sprouts in soil).
- Describe examples of seeds that are used in different ways (e.g., seeds that we eat for nourishment, seeds that we use for musical instruments, seeds that we plant).

Seeds are little miracles; they are sacred gifts from God.

Each child/person gathered is invited to take (at least) seven of the seeds that they are most drawn to. Or pull out the seeds you have brought with you! *(Ushers could pass out trays, or if this is cumbersome, people could be asked to take some seeds as they arrive.)*

Reflect silently on the beauty and sacredness of the seeds while you hold them.

*(a moment of silence; people can journal if they wish)*

*(Close the time of silent prayer with the following prayer.)*

### *Seed Blessing Prayer*<sup>2</sup>

We hold these seeds in our hands as a present and future gift.  
Their existence reminds us of the power of dreams to grow in unexpected ways.  
Their growth will help us celebrate life,  
    and God's promise for a world where all are fed and  
    all are loved.  
May these seeds remind us all, that we, too, are sacred seeds planted in God's garden.  
Thank you, God, for the gift of these seeds.  
Amen.

### *Creating a Mandala*

Now with the sacred seeds in your hands, we are going to work together to create a sacred circle or mandala as a visual prayer to God to show how sacred and beautiful these seeds are to us.

*(Have a flat tray or a box filled with soil or sand that is big enough to hold at least seven seeds from each member of your community. Trace out a large circle with two concentric circles inside. In the smallest circle add your seven seeds to form a pattern while saying...)*

Thank you God for these seeds of *(name what these seeds represent to you, e.g., hope, promise, nourishment)*.

We now invite the children/congregation to add their seeds.

*(If working with a smaller and older group, you may invite people to share their reflections as they add their seeds to the mandala. If this is being done as the Children's Time, inform the congregation that they will have an opportunity to add their seeds to the visual prayer of thanksgiving during the offering. If there are no children in your congregation, the creation of the mandala may be moved to the offering, inviting people to hold their seeds throughout the service.)*

### **Hymn**

"All Things Bright and Beautiful" (*Voices United* 291)

"In the Bulb There Is a Flower" (*Voices United* 703)

"Each Blade of Grass" (*More Voices* 37)

"Soil of God, You and I" (*More Voices* 174)

### **Scripture Readings**

Genesis 2:5–9<sup>3</sup>

Psalm 65 (*Voices United* page 763) sung

Mark 4:1–9 or Matthew 13:31–32

### **Genesis 2:5–9, NRSV**

When no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for [YHWH] had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—then [YHWH] formed [an earth creature] from the dust of the ground, and breathed into [its] nostrils the breath of life; and [the earth creature] became a living being. And [YHWH] planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there [God] put [the earth

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<sup>2</sup> Inspired by the Commission on Justice, Peace, and Creation, National Council of Churches in India (Rev. Dr. M J Joseph, Rev. Chukka Sweetly Helen and Rev. R. Christopher Rajkumar) and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance.

<sup>3</sup> Consider using an inclusive translation or replacing "man" with "an earth creature." See example in text.

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creature] whom [God] had formed. Out of the ground [YHWH] made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

### Ministry of Music/ Anthem

#### Sermon/ Reflection

Explore: How do we as a community of faith, as a denomination, and as earth creatures understand seeds as sacred?

You may consider giving this question in advance to a few people in the congregation and inviting them to share their reflections and testimonies during the sermon time. The following reflections of how and why seeds are sacred could be shared along with reflection and testimonies from people in your community (or people who can speak to your context).

#### *Adrian Jacobs*

“Haudenosaunee people have a ceremony in spring to bless the seeds before the planting season. We also called corn, beans, and squash our ‘three sisters.’ This is in keeping with our view of creation as relatives, e.g., elder brother sun, grandmother moon, grandfather thunder, and mother earth. The sustenance provided by food makes Haudenosaunee people happy and is a recurring phrase in the Thanksgiving Address or The Words before All Other Words.

“From my other reading and education a seed contains in itself all the DNA necessary to produce a full-grown plant and fruit containing seeds for the future. In essence, in a seed is a universe of plants that expresses the genius of Creator.”

*Adrian Jacobs is Cayuga First Nation of the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario. Jacobs is the Keeper of the Circle/Principal at the Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, in Beausejour, Manitoba.*

#### *Patricia Vickers*

“Where I come from, our soil is comprised of rock, sand, silt, and peat. There was no cultivation of plants in the past or present. The seeds must thrive without the assistance of human intervention. Plant medicine knowledge is passed on through the mother’s line. For females, one is shown by an aunty how to gather the plants that were once seeds. She must search for where the seeds have grown into cedar, devil’s club, and spruce to assist others or self with purification.

“All life is sacred. A seed in particular is significant because a seed needs to be connected, in contact with all elements to grow, to become. We speak of thought as a seed and the heart as the place where the seed grows. When one’s heart is not clean, it will not produce good thoughts, good seeds. The seed is the beginning; it is already the nature, the essence of what it will become. May our hearts hold good seeds.”

*Patricia Vickers' heritage weaves ancestry from the United Kingdom and Ts'msyen and Heiltsuk Nations. She belongs to the Eagle Clan from the village of Gitxaala, British Columbia.*

#### Hymn

“Many and Great, O God, Are Your Works” (*Voices United 308*)

“When Seed Falls on Good Soil” (*Voices United 503*)

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“Called by Earth and Sky” (*More Voices* 135)

“When a Grain of Wheat” (*More Voices* 125)

### Offering

#### Scripture Reading

2 Corinthians 9:6–11

We offer to God our sacred treasures, trusting that they will be transformed to do more than we could ever hope or imagine.

You are invited to physically or symbolically come forward to share your offering (*arrange to have offering plates at a central place close to or on the altar*) and to add your seeds to the mandala by placing your seeds in a circular pattern within the second concentric circle while saying “Thank you, God, for these seeds of ...”<sup>4</sup>

### Dedication

#### Sung Doxology

“We Give Thanks unto You” Psalm 136 verse 8 (*Voices United* page 857)

“When Hands Reach Out and Fingers Trace” (*More Voices* 136) verse 5

#### Dedication Prayer

**We thank you, God, for the circle of life:  
the cycle of receiving and giving and  
the cycle of seed time and harvest.  
Bless these gifts that we now present,  
trusting in their future promise.  
Amen.**

### Pastoral Prayers and the Lord’s Prayer

Creating God,

For the care that we can give and receive as your creatures,

**we give you thanks.**

For the care of (*name people and communities that offer and receive care*)

**Thank you.**

And we ask for your care and protection over (*name people and places in need of God’s care*).

**As you receive the prayers of all creation,**

**receive our prayers.**

(*open space for silence or communal prayers*)

We gather these prayers with the prayer Jesus taught us (*The Lord’s Prayer*).

**Amen.**

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<sup>4</sup> Consider in advance how you will accommodate, without drawing undue attention, those who are unable to come forward. For instance, a smaller mandala could be brought to those who cannot come forward (as well as possibly the choir) and be placed in the centre of the mandala (or beside it).

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### Hymn

“Touch the Earth Lightly” (*Voices United* 307)

“We Have This Ministry” (*Voices United* 510)

“We Cannot Own the Sunlit Sky” (*More Voices* 143)

“God, Help Us to Treasure” (*More Voices* 147)

### Commissioning and Benediction

Go, appreciating the beauty and promise of all things sacred.

Go, knowing that we cannot hold on to the glimpses of beauty that we experience.

Go, thankful for the gifts such beauty brings.

And may the deep nourishing soil of God’s grace,  
the radiant warmth of Christ’s love, and  
the restoring power of the Spirit be with us all,  
as we spread God’s glory, wherever we are planted.  
Amen.

*(During the commissioning, consider getting members of the gathered community to transform/scramble the seed mandala that was created by the congregation as a reminder that we cannot stay in the beauty of this moment, but must take it with us. If people have not had a chance to see the mandala, you may wish to keep it on display for a week, or invite people to take/care for a seed as they leave.)*

Please send pictures of your seed mandalas to [seeding-life@united-church.ca](mailto:seeding-life@united-church.ca).

**Alydia Smith**, Program Coordinator, Worship, Music, and Spirituality, the General Council Office, The United Church of Canada.