

Mennonite Church of Normal  
Fifth Sunday of Lent                      March 21, 2021

***Deep in the earth: Called to deep growth***

**Worship Focus:** Like a seed that falls deep into the dark, rich earth, we are called to deep growth, releasing our attachments that prevent us from bearing and offering fruit.

**Gathering in God's Presence**

**Prelude** Denise Hedberg

**Welcome/Congregational Life** Joe Culpepper

**Call to Worship** Joe

One: The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with Israel.  
I will be their God, and they will be my people.

**Many: God, teach us wisdom in our secret hearts.**

**Put a new and right spirit within us.**

**Restore to us the joy of salvation, and sustain in us a willing spirit.**

One: We trust you, God, to forgive our iniquities and remember our sin no more.

**Many: There is a time for everything, and sometimes, the hour is upon us.**

One: Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears,  
knowing that those who love their life will lose it.

**Many: "The hour has come. Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies,  
it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."**

**All: We call out to you, as you call us to deeper growth.**

**Opening Prayer** Joe

**Praising God Together**

**Songs of Praise** VT 765 Neno lake mungu /Listen, God is Calling (STJ 42)  
VT 588 We Walk by Faith (HWB 570)

**Hearing God's Word**

**Children's Story:** Annette Harnish

**Invitation to Listen:** VT 405 Listen to the Word

**Scripture Reading:** Jeremiah 31:31-34; John 12:20-33 Lexi & Shannon Neeley

**Sermon:** "An inside job" Gary

**Psalm 51:1-3,10-12**

<sup>1</sup>Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.

- <sup>2</sup>Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.
- <sup>3</sup>For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me. . .
- <sup>10</sup>Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right<sup>[b]</sup> spirit within me.
- <sup>11</sup>Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
- <sup>12</sup>Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing<sup>[c]</sup> spirit.

### Receiving God's Grace

**Response Song:** VT 141 Create in Me a Clean Heart (STS 62)

#### Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness

Joe

One: Deep calls to deep.

We call to you from the depths of our hearts.

**Many: We confess our resistance to being planted  
into your aching earth,  
into the way of your covenant.**

**We confess our need for you to plant within us  
the joy of your salvation,  
a willing spirit.**

*(Silence. Or name the forces that keep us from deep growth.)*

One: Deep calls to deep.

You call to us from the depth of your love.

**All: Calling us to deep growth.  
We come to you, God.**

**Response Ritual:** Stone of Deep Growth

Joe

- How is God calling you to deep growth?
- What do you need to let go of so that you can grow?

**Affirming our Faith** VT 701 You are All We Have

**Sharing Joys & Concerns; Prayer**

Devon Tracy

### Sent in the Spirit's Power

**Sending Hymn** VT 777 Seeds We Have Sown with Youth Choir recording

#### Benediction

Joe

Only when a seed "lets go" does new life arise from it. And here is the secret planted deep within the earth—this change happens not once for us but many times over. May we go into this week aware of the times of letting go that have allowed for new life to come. May we go, aware of the deep growth stirring within us. Amen

#### Postlude