

Title: Receiving Seeds, Sowing Seeds  
Date: 5/22/2022 (Easter 6, Year C)  
Location: St. Alban's Episcopal Church  
Service: 10am Holy Eucharist (Hybrid)  
Readings: [Acts 16:9-15](#); [Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5](#); [John 14:23-29](#); [Psalm 67](#)  
Video Link: <https://youtu.be/HmLXuYZ6Lqw?t=1273>

May God be merciful to us and bless us,  
show us the light of his countenance and come to us.  
Let your ways be known upon earth,  
your saving health among all nations (Ps 67:1-2).  
Amen.

We are coming to the end of the fifty days of the Easter season. Since I will be away next Sunday, this will serve as the season finale. So, let's take this opportunity to pause and take stock of where we are and where we're going, because as one season ends, another one begins.

Even though I have a black thumb, and should never be asked to take care of any plant that is not artificial,  
when I think of the church calendar and the seasons of the church year, it's helpful for me to think about them in terms of  
seasons for planting and growing and harvesting.

In Lent we prepare the ground.  
We clear the weeds and break up the hardened soil.  
Through our Lenten practices,  
whether we decide to stop doing something  
or to start doing something,  
our goal is to remove the obstacles  
that keep us from hearing and responding to the voice of God,  
that keep us from seeing the image of God in ourselves and one another.

In Easter we make decisions about the seeds we want to plant  
and begin planting the seeds.

One way  
to respond to the resurrection of Jesus  
is to think about what we want to resurrect,  
what we want to bring to life.

Not knowing where the seeds will land and whether they will take root, it's **totally fine** to plant all kinds of seeds in all kinds of places.

We start with a vision of the harvest we want to see,  
and then work backwards to create a plan of action.

We may have little control over the results,  
but we can still be intentional in what we do.

Then in Ordinary Time, the long season that takes us from Pentecost to Advent, from summer into fall, we faithfully tend the fields.



I'm walking through this chiastic structure  
not because it gives me a chance to nerd out,  
though I am always happy to nerd out about scripture.  
I'm talking about this mirror effect  
because it underscores the importance of the theme at the hinge,  
the point where we make the turn  
from passive recipients  
to active participants.

Jesus isn't static; Jesus is the Way.  
Jesus draws us toward him,  
and Jesus sends us out.  
We hear the words of our shepherd,  
and we follow where our shepherd leads.  
Jesus teaches through word and example  
not just for us to know in our thoughts,  
but to make real through our words and deeds.  
For me, the best way to REALLY learn something,  
to internalize it,  
is to SHARE it with someone else,  
to SHOW it to someone else.

There is this constant movement.  
We go inward, then go outward.  
We come back to church, then come back out into the world.  
We go from receiving seeds  
to planting them.

So, what kind of seeds do we want to plant this Easter season?  
What do we want to resurrect from our past?  
What do we want to bring to life in the future,  
given all that is happening in the world right now?

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.  
I do not give to you as the world gives.  
Do not let your hearts be troubled,  
and do not let them be afraid" (Jn 14:27).

The kind of peace Jesus left us with  
is not the kind of peace  
that comes from avoiding talking about politics in church.  
He went to synagogues to preach good news for the poor,  
release for the captives,  
recovery of sight to the blind,  
freedom for the oppressed,  
and the wholesale forgiveness of debts (Lk 4:18-19).

The kind of peace Jesus left us with  
is not the kind of peace  
that comes from keeping to ourselves.

Jesus went out of his way  
to be with the kinds of persons that others avoided,  
persons that many saw as unclean or less than,  
less deserving of the respect and rights  
due full members of the community.  
Women, widows, orphans, children, slaves,  
basically anyone who was not the male,  
married head of a household.

The kind of peace Jesus left us  
IS the kind of peace that comes from walking the way of Jesus.  
As I've said all Easter long, our presiding bishop, Michael Curry,  
taught us that the way of Jesus is...  
loving, liberating, and life-giving.<sup>3</sup>

It can be hard to respond to  
those who spread hate with a very narrow definition of love,  
those who want limit instead of liberate,  
those who sow the seeds of death while claiming to protect life.

Doing so may not feel peaceful in the moment,  
but there is a peace that comes from knowing that  
we ARE responding to the voice of our shepherd,  
that we are transforming ourselves and this world,  
starting in this corner of Texas,  
so that there WILL be lasting peace.

We may feel troubled; we may feel afraid.  
We may feel like we can't speak up without being  
constitutional scholars or Biblical scholars or issue experts.  
I keep returning to the words "loving, liberating, life-giving" because this mantra  
grounds us solidly in the footsteps of Jesus.

This is the kind of presence we are called to be;  
this is the movement of the Spirit  
we are called to bring into the world.

So, what kind of seeds are y'all interested in planting?  
During my interviews and in my first months here,  
I've heard that we want to reach new people  
and incorporate them into the life of the church,  
especially people in the rapidly growing areas around us. I've heard  
that we want to attract families with children and youth and get them  
involved in the church.

What are the loving, liberating and life-giving seeds  
we can plant right now  
among this community  
and off the hill  
so that they won't just come, they will want to STAY?

These questions I ask at the end of my sermons are NOT rhetorical.  
I hope you will take them away with you.  
Keep these questions in mind  
as you look at the people and the neighborhoods around you,  
as you read the news,  
as you encounter other organizations.

Then bring back an answer, or many answers, to share,  
so together we can go out and  
make the loving, liberating, and life-giving presence of Jesus more real in  
this world.

This is the way toward resurrection; this is the way toward new life.

Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/chiasm-chiastic.html>

<sup>2</sup> Collect from the Fourth Sunday of Easter [http://lectionarypage.net/YearC\\_RCL/Easter/CEaster4\\_RCL.html](http://lectionarypage.net/YearC_RCL/Easter/CEaster4_RCL.html)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/jesus-movement/>