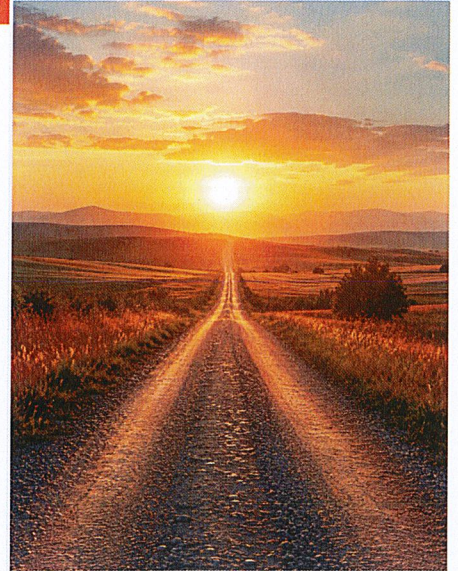


Grace Devotion

Week of July 26, 2026

And Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?” ²⁶ Laban said, “This is not done in our country—giving the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷ Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years.” ²⁸ Jacob did so and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife. (*Genesis 29:25b-28 NRSVUE*)



The Parable of the Mustard Seed

³¹ He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³² it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.” (*Matthew 13:31-32 NRSVUE*)

Dear friends,

Life rarely unfolds the way we imagine it will. Jacob knows something about that. After a long journey marked by struggle and uncertainty, he arrives in a new place and meets Rachel. He is deeply moved by her and agrees to work seven years in order to marry her. The story tells us those years “seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.” But when the time finally comes, Jacob discovers that his story has taken an unexpected turn. In the darkness of the wedding night, he is given Leah instead of Rachel. The deceiver becomes the one deceived. It is a painful moment—one that disrupts his plans and reshapes his future. Jacob, who had often tried to manage outcomes and secure blessings by his own strength, now finds himself unable to control what happens next. His life takes a detour he never would have chosen.

Yet, even here, God is present. God does not abandon Jacob in the disruption. Instead, God continues to work quietly, steadily, and sometimes imperceptibly, shaping Jacob through what he did not expect and would not have chosen for himself. The road bends, but it does not end. Jesus speaks of this same mystery in the parables of the kingdom. The kingdom begins like a mustard seed—small, almost invisible—and yet it grows into something far greater than anyone could predict. It works like yeast hidden in dough, unseen but transforming everything it touches. It is like treasure buried in a field or a pearl discovered unexpectedly, revealing worth where no one thought to look.

In every image, God is at work beneath the surface. Not everything that matters is obvious in the moment. Not every detour is wasted. Not every delay is a denial. Sometimes what feels like interruption is actually transformation.

Faith does not always mean understanding the road ahead. Sometimes faith is simply trusting that God is still present on the road we did not plan to take.

This week, consider the unexpected parts of your own journey. The changes you did not choose. The chapters that felt like detours. And gently ask where God might have been forming you in ways you only recognize in hindsight. You may discover that even the winding road has been carrying you forward.

Prayer:

Faithful and patient God,

You meet us not only in the paths we choose, but also in the ones we never expected to walk. When life takes unexpected turns, steady our hearts. When our plans fall apart, remind us that You have not let go of us. Help us trust that even in confusion, disappointment, or delay, You are still at work beneath the surface. Shape us through every step of the journey, even the ones we did not choose. Give us the grace to see Your presence in every detour along the way. Amen.

With Grace and Love,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pastor Amy". The word "Pastor" is written above "Amy" in a cursive style.

Pastor Amy

July 26, 2026

Nineth Sunday after Pentecost

“Changed Along the Way” Sermon Series

Westminster Chimes and Prelude
Welcome/Announcements

**° Hymn: “It Is Well with My Soul”

** Call to Worship

Lector: Sometimes life takes unexpected turns.

Congregation: God walks with us every step of the way.

Lector: Sometimes growth happens in ways that we cannot see.

Congregation: God is always at work in our lives.

Lector: Let us worship God, who brings life from small beginnings and hope through the detours in our lives.

Congregation: We trust that God is still shaping us!

** Opening Prayer: (pray silently or aloud)

Loving God, When life takes unexpected turns, help us trust Your presence and Your guidance. Give us eyes to see how You are working, even when we cannot understand the path we are on. Plant Your truth within us and nurture our faith. Shape us through every step of our journey. Amen

** Sharing the Peace of Christ

**+“Old Church Choir”

Celebration of Our Gifts

** Offertory Response: “Doxology”

** Prayer of Dedication

Joys and Concerns
Praying for Others
Lord’s Prayer

**° Hymn: “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms”

Prayer of Confession/Silent Reflection/Assurance of Grace

Scripture Reading:

Genesis 29:15-28

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Time for the Young at Heart

Message: “Growing Through What We Didn’t Choose”

**+“What an Awesome God”

** Final Blessing

** “A Choral Benediction”

Postlude

** Please stand, if you are able.

+ Black contemporary folder

° Blue hymnal

#40

#625

#354

#61

#493

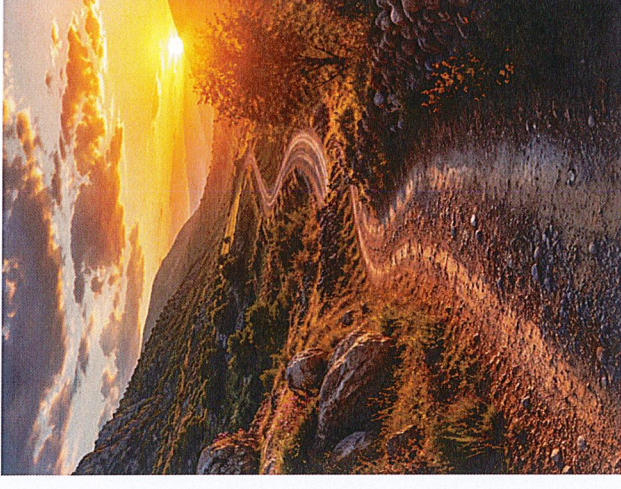
Announcements

- Please consider sharing your talents by hosting snacks in the Gathering Place on Sunday mornings or acting as Lector. Both sign-up sheets can be found in the Gathering Place on the bulletin board.
- **5th Sundays Are Special – August 30th!** Join us for a special outdoor worship service, Continental Breakfast Potluck and our Blessing of the Backpacks and Briefcases as we prepare for a new school year. Enjoy a morning of worship, fellowship, and community!
- Join us for Blessing of the Pets September 12th @ 1:00 PM
- Confirmation & Sunday School Kick off, September 13th @ 9:00 AM
- Thanks to our singers and musicians for sharing their talents with us today.
- Women's Ministry – ZOOM – August 12th @ 7:30 PM
- Monthly Movie – August 14th @ 3:00 PM
- Women's Ministry – In Person – August 26th @ 7:30 PM

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Meetings

- Worship & Music Meeting – July 27th @ 4:45 PM
- Faith Formation Meeting – July 27th @ 6:00 PM
- Consistory Meeting – August 10th @ 5:00 PM
- Worship & Music Meeting – August 24th @ 4:45 PM
- Faith Formation Meeting – August 24th @ 6:00 PM



Grace United Church of Christ

100 Fourth Street

Hanover, Pennsylvania 17331

717-632-1146

Prayer Line: 717-632-1146 LINE 3

Thank you for today's Worship Leaders:

Pastor - Amy Fawks

Lector – Linda Bixler

Guest Pianist – Grace Neilson

Head Usher – Anita Kincaid & Susan Dienes

Jacob & Rachel

And then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.
Genesis 29:28b (NIV)

The puzzle is based on Genesis 29:15-28



A Love Story

L F V E Y K I P N D C N R J Q
P O F P B M L A R X J O Z O D
I I V O K E B E S T M L U X I
W R C E H A T A J Q Y D P R D
I A W C L H W O R K F E S K Q
J F A B G C I U A D G R A K M
D R Y U E G L I F T H B Q R V
E B A Y N A W E W C N H S K S
C D K E U A U P A A B A E G B
E F B C W W M T C H I M V F O
I I J I P R G E I B K L E N S
V G S N N M H J P F U V N S C
E Y X F M K V T Y O U N G E R
D I R B I B I N V H W L R J Y
I D Q E M K V A D W E T T D Q

WIFE	LABAN	LOVE	RACHEL	BEAUTIFUL
JACOB	LEAH	NAME	SEVEN	DAUGHTER
YOUNGER	WORK	DECEIVED	OLDER	YEARS

Mustard Seeds and Yeast

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. Matthew 13:34 (NIV)



The puzzle is based on Matthew 13:31-33

1. Find the hidden words. The words have been placed horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. When you locate a word, draw a circle around it.

D	O	U	H	T	C	S	B	M	D	P	T	T	V	P
N	N	R	Q	Z	K	S	U	B	G	D	Q	W	Z	T
Y	R	N	W	G	H	E	Z	P	O	U	N	D	S	O
E	O	H	E	A	V	E	N	U	S	R	C	E	T	H
A	W	J	X	K	I	D	S	M	A	L	L	E	S	T
S	V	J	D	L										
T	M	N	O	A										
K	W	A	U	R										
I	G	B	G	G										
N	T	Z	H	E										
G	L	K	W	S	M	U	S	T	A	R	D	Y	R	D
D	W	L	O	T	H	W	F	L	O	U	R	P	G	N
O	P	B	S	I	X	T	Y	H	S	D	I	J	T	B
M	J	N	H	K	S	M	F	Y	X	D	I	N	N	J
D	D	G	Y	H	X	J	B	P	A	R	A	B	L	E



MUSTARD	KINGDOM	GROWS	FLOUR	LARGEST
SMALLEST	HEAVEN	WOMAN	PARABLE	SIXTY
POUNDS	YEAST	DOUGH	BIRDS	SEED