

Scattered and Gathered

We Gather

You might want to start by lighting a candle - in today's reading we will hear Jesus say, "I am the light of the world!" The candle helps to centre us - perhaps take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.

Today we are half way through the journey of Lent.
In many places in Europe, our brothers and sisters celebrate Mothering Sunday - it is the feast day in the middle of Lent where people are encouraged to return to the church of their baptism, to reconnect with the community that nurtured them in faith.

It is all a bit strange, our gathering today - some of us with our family, many of us on our own.

Even in this short time, the idea of gathering together and reconnecting almost seems like a distant dream.

It is strange not being together in that place that is so familiar.

Be still... and how that God is God.

God is here.

God's Spirit gathers us together even without physical presence, as we are reminded that we are one in the love of Jesus Christ, and nothing can separate us from God's love shown to us in Christ Jesus.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Ancient of Days, [God the Creator], breathed life into this Land and her Peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation have blessed this place through their care and concern.

We pay our respects to their Elders and Leaders,
past and present, and we pray for the future of their communities.

May we walk gently and respectfully on this Land.

(c) 2017, A.Koh-Butler, This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here.

Call to Worship

The Psalm for today is Psalm 23. *You might like to read or sing it now.*

Let us pray...

Compassionate God, you lead your people to places of refreshment and renewal.

We praise you for this day.

We praise you that as we gather here, we know that our brothers and sisters in Christ in this community and beyond are also gathering - even though we cannot see each other, our spirits join with their's as we offer praise to you.

We praise you that in this time of supermarket chaos, you remind us that, in you, our cup is more than full!

Forgive us when we become fearful and gather more than we need.

Forgive us when we close our eyes to the needs of our friends and neighbours.
Forgive us when we lose sight of the path on which you are leading us.

Give us courage to enter the light, to leave darkness behind and allow your light to flood our lives.

Give us wisdom to shine light into the places that seem steeped shadow.

God of song and heartache, you know that the most challenging places cause our hearts to sing the prettiest songs. The shadow of death makes it dark in the valley, but in these moments we are like seeds in soil, waiting for the right moment to put down roots and send up shoots toward the surface. Cause our hearts to rest in what we cannot see with our eyes; to hear what the ear cannot decipher, and to love the mystery of your love.
Amen.

We Listen for God's Voice

Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14

⁸For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—
⁹for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. ¹⁰Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; ¹³but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,
'Sleeper, awake!
Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.'

Reading: John 9:1-41

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' ³Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' ⁶When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, ⁷saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, 'Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?' ⁹Some were saying, 'It is he.' Others were saying, 'No, but it is someone like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.' ¹⁰But they kept asking him, 'Then how were your eyes opened?' ¹¹He answered, 'The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash." Then I went and washed and received my sight.' ¹²They said to him, 'Where is he?' He said, 'I do not know.'

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, 'He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.' ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?' And they were divided. ¹⁷So they said again to the blind man, 'What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.' He said, 'He is a prophet.'

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹and asked them, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?' ²⁰His parents answered, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.' ²²His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³Therefore his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'

²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, 'Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.' ²⁵He answered, 'I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.' ²⁶They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' ²⁷He answered them, 'I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?' ²⁸Then they reviled him, saying, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.' ³⁰The man answered, 'Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.' ³⁴They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?' And they drove him out.

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' ³⁶He answered, 'And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.' ³⁷Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.' ³⁸He said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshipped him. ³⁹Jesus said, 'I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.' ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, 'Surely we are not blind, are we?' ⁴¹Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, "We see", your sin remains.

Reflection

A video has been posted on the church website: <http://kiama-jamberoo.unitingchurch.org.au>

If you would like to engage in a guided meditation, the link below offers both a recording and a written version:

https://craigmitchell.typepad.com/mountain_masala/2020/03/the-blind-one-at-the-pool.html

You might like to sing "Amazing Grace" together - or listen to one of the many versions available on Youtube...

We Respond

Prayer for Others

Spend some time thinking about the people around you:

- *family*
- *friends*
- *neighbours*
- *people who are ill or struggling or lonely*

- *is there anyone you could make a point of contacting this week - pray for them*

Give thanks for health workers, researchers, government officials - working to provide care, healing and organisation. Pray for them - for strength and compassion.

Pray for our leaders - for wisdom and courage.

Pray for the church - that we will learn to be the church even when we are unable to gather. May our light shine in our communities.

Offering

In responding to what we have read and how we have heard God speak to us, we commit ourselves to a deeper walk with Jesus as our Shepherd and Guide.

If you make a regular financial contribution to the Kiama-Jamberoo Congregation, consider putting that amount aside now and keeping it safe.

We pray...

God, you reach out to us in our darkness and shine light into the dark places of our lives. Here we offer what we have and who we are - mould and shape us to be light in the world. Open our eyes to see where you need us to be and who you need us to love. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

Notices

Keep an eye on the website, facebook page and the e-news for updates.

If you hear of or notice anyone needing a bit of extra support, please let Kath, Janice, or one of the Elders or Pastoral Partners know.

We Go

Sending and Blessing

Go now and be light in the world.

Go gently,
offer love and grace,
and be at peace.

May the God of All-Love watch over us while we are apart.

And may you know the blessing of the Creator, Saviour and Spirit of Life, now and always.
Amen