



We Gather

Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.

This week, it would be appropriate to find a **red cloth** or scarf as it is a celebration day - the anniversary of the inauguration of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Start by lighting the candle. The candle helps to centre us.

Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.

Today's video can be found here:

<https://vimeo.com/430887741/752515e1f5>

Acknowledgement of Country

We recognise the stewardship of the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation for the land on which we gather today.

From river to ocean
from campfire to hearth
may the First People
who have cared for this land
be blessed.

From breath to song
from step to dance
may those who follow your Songlines
guide us on the journey
to living honourably in this place.

From greeting to Amen
from silence to chorus
may our worship
join with the voices
of the First Peoples
of this Land.



(c) 2017, A.Koh-Butler

Prayer

Most wonderful God, as we once again come to worship you,
we praise you for the riches of love that enable us to celebrate your goodness.

Turn our minds away from petty concerns to larger commitments,
away from distractions or apathy towards a sense of awe and wonder,
away from self-obsession to the holiness of your awesome beauty,
humble power, and your unspeakable love.

We realise we never seem be able to thank, praise and enjoy you

to the heights that we should, but we do pray to be able give you the best worship that is possible at this time.

Holy Friend, in you there are no shadows, no imperfections, and no regrets. We wish we could say the same about ourselves, but it is not so.

We confess that there are ugly things which need dragging into the light of your beauty; greed, racism, selfishness.

We confess that there are some faults that we have been ignoring.

We confess that in our hearts there are unresolved regrets for hurts inflicted or opportunities wasted, yet instead of confessing them we try to rationalise our behaviour.

So, we come to you now needing the cleansing of our hearts and souls from Your streams of mercy, and the quenching of our thirst from Your spring of grace.

Forgiveness

Friends, let's not rush past this moment of forgiveness because of familiarity.

Let's soak God's grace into our souls.

God is merciful, just, and reliable.

God our constant companion has promised to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all corruption.

We don't need to carry the old guilt one moment longer.

Our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

Sing: Lord I Lift Your Name on High

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVqWEtfpTgo>

We Listen for God's Voice

Reading: Matthew 10:24-39

²⁴ "The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

²⁶ "So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. ²⁸ Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

³² "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

³⁴ "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn

"a man against his father,

a daughter against her mother,

a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

³⁶ a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

³⁷ “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Sing - How Great is Our God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKLQ1td3MbE>

Reflection - Family Re-defined

Let us pray:

In our struggle to hear your word, O God,
Bless, even our doubts, our wonderings,
Our wanderings, our struggles,
Life's deep questions, and deeper mysteries.
Teach us to love our questions as well as Your answers. Amen.

Do you remember the Port Arthur massacre? It was in April of 1996. It is hard to forget it. 38 people dead, 18 wounded.

I remember being devastated, numb, in shock for days. Our news feeds were full of the unfolding drama. Day after day, more information emerged about the horrific events that took place over a number of days. After the initial shock wore off, what did we do? We regrouped. Stricter gun laws were passed. The buy-back scheme began and over 700,000 weapons were handed in. People became more cautious. We pulled in our loved ones close to our sides and we vowed that we would never be so vulnerable again.

That's what we did. We had been attacked on our own soil, and we didn't like it... not one bit. It would change our Australian culture forever.

A less known massacre happened near Coniston Station in the Northern Territory in October 1928. Over a number of days, from 60 to maybe 200 First Nations people were gunned down. A white man had been killed for taking a married Aboriginal woman away from her family which brought about many other atrocities. Some First Nations people were just looking for water in a drought, others were trying to protect the women and children from a known rapist. After the initial shock wore off, what did they do? People became more cautious. They pulled in their loved ones close to their sides and they vowed that they would never be so vulnerable again. Their culture changed forever.

In the year 70 A.D., the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by Roman forces. It was precipitated by some of the Jewish people, zealots, who had tried to not just stand up to the Roman empire but to expel the Romans from the Holy City of Jerusalem. The zealots felt that the Roman army was oppressive and heavy handed, so they tried, unsuccessfully to get rid of them.

Retribution by the Roman Empire was swift and thorough. They may well have been looking for an excuse to show off their power against the Israelites and the result was devastating. Thousands died, and those who managed to survive were left homeless and in despair. The temple was demolished with only one wall remaining. What we now call "The wailing wall".

If you are a first-century Jew, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. is your Port Arthur moment or your Coniston Station event.

Jerusalem is destroyed. There is dust and rubble everywhere. How many survivors are there? You count them up. You are in shock, devastated, numb. What do you do now? You take stock of your situation. In the light of these events what do you do? The same thing we did after Port Arthur. The same thing the First Nations people did after the Coniston massacre. You stop, you grieve over your loss, and then you re-group. You consider what you have left and think of what is so basic to survival that you cannot do without it.

You go back to basics. You ask the deep questions. Why are we here? Who do we serve? What is life really about? What is the most important thing in our world? Are there important aspects of our lives that the Romans can't destroy with their military forces?

The answers: It is your religious devotion, and you will defend it with your very life. If nothing else remains, your worship, your faith in the one true God of Israel, will prevail. You are the children of Abraham, and even without your much-loved temple you will make sure the faith is kept alive. You will see to it, and if need be you will see to it personally.

Except, there is a small problem. For some years now, a growing number of people who were Jews, have begun to follow a man called Jesus. He was crucified but that didn't stop his followers. The people of "The Way" as they were originally known are growing in numbers and have become a fly in the ointment. , Jesus' followers, Christians, have expanded their borders by taking their message to the Gentiles and in some cases they haven't even insisted that the converts adhere to the Jewish law.

Something has to be done about this and done quickly. If Judaism is to survive – and it will survive – it has to deal with this Christian movement, and the sooner the better.

I can understand the heart of the purist. They have been faithfully following the Law, trying to live up to what they know to be true, and then this group of Christians start to turn it all upside down. Pulling the rug out from under your feet.

So, for the years after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., the Christians suffer persecution at the hands of the Jewish leadership and the Roman Empire. They are isolated, vulnerable and scattered. They are oppressed on all sides and their faith is tested. Some family members believe in Jesus and others don't. In the process, families are being torn apart.

It's to these Jewish Christians that Matthew, a Jew, is writing his gospel and sharing these words of Jesus. "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household."

These words of Jesus, recorded by Matthew, are extremely relevant to the people hearing them. They know exactly what Jesus is talking about because it's happening to them. At that very moment, because of their devotion to Jesus, many of them have been cut off from the rest of their family. Mom has rejected Daughter, and Dad has disowned Son.

These words of Jesus are hard for us to hear, however. Some things are best left unsaid. Both Matthew and Luke record these words and Luke is probably a Gentile writing to Gentiles. It is clear then that the early Christian church took these words of Jesus to heart. We might think they are strange and even hurtful, but they are important.

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.”

Barbara Brown Taylor asks the question for all of us when she says, “What are we to make of such a harsh pronouncement, and where, please, is the good news in it?”¹ It doesn’t fit with our picture of Jesus who tells us to love our enemies; to be people of peace, healing and forgiveness. But then, almost in the next breath, Jesus is found saying, “Whoever loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”

“Where, please, is the good news in it?”

We need to be careful here. Jesus is not talking about families that are abusive or where a parent suffers from alcoholism. Jesus is not talking about a chaotic family life because of an addiction or psychological disorder. Mother and daughter, father and son, are turned against one another specifically because of what Jesus said and did, and what Jesus stands for. The gospel – which is supposed to mean “good news,” – does not always bring people together. Sometimes, it divides them.

Jesus is talking about what happens to family loyalty and relationships when Jesus comes first. It can be a painful, painful subject. Here we find Jesus redefining what ‘family’ is. Are you familiar with the time Jesus was teaching and his family came to get him, to take him home for some much-needed rest and recuperation? When word has reached him that his mother and his siblings have come to see him, he answers by saying, “Who is my family?” And then he defines his family as those who follow his Father... his heavenly father.

“Where, please, is the good news in it?”

Jesus doesn’t despise family... not yours, not mine. But he does re-define family? Family, memories are important to us. They can sustain us in difficult times. Family has an impact on who we are, and we can’t change that even if we wanted to.

However, I’m not so sure that his lineage was so important to Jesus because he talked about his mother and brothers, his sisters and aunts and uncles and cousins, as being those who give their devotion to his heavenly father. And that is why we call other Christians, brothers and sisters in Christ. It is not the physical resemblance that makes us family, but our likeness to Jesus of Nazareth that makes us kin. Our skin colour, our culture, our language, our political persuasion, may be different but we as followers of Jesus are family.

This week is known across the world as Refugee Week. It is an opportunity for us to hear stories of people who have had to run for their lives, fleeing from war, or persecution, famine or oppression. Most refugees have little or no possessions, they are already vulnerable from years of trauma or mistreatment. Their cultures are different, their language is different, their skin colour is different. As followers of Jesus, how should we treat refugees?

There was an article in Sojourners magazine in August 2015 by Stephen Mattson that said: "Many Christians are wary of participating in social justice because of a deep-rooted fear of being labelled 'liberal', 'progressive', or 'secular'. They don't want to be associated with 'secular' movements and are uncomfortable delving into issues that go beyond their cultural comfort zones.

But the Bible tells us that Jesus cared deeply about the social causes around him."

His comments and interactions with others bear witness to this. The Samaritan woman at the well, children, gentiles, woman, lepers, Jews, this sick, all are important.

We have been experiencing a time of reflection over the last few months. We, like the early church and many others down through the centuries after a cataclysmic event, have taken stock of where we find ourselves, and considered what is important to us as the children of God. Now we need to begin to address what the church will look like as we emerge from our cocoons; how will we answer the fundamental questions of faith and life? What is important to us? Who do we serve? What would we like to be known for?

My hope is that we will have enough faith in God, to open our arms wide and see that the stranger, the vulnerable and the oppressed in our society are all loved children of God and that we can join with them in following Jesus.

Notes:

¹ Barbara Brown Taylor, *Gospel Medicine* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cowley Publications, 1995), p. 15

The idea for this sermon came from Dr. Randy L. Hyde with thanks.

Let us pray:

Lord God, help us to keep open hearts, minds and hands to see Your Spirit at work in others and to welcome the stranger in our midst that we might see Christ in each other.
Amen.

Sing - In Christ Alone

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWiFYJMGas0>

We Respond

Prayers for Others

Loving and faithful God, the one whose grace is sufficient for all our needs and whose very presence is our strength in times of weakness. We take hold of your promise with confidence that when we boldly approach your throne of grace, we will find mercy and grace in time of need. Still our hearts and prepare us as we bring our concerns before you

In a volatile and uncertain world, we seek your wisdom for how to live faithful to your calling. We see so much pain and hypocrisy, arrogance and injustice in our communities; much of which is driven by the lust for power and domination and justified by history or economic pursuit. But at the heart is the insecurity and brokenness of our human condition. Lord, in your mercy we cry out for you to pierce the darkness and recreate us again so that the light of your love can break through. Give us the courage to speak out against the behaviours that oppress and disparage

our neighbours, even if it comes at a cost. When are faced with issues that divide us and we don't know how to respond, help us to find a place of understanding so we can move forward.

We pray for people and communities who do struggle because they are feeling oppressed and fearful. For those dealing with physical or mental illness, people who are grieving loss, from death or broken relationships, loss of jobs or acts of violence, Lord we ask for your peace and comfort to prevail in the midst of their torment. Breathe into their lives and heal them. Speak their names and bring new life to their souls.

We hold before you in silence now people and situations you've laid on our hearts, those in our families and our community.....

As a congregation in Kiama-Jamberoo we ask for your Holy Spirit to open our eyes and hearts to how you are leading us into the future. We seek your wisdom and gentleness, humility and courage and a heart to humble ourselves to be a people of prayer and dependence on you. We may be able to gather but we thank you for the opportunities of meaningful connections that we have been able to maintain during these uncertain times.

Lord, without you we can do nothing. Keep us humble and teachable we pray and continue to speak your word into our hearts that your will might be done in our lives and your church. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Prepared by Narelle Dempster

A Prayer for the Uniting Church in Australia

Mighty and merciful God,

you have led your pilgrim people through centuries past

and are calling us to serve you today.

You have blessed us with gifts of the Holy Spirit.

You have given leaders to your Church

who have guided us with courage and insight.

Despite the failings of your Church, you continue to claim us for yourself,

to renew our faith

and to send us out to a world in need.

We thank you for the inheritance into which we have entered:

for the Reformers of the 16th century who preached the centrality of Jesus Christ;

for the Evangelical Revival of the 18th century which reached out

in fresh ways with the Good News;

for the Ecumenical Movement of the 20th century which has brought Christians

together across barriers of race, language, culture and tradition.

We give you thanks for all who prayed and worked to bring the Uniting Church

into being:

for those who wrote the Basis of Union;

for those in every locality who worked patiently to bring people together;

for those who for 40 years have proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ,

ministered to the sick and suffering,

and developed new initiatives in mission.

We ask your blessing on your Church in the coming years:

that you will draw us closer to other Churches;

that you will strengthen our work for justice and peace;

that you will help us minister to the poor and distressed,

the lonely and alienated, the confused and despairing.
May your Spirit of truth and love be our guide both now and in the future,
that we may be a faithful servant Church,
giving of ourselves and all we have
as Jesus gave himself for us. Amen.

Re-written by Rev Dr D'Arcy Wood, from a prayer by his father, Rev Dr A. Harold Wood

Offering

*In responding to what we have read and how we have heard God speak to us, we commit ourselves to moving with God's Spirit, breathing life in the world around us.
If you make a regular financial contribution to the Kiama-Jamberoo Congregation, consider putting that amount aside now and keeping it safe.*

Great and loving God, who hears the cries of all people, and who proclaims each and every one of us to be of great worth: take these gifts we offer. May our giving help your church to proclaim the gospel of justice and truth throughout the world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Adapted from Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for 3rd Sunday after Pentecost, 21 June 2020

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.*

UCA Anniversary messages

Here is a link to the President's message: <https://vimeo.com/430221676>

Here is a link to the Moderator's message: <https://vimeo.com/430580314>

We Go

Sending and Blessing

The love of God enfold you,
The wisdom of Christ enlighten you,
And fire of the Spirit inflame you;
And may the blessing of the holy triune God
Rest upon you and abide with you, now and evermore, Amen.

Worship resources prepared by Rev Janice Freeston