



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 **green cloth** or scarf to signify that we are now in a time of "growing".
Start by lighting the candle. The candle helps to centre us.
Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*



Introduction

We are living in a time of uncertainty - not a far-off, maybe, but a here-and-now, "what if?" In our part of the world, we are beginning to move about more freely - and yet... We are still warned to be careful of large gatherings, of getting too close to others, to remember to keep washing our hands.

Sometimes it is hard to turn it around to consider, what *can* we do? We give thanks for the place we live in with open spaces we can walk in, take a thermos and sit and enjoy the sunshine. We have friends and neighbours to keep in touch with, to phone, to visit.

Today's readings hold together our cry of "How Long?" with Jesus reminding us that even the smallest gift of hospitality is a blessing.

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.

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Call To Worship

God's love stretches wide,
ready to embrace all with love.

You who are thirsty for the presence of God, welcome.

May your thirst be satisfied.

You who long for a caring touch, welcome.

May you know God's love through the care of this community.

In the name of God, welcome to all;

let us drink deeply of God's presence

and share this grace with one another.

Come, let us worship.

Adapted from Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for 4th Sunday after Pentecost, 28 June 2020

Sing - All Are Welcome

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3Pb77ylz_Q

Prayer

Welcoming God,
we come to you
as we often do,
knowing that you
are waiting with open arms, ready to welcome us,
your family,
here in this place.

Welcoming Jesus,
so often the recipient of hospitality and yet willing to sit with anyone, saint and sinner alike,
we come to you
knowing you are prepared to budge up and let us sit with you.

Welcoming Spirit,
so often hidden from sight
and yet so large a part
of any gathering of God's people,

we come to you
knowing that the whispers of welcome are all around us.

Knowing we are welcomed
and yet knowing that we
have not always been deserving of that welcome,
your wide arms of grace, O God,
are too much to take in.
When we come with our heads dipped in shame
you gently lift our chins,
gaze into our eyes,
and say: welcome child,
so good to see you.

God of Love, may we never take this for granted,
try harder to live up to your gracious welcome,
accept your love and, in turn,
offer that same love and welcome
to all whom we meet.

Gracious God, hear our prayer. Amen.

Spill the Beans, Resources for 4th Sunday after Pentecost, 28 June 2020

Words of Assurance

We are born in love, and we live in love.
Each day, the spirit of love speaks anew and guides in a love that transcends the world's coldness and fear.
So hear again Christ's words of grace for you as they set you free:
Your sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

Adapted from Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for 2nd Sunday after Pentecost, 14 June 2020

We Listen for God's Voice

A video can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/432748305/aaa95e8354>

Reading: Psalm 13

- ¹ How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
- ² How long must I bear pain in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

- ³ Consider and answer me, O Lord my God!
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,
- ⁴ and my enemy will say, 'I have prevailed';
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

- ⁵ But I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
- ⁶ I will sing to the Lord,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Reading: Matthew 10:40-42

⁴⁰ ‘Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; ⁴²and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.’

In this we find the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

God of generous welcome, as we listen for your voice, prompt and nudge us towards understanding. May we have courage to respond with open hearts and open hands. In Christ’s name, we pray. Amen.

We begin our reflection on the Scriptures today in Psalm 13.

This psalm expresses something we all can identify with at different times in our lives. It’s the cry that comes from having given life and discipleship our best shot, from dreaming, praying and working for a world that better reflects God’s intention for the world, and from feeling like we are beating our heads against a brick wall.

How long?

How long, O Lord?

This is a psalm that expresses the rawness and realness of human emotion when faced with trials that just seem too hard to bear.

But it is also a psalm that starts in pain but ends in praise.

The struggle, the pain, the waiting - they have not gone away.

But the psalmist is able to direct his heart and soul and mind towards God:

“I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

⁶ I will sing to the Lord,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.”

And isn’t that where we find ourselves sometimes?

The struggle seems endless - when we watch the latest news of violence and corruption in the world around us, when we see people in our communities without work and struggling to keep a roof over their heads, when we are stuck inside and wary of going out into the world. It is a perfectly understandable and valid cry: how long?

But it is not where we stay.

Our hearts turn towards the God of steadfast love and we remember the God who has picked us up and set us back on our feet time and time again, and we sing our praise in gratitude - maybe not always loudly and lustily, but somewhere deep within us, we are able to embrace some sense of gratitude.

So what comes next? Is it just about singing our praise and thanks?

For us, today, the reading from Matthew 10 answers the “what next?”

The few verses we heard are Jesus' final instructions to his disciples before he sends them into the surrounding towns and villages to begin their ministry. We have had this chapter before us now for 2 weeks, and, remember 2 weeks ago, "as you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.' (10:7-8)

And then last week we hear dJesus say, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." (10:34)

And while this last part of his instruction on the surface seems to be fairly straight forward and not too hard - welcome and hospitality - if we look more closely, we'll find that it continues to deeply challenge our expectations and assumptions.

It challenges our assumptions about who belongs, who gets to contribute and who gets heard. Prophets, the righteous, and "little ones". Everyone, without exception. This is about something more than welcoming on our terms - this is about welcoming in a way that embraces, enfolds and enables a person to be all that God has created them to be. So how do we make space for the voices who are not yet heard?

How do we make space for the gifts and graces the stranger brings with him or her?

It also challenges the way we receive - the words of a prophet, the approach of a stranger. It is hard to hear things we don't want to hear; hard to recognise wisdom in unexpected places and from unexpected people; and even harder to change our ways when the prophet points out our waywardness.

It is hard to genuinely welcome someone who is not like us. Everything is fine until we have to negotiate shifts in our customs or practices to accommodate someone who is new to the group or community.

And lastly, it continues the theme of what discipleship costs. Jesus has been pretty clear about that throughout his teaching in Matthew 10 - losing one's life to find it (10:39). And here: welcoming the stranger, making space for the prophet, are all sometimes difficult.

Responding requires something of us.

Welcoming another genuinely and generously requires us to be willing to embrace something new and perhaps to let go of something we once loved.

Agreeing with a prophet can leave us out of step with the people around us, crying in the wilderness, so to speak.

And to be honest:

we fill our minds with so many messages from television, radio, social media, that it becomes hard to hear God's voice through the noise;

we get so busy it is hard to make space to spend time with friends let alone someone who is new and perhaps a bit odd;

we become suspicious of people we don't know well;

we worry that someone might take advantage of us;

we are protective of the privacy of our homes;

or we have turned hospitality into an episode of Masterchef or My Kitchen Rules thinking that we have failed unless we can produce a 5 course meal with all the trimmings.

So Jesus reminds us, the logistics are pretty simple: a cup of water.

Make the space, make the time, to hear, to see, to offer - welcome, a drink, a smile. A BYO sandwich with a thermos in the park, perhaps.

The effect can be life-changing - for all involved; maybe even world-changing! The welcome Jesus speaks about is a welcome that invites us out of our own comfort zone in order to embrace another person. It is a welcome that is willing to change ourselves in order to hear and embrace another person.

So I have been wondering what welcome and hospitality and listening for God's voice in surprising places looks like when our movements are restricted and we are not able to move about as freely as we once could?

If we can't gather in church like we used to for a while, what would it look like if every couple of days we intentionally met a few others for lunch or a coffee or even a walk along the harbour or river?

The Men's Shed, for example, are meeting in the park with a cup of coffee every fortnight now.

We can talk about what is happening, pray together, maybe even share our faith joys and struggles, listen for the voice of the prophets amongst us.

And what if then we invited people who were once part of our church to one of these groups or gatherings as a way to reconnect? Or people we know are a bit isolated or lonely? What about people who we might otherwise feel uncomfortable inviting to church?

We will, one day, be able to gather together again in shared worship.

But in the meantime, as the Psalmist says,

"I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

⁶ I will sing to the Lord,
because he has dealt bountifully with me."

May we trust and rejoice and sing together in the simplicity of small gatherings sharing simple hospitality. And may we be brave and courageous in extending an invitation to our neighbours.

God of courage and peace, help us to follow your example and love courageously. Help us to trust that your wisdom and care can carry us when the world threatens danger or harshness. Help us to be people of brave love and generosity. Amen.

We Respond

Reflective Prayer

Lord,
can I pull up a chair?
Can I sit with here a while with you?
Not too long though,
I don't want to outstay my welcome.

You see, Lord,
It is so good to feel
wanted and welcome,
not to be turned away
or greeted with a "what now?"

I try, Lord, to be like you:
not to bristle when someone expects something from me;
not to let my impatience show;
to give people space and time.

I know, Lord,
that in saying "welcome"
it opens up possibilities,
some good and some that well, you know...
will take all my patience.

And in sitting with you awhile

I am reminded again
what "welcome" looks like
and feels like.

Thank you, God,
for letting me sit awhile.

I will leave you in peace now. Amen.

Spill the Beans, Resources for 4th Sunday after Pentecost, 28 June 2020

Prayers for Others

You might like to re-read Psalm 13 (above)

Today we come and lift our hands in prayer, and there are so many things to pray about...
Those who have found the lockdown most difficult...

Those who are now finding returning to their normal activities difficult, who are anxious and afraid...

Those who are struggling with illness and the limitations of age...

Those who have no work and face a very uncertain future...

Those who have been impacted by the fires and are feeling overwhelmed by one thing after another...

Those who feel unsupported and alone in their grief and struggle...

Those who have worked so hard to serve their communities - front line medical, emergency services, teachers, government agencies, charities and community workers...

We pray for our world, broken and battered...

We pray for those who have made mistakes and now have to carry the burden of that, knowing that others have paid for their mistakes...

We pray for the leaders of the nations, bring them to their knees to find the wisdom and courage to move into tomorrow as they make and implement decisions that will impact all of our lives...

We pray for our first peoples, especially for those who have heard the clamour of voices following George Floyd's death and wanted to scream out "Why didn't anyone care when that happened to me? " May the tearing open that has happened be the beginning of true healing and empathy.

For the situations and people on our hearts that we haven't mentioned...

And finally we come to the little finger of our hands, the weakest one, ourselves.

Give us grace for the days when we feel that it's all too much, fill us with Your love and understanding when we're tired and discouraged, open our eyes to the beauty and wonder around us and use us to share glimpses of hope and joy with those around us. Amen.

Prepared by Marion Haigh

Listen - How Long?

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.

Generous God,
we bring to you our offerings:
our money, our time and ourselves,
not as payment for something given,
but out of adoration and thanksgiving for all we have received.

Take what we offer and who we are, bless them to the work of this church and your kingdom. Amen.

Spill the Beans, Resources for 4th Sunday after Pentecost, 28 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.

Sing - Brother, Sister Let Me Serve You (TIS 650)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYpH3y4608E>

We Go

Sending and Blessing

Live as a testament to God's welcome and grace.

Look for life not in the promise of status or fame,
but in the still, small voice of radical love.

Go in peace and love,
listening to the voice of God amid the blur and noise of the world,
offering nourishment to neighbour and stranger,
and remembering the love of a humble and all-embracing God.
Go with renewed hope and a braver faith.

Adapted from Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 2nd Sunday after Pentecost, 14 June 2020

And the blessing of God, Creator, Saviour and the Spirit of Life is with you, always. Amen.

Listen: The Blessing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOt7baaVSbE&feature=emb_logo