

***Be Transformed - Is The LORD With Us?***  
**Season of Creation - River**

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**Gathering**

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*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 Christ candle. The candle helps to centre us. Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

*A video of this service is here: <https://vimeo.com/461708528/71ff8d387f>*

**Welcome and introduction**

On this 4th Sunday in the Season of Creation, we give thanks for the rivers that flow through the land bringing life-giving water. In Australia, we know well the cycle of "droughts and flooding rains": where riverbeds run dry stretching the will of farmers, livestock and native wildlife; and then overflow, sometimes catastrophically, and in so doing, replenish the land abundantly.



Today's readings find us in the desert with the people of Israel - parched and thirsty - thinking that they will die, and yet God provides water from a rock, life-sustaining water...

**Call to Worship - Psalm 104:27-33**

- <sup>27</sup> [Creatures] all look to you  
to give them their food in due season;  
<sup>28</sup> when you give to them, they gather it up;  
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.  
<sup>29</sup> When you hide your face, they are dismayed;  
when you take away their breath, they die  
and return to their dust.  
<sup>30</sup> When you send forth your spirit, they are created;  
and you renew the face of the ground.  
  
<sup>31</sup> May the glory of the Lord endure for ever;  
may the Lord rejoice in his works—  
<sup>32</sup> who looks on the earth and it trembles,  
who touches the mountains and they smoke.  
<sup>33</sup> I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;  
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

Let us pray:  
Gracious God, be with us today,  
in our joy and sorrow, anticipation, and exhaustion.  
Lead us to your life-giving water  
so that we may be renewed  
to carry out your transformative work in the world. Amen.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Season of Creation 4, 27 September 2020*

### **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*

### **Sing - Creator and Poet** (see video)

#### **Prayer**

You are the font of every blessing.  
You are life-giver,  
water-finder,  
path-maker.  
Beyond the wilderness of our wandering,  
in the spaces between where we were  
and where we are going,  
you are steadfast and faithful.  
Our quarrelling, our testing does not drive you away.  
Beyond the wilderness,  
beyond our doubts,  
beyond our hopelessness  
your voice,  
your presence  
your faithfulness abides.

*Spill The Beans, Resources for 27 September 2020*

#### **Confession**

God, giver of life,  
We gather today acknowledging the harm  
we have done to your creation and one another.  
We pollute the rivers and endanger the creatures within them,

rather than honouring their sacredness.  
We seek control and have power over the waters, rather than respecting their might.  
We overlook the many enslaved and vulnerable lost  
in the waters,  
rather than acknowledging our role in this violence.  
We focus on our own desires,  
rather than seeing how they impact the world around us.  
We come yearning to be refreshed and replenished by the water of life,  
so that we might seek ways to honour you better and all of creation.  
Forgive us for the injury we have caused.  
Inspire us in seeking new ways to participate in and with  
your creation.  
Renew us with your life-giving water. Amen.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Season of Creation 4, 27 September 2020*

### **Assurance**

God invites us to come to the water in our entirety,  
with our flaws and questions, gifts and joys.  
May water always remind us of God's promise at our baptism –  
we are forgiven, loved children of God.  
May this promise help us strive to be better stewards of God's love  
with one another and all of creation.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Season of Creation 4, 27 September 2020*

**Listen:** Envía tu espíritu

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AA6jrMZj5fQ>

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## **Listening for God's Voice**

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### **Reading: Exodus 17:1-7**

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup>The people quarrelled with Moses, and said, 'Give us water to drink.' Moses said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?' <sup>3</sup>But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?' <sup>4</sup>So Moses cried out to the Lord, 'What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.' <sup>5</sup>The Lord said to Moses, 'Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. <sup>6</sup>I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.' Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. <sup>7</sup>He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarrelled and tested the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'

**Listen:** Is The Lord With Us? (Robin Mann) - see video

### **Reading: Matthew 21:23-32**

<sup>23</sup> When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?' <sup>24</sup> Jesus said to them, 'I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the

answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. <sup>25</sup>Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?' And they argued with one another, 'If we say, "From heaven", he will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?" <sup>26</sup>But if we say, "Of human origin", we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.' <sup>27</sup>So they answered Jesus, 'We do not know.' And he said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

<sup>28</sup> 'What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today." <sup>29</sup>He answered, "I will not"; but later he changed his mind and went. <sup>30</sup>The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, "I go, sir"; but he did not go. <sup>31</sup>Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, the tax-collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. <sup>32</sup>For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax-collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

Hear what God's Spirit is saying to the church.

***Thanks be to God!***

### **Reflection**

Water of Life, you are our source of renewal and strength. Help us to become vessels carrying your life-giving water to restore all of creation. Grant us the courage to challenge forces that harm, and joyfully spread your message of new life. Amen.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Season of Creation 4, 27 September 2020*

The people of Israel are on the move - between promise and fulfilment, somewhere in the wilderness both in the sense of place and state of mind.

And they are thirsty - desperate for the water they need for themselves and for their livestock.

The people "quarrelled" with and "complained" against Moses and "tested the Lord (17:2-3).

The Hebrew word for "quarrel" and "complain" is more a "murmuring" - not so much outright confrontation, but that twittering or whining and griping that goes on in the background when people are discontent. In many ways this is a very human response to unknowing and to personal threat or even desperation (thirst) - anxiety, blame, anger, resentment.

But we need to note - this is not the first time on this journey that they have been thirsty (see Exodus 15:22-25, 27). And it won't be the last...

God provided for them then - memories are short, faith is sometimes thin...

God instructs Moses to use the same staff he has used to touch the Nile; the same staff he held above the sea they crossed. This time he used the staff to strike the rock. And the people and their livestock had life-sustaining water to drink.

Is the LORD with us?

How do you know?

*You might like to take some time to reflect on how you know that God is with you and with God's church?*

I know because I see God's beauty in the world around me every day - we live in such a beautiful place where both gentle breeze and the raw power of wind, rain and surf are our everyday realities.

I know because God's people continue to show up and remind me of the love God showers us with - genuine care, concern, gratitude - every day.

I know because even though we have been prevented from meeting in person now for more than half a year, you continue to stay connected: when we can meet in small groups you are there with optimism and gratitude, and there is an openness to the questions about how God might be moving us, challenging us, inviting us into something new.

I know that even though we sometimes feel thirsty, and sometimes have no idea where we are going together, God continues to refresh us, nurture us and push us into God's future.

So as we turn to today's gospel reading, know that God is with us, embracing us and the whole of creation in love and grace.

This story is only told by Matthew's account of Jesus' life, where questions of authority are important to the Jewish audience. For us it also gives us food for thought about how we respond to teaching that is new or different from anything we have heard before.

When Jesus enters the temple in Jerusalem, we need to understand how surprising, if not, shocking this was. One commentator describes it like one of us entering the Vatican and delivering a sermon. Jesus was a country boy, an out-of-towner, and certainly not one of the temple leaders. His clothes, his accent, his friends would have stood out a little.

The chief priests and elders confront Jesus directly, which gives Jesus an opportunity to respond directly. He doesn't answer their question, but he exposes their inconsistency by posing *them* a question. Which is the point of the parable Jesus tells: how do what we *believe*, what we *say* and what we *do* match up?

The leaders of the temple had never acknowledged that John the Baptist was a prophet, but they knew that John had been popular amongst the people. So as Jesus aligns himself with John, the temple leaders are afraid of the crowd so they cannot be honest about what they think, or perhaps, their mistake that Jesus has exposed.

How often do we find ourselves not saying what we believe because we are fearful of the way people around us will react?

Or how often do we stay silent when we know we have been mistaken but are afraid to expose ourselves, to become vulnerable in front of others?

Jesus then tells a story that invites us to pay attention to aligning what we say with what we do - there is no point saying "yes" if we have no intention to do it; in fact, Jesus' story suggests that it is better to say "no" upfront and then change your mind later and get on with it.

In terms of faith, when we align ourselves with Jesus with our words, making promises in baptism, confirmation or confessions of faith, how do our actions reflect those words?

We say, "Jesus is Lord", we tell stories of God's love for all people and all creation, does our living reflect these sweeping claims?

Now we should note that in the parable, both sons are disobedient - neither of them displays what we might describe as "perfect obedience". But one, eventually, gets on with what he has been asked to do.

Perhaps today, as we reflect on God's provision of life-sustaining water in the wilderness, as we proclaim that God is indeed with us, we can also ask, how does our living reflect these claims?

As a Christian community, in Kiama and Jamberoo, how does our life together reflect these claims?

Say what you believe.

Do what you say.

Let's pray...

God of all time, you promise to be with us always. We believe it. We know it.

We say that we have committed our lives to embodying your love and grace as Jesus did.

Help us to do that.

Spirit of Life, breathe through us - open our hearts and minds to the blindspots in our living, and give us grace to respond with humility and love.

Reveal yourself to all your people through us, we pray. Amen.

**Listen:** Renew Our World (see video)

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## Responding

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### **Prayer for others (based on Philippians 2)**

Name above all names, name yet untamed;

in the fullness of time

you emptied yourself

becoming weak in power

to be strong in love.

Still fear and trembling

fill our days and our faith;

please help us to shift

from fear to awe.

Move us from trembling

to transformation

that we might

not confuse the love of infinite power

for the power of infinite love.

So we pray for people

in places of privilege and power

that empty words and empty promises

might be replaced with the fullness

of justice and the honesty of humility.

We pray for people

under the thumb of privilege and power:

for voices silenced,

breath suppressed,

lives destroyed.

Bend our knees that we might

uplift all who are long-held down,

all who are long ignored,

all who are bound

by powers and principalities  
into shapes that seek  
to hide your imaging shining within them.

And so we name people who we know who are in need today:  
people who are sick;  
people who have lost their job;  
people who have lost hope;  
people for whom our heart breaks...

And we pray for ourselves and this Christian community of which we are a part:  
Encourage us to be of  
that same mind  
of that same spirit  
of that unity in Christ  
that first wound the world  
with the cords of your grace.  
Give us courage to mend relationships,  
to seek to understand and to work with each other constructively,  
and in so doing, to embody your love, revealing your realm to all we encounter.  
In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

*Adapted from Spill The Beans, Resources for 27 September 2020*

### **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.*

*Let's pray...*

Even our best intentions can be stumbling blocks.  
Yet, Generous God, you can redeem even our half-hearted attempts, our half-baked schemes, our well-meaning failures.  
Take our flawed faith and our incomplete gifts and transform them  
for the sake of your complete love, your more-excellent path, your upside-down kingdom.  
In your grace-filled name we pray. Amen.

*Spill The Beans, Resources for 27 September 2020*

### **Holy Communion**

We will be sharing in Holy Communion on Sunday 27 September at Jamberoo. If you would like to join us, please contact Pam Waters (email: [pjwaters1912@gmail.com](mailto:pjwaters1912@gmail.com) or phone: 0415 364 252).

*If you would like to share in Communion and are unable to join in communion this way, please let Rev Kath or Rhonda Back know. Now that restrictions have been eased a little, we are able to bring Communion to you in your home at a time that suits you.*

## 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.

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## Sending out

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### Sing - O Jesus I Have Promised

Traditional: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svgHDdzP5xY>

Modern: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNz-33V1V8A>

### Sending and Blessing

You are a sacred part of God's creation,  
God cares for you and is with you in times of abundance and scarcity.  
Just as water flows endlessly from the river of life,  
go and spread God's love to all of creation.

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And be blessed with the imagination of God our Creator;  
be blessed with the love of Christ Jesus;  
and be blessed with the breath of God's Spirit blowing through your life and the lives of all you meet. Amen.

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### For Reflection

#### *Prayer is an act of resistance*

I am clear about one thing, as I pray. The light within which I move and breathe; the divinity in which I am immersed for my whole life, whether I choose it or not; the love in which I swim – all of which I name “God” – does not need my prayers. This God is made of love, which will pour out on me and through me no matter what I say. I am clear that this love is poured as willingly upon a pipeline-promoting CEO or an industry-captured panel of regulators as it is upon me.

But when I pray, I remember who I am. The act of articulating my gratitude and fear, of finding words for my hopes and

petitions, forces me to recall that I am a creature of this lovely planet. It helps me imagine what must be done to bring it back to health. The act of praying strengthens my backbone, so that I will not bow to those who insist that we must wreck this one river with cyanide for the sake of bars of gold, or foul this other river with the byproducts of fossil fuel extraction. I will not forget that I am connected to those rivers in every cell of my body.

*“The act of praying strengthens my backbone, so that I will not bow to those who insist that we must wreck this one river with cyanide for the sake of bars of gold, or foul this other river with the byproducts of fossil fuel extraction.”*

That is why people of faith link protest and prayer together. We resist damage to the beauty of creation, and we pray for strength and courage to carry on. Amen.

*Activist Alphabet by Donna Sinclair.  
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