

Dressed for Life

Gathering

*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 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.

*A video of the music, readings and reflection can
be found here: [https://vimeo.com/
589637007/6b77d239fe](https://vimeo.com/589637007/6b77d239fe)*

Introduction

Today we are thinking about the kind of spaces where we encounter God, and the equipping we need to be God's agents of life in the world. Where do you find it most easy to know God's presence?

What equipping do you need to be the person God calls you to be?

Acknowledgement of Country

We listen to the breath of the earth.
May we hear the groaning of creation.

We listen to the sighing of the wind.
May we hear the songs from the skies.

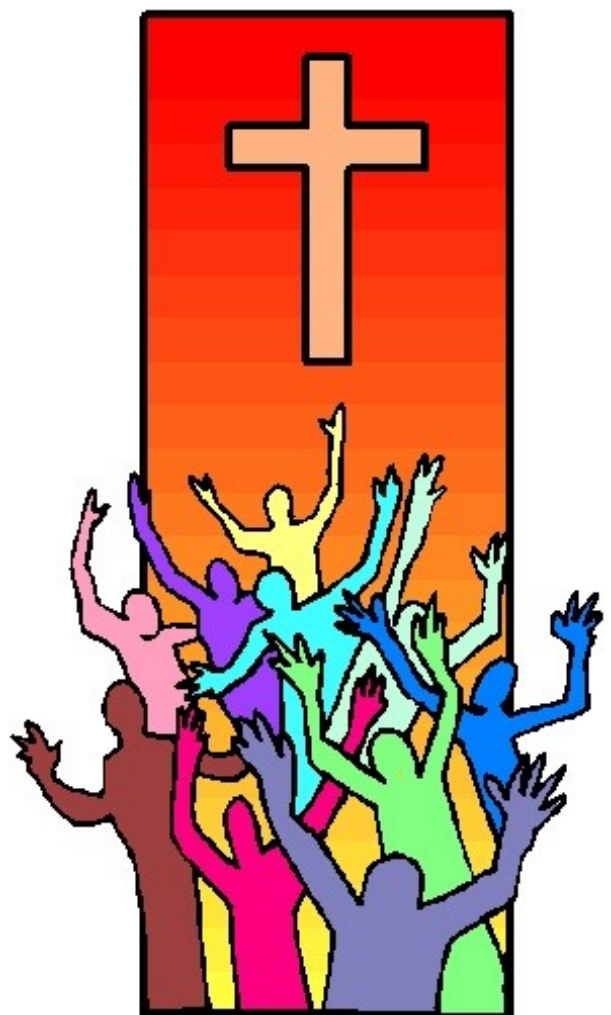
We listen to the movement of the oceans and waters.
May we hear the shared waters of life in our being.

We open our ears to the wisdom of the Land and her peoples.
May we listen, both to the silence and the speaking.

We honour and pay our respects to those on whose Land we meet, especially the Wadi Wadi people of the Dharawal nation.
We pause and we listen.

A silence is kept.

Those who have ears – Hear!
May we hear the voice of the Spirit in Creation,
Now and to the end of time.



Call to Worship

Psalm 84:1-2:

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!
My soul longs, indeed it feints for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

Let us pray...

God of all Creation, you are present with us.
Here in this space, as much as any space.
Here in this moment, as much as in any moment.
Here with us as we feel buoyant and hopeful,
as much as when weighed down and challenged by life's complexities.
Your sanctuary is wherever we worship.
In the place we call Church,
in the place we call home,
and in the place we call creation.
All belongs to you,
and we find you wherever we are,
whenever we still our minds and hearts to be at one with you.
We are ready now.
We are ready to be with you.

Based on *Spill The Beans, Issue 39, Resources for 22 August 2021, p.124*

Listen - All Are Welcome

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
*All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus: *All are welcome...*

Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us: *All are welcome...*

Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and love the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger: *All are welcome...*

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter: *All are welcome...*

© 1998 Marty Haugen from *Common Ground – a Songbook for all the Churches*,
Saint Andrew's Press, Edinburgh

Prayer

God, you are infinite... mysterious... eternal.. at home everywhere and nowhere,
with us always, but never in a way that can be proved—even to ourselves.
You are beyond our words to describe; beyond our most fervent efforts to tame or
contain.

Forgive us, O God, if we have ever tried to scale you down to more manageable size;
reciting creeds as if they were the final word;
speaking of 'the house of God', as if you actually lived there, in a building we had made.
Give us a fresh glimpse of your glory—
as much as we can handle, and perhaps just a little bit more,
then let us come and truly worship you.
God, you are infinite and uncontainable,
but you also made us and know what we need. If anything of our founding story is true,
then you chose to reach out and find us,
not everywhere, all at once,
but in one specific place, at one particular time, and in the person whose name we bear
and who calls us now to be his presence
here one earth.

Loving God, forgive us, if we have failed
to recognise you in the ordinary, humdrum places where we do our daily living:
in the family and friends who teach us what
it means to 'live in love' and thus to live in you.
in the neighbours who need our help,
and give us theirs;
in the all-too-flawed community of the church. Give us a fresh glimpse of your presence
in every person we meet, every place that we go, then, if we need to, let us set a special
time
and place aside to come and worship you.
May the worship that we offer here and now draw us more deeply into the eternal
mystery and assure us more profoundly of your love. Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 39, Resources for 22 August 2021, p.124

Listening for God's Voice

Reading: 1 Kings 8 (selection)

Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the ancestral houses of the Israelites, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion.

⁶Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim.

¹⁰And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, ¹¹so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

²² Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. ²³He said, 'O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart, ²⁴the covenant that you kept for your servant my father David as you declared to him; you promised with your mouth and have this day fulfilled with your hand. ²⁵Therefore, O Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant my father David that which you promised him, saying, "There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children look to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me." ²⁶Therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you promised to your servant my father David.

²⁷ 'But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! ²⁸Have regard to your servant's prayer and his plea, O Lord my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today; ²⁹that your eyes may be open night and day towards this house, the place of which you said, "My name shall be there", that you may heed the prayer that your servant prays towards this place. ³⁰Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray towards this place; O hear in heaven your dwelling-place; heed and forgive.

³¹ 'If someone sins against a neighbour and is given an oath to swear, and comes and swears before your altar in this house, ³²then hear in heaven, and act, and judge your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing their conduct on their own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding them according to their righteousness.

⁴¹ 'Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name ⁴²—for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm—when a foreigner comes and prays towards this house, ⁴³then hear in heaven your dwelling-place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built.

Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. ¹¹Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.

¹⁶With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the

flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. ¹⁹Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

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

Thanks be to God!

Reflection

Holy God, as we gather in our homes, we open our hearts to your Spirit.

As we open the Scriptures, open our minds to understand and open our hearts to respond. Help us to grow in the ways we reflect your love in the world. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

It really is exciting to see the building at Kiama coming together. This week we were confirming the colour of the tiles for the toilets and shower and the pavers and blocks for the pathways and garden beds. In the newsletter this week, there is an item about what we might call this new space.

So can you imagine, what the people of Israel felt like as they entered the new temple that Solomon had built?

Chapters 5-7 of 1 Kings describe the building and its decoration in great detail - built with cedar and cypress timber gathered using 30,000 men, "conscripted forced labour" (5:13). There were 70,000 labourers and 80,000 stone cutters overseen by 3,300 supervisors. It was imposing and magnificent in every way - every material used was the best it could be, no expense was spared, and every item in it had been specially made.

The reading we have before us records Solomon bringing the Ark of the Covenant into its permanent home in the temple. While the building itself wasn't huge, it was to be a holy, sacred place, surrounded by a very large courtyard. Its beauty was in every way intended to reflect the glory of God. The courtyard provided the space for the people to gather and pray. Only the priests could enter the most holy place.¹

Throughout history, humans have continued to build imposing and beautiful buildings in which to gather for worship.

Importantly, for us, the idea of access to the sanctuary space being restricted to the priestly tribe is no longer relevant. And we try to emphasise a sense of the sacred and holy in the ordinary and everydayness of the spaces we inhabit - spaces that are special or sacred as we name God in the midst of all that we do and all that we are.

And so we have sacred spaces like our worship space, like the church at Jamberoo, and we have sacred spaces like the halls where people gather, and the kitchen where food is prepared and hospitality is offered, like our own kitchens and dining tables, and reading chairs and gardens.

¹ Note: Solomon's temple was completed in 957BCE. It stood for 350 years before Nebucadnezzar II of Babylon removed its treasures in 602 and 597BCE and then destroyed it in 587/6 BCE. The temple was rebuilt when the exiles returned from Babylon in 538-515 BCE. This temple stood for 500 years before it was destroyed again by the Romans in 70CE.

And we have sacred spaces in our communities - at the library or a coffee shop or walking in the park; sacred spaces in nature - at the beach, on the river, in the bush, in the desert.

As we reflect on what is being constructed at Kiama, how do we create sacred space in the everyday of people's lives?

It happens in ensuring people can access the building easily; making sure our signs are clear; keeping the place clean and tidy; in the naming of the spaces; in the beauty of the spaces and its decoration; in holding lightly responsibility and ownership that leaves open space for people to find themselves "home".

And it happens in us - in the people who offer hospitality and welcome and hope to share something of the good news of God's love for all the world in the way in which we interact with people who come and go.

And so we consider the reading from Ephesians 6. This passage comes at the end of the letter, following the typical pattern of letter-writing for the day. It began with greeting and praise to God and then gave instruction to the church and the way it organises itself, and then to its members about the way we live together. Verse 10 begins the last piece of instruction, "Finally, be strong in the Lord..."

And then the writer of the letter begins to describe the kind of equipping we will need to "be strong in the Lord".

What do you need? What equipping do you need to be strong in the Lord? What equipping do you need to be people who are living in ways that reveal God's realm in this world?

The imagery the letter-writer uses is unambiguously militaristic.

And it is not hard to see that the soldiers, Roman soldiers, were a common sight in the communities to which this letter was written so the analogy is easy to grasp.

It's where we get hymns like "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "Stand up, stand up for Jesus you soldiers of the cross" from, hymns that are not so easy to sing anymore.

So the question for us, is what do we do with this in a world that certainly doesn't need more military armour in it? How do we find "good news" in this kind of imagery?

And I wonder whether the writer, rather than suggesting we "armour up", is really drawing a contrast. Rather than being weapons for war and armour for protection from violence, this equipment is about the growth of God's kingdom in the world - it is not about destruction, it is about what we need to live in ways that show God's love and grace in the world. So it is about putting on or embodying righteousness or justice, faith, salvation, truth, and the word of God. Perhaps my favourite is verse 15: "As shoes for your feet put on *whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.*"

And as we do, we are able to reject the things that draw us away from God's way - the "evil forces" as the letter-writer calls them - and to challenge the systems and structures of the world that prevent people from being all that God has created them to be.

So are you "dressed to kill" or dressed for life?

What *are* you wearing? What are you leaving hanging in the wardrobe?

The sacred space we are creating at Kiama, and at Jamberoo, needs the people of God to embody that to which God calls us. May it be so in us.

Let us pray...

God, walking your way requires a particular kind of footwear – shoes in which we can march for justice, run faithfully, stride through rocky terrain, step tenderly, and dance joyfully. Guide us in our choice of shoes. Amen.

Seasons of the Spirit, resources for 22 August 2021, p.162

Listen - Let Us Put on The Clothes of Christ (Seasons of the Spirit)

*Let us put on the clothes of Christ
and live as equals with everyone.*

*Let us put on the clothes of Christ
and reunite the family of God.*

Jew and Greek will live side by side - with the garments of justice on.

Every door will open wide - in that sweet delightful dawn.

Hate and fear will not come between, Oh let us unite in love.

We'll celebrate our diversity - as we welcome the reign of God.

Let us put on the clothes of Christ...

All the captives will be set free - with the garments of justice on.

Discrimination will cease to be - in that sweet delightful dawn.

To the poor we will bring good news, Oh let us unite in love.

Our faith will travel beyond the pews - as we welcome the reign of God.

Let us put on the clothes of Christ...

Men and women will live as one - with the garments of justice on.

Equal privilege for everyone - in that sweet delightful dawn.

Domination will fin'ly end, Oh let us unite in love.

The pains of history we will mend - as we welcome the reign of God.

Let us put on the clothes of Christ...

Let us rise up completely new - with the garments of justice on.

Living fully in Christ we'll bloom - in that sweet delightful dawn.

Like the threads of a tapestry, Oh let us unite in love.

And weave a joyful community - as we welcome the reign of God.

Let us put on the clothes of Christ...

Words: Galatians 3:27-28, adapted by Bret Hesla

Music: Bret Hesla, © 1993 Bret Hesla, administered by Augsburg Fortress

Responding

Prayers of the People

Mighty and mysterious God,

you are here and everywhere; everywhere and nowhere, beyond and beside us, around us and within.

You are with us on the dark days as well as the sunny ones;

in the clash and clatter of our everyday lives just as much as in the stillness of this place.

We are the ones who need special times and places
set apart so that we can focus our attention on you.

We give thanks for this place of worship,

be it a tiny chapel, a great cathedral,

or a corner of our home.

Thank you for its beauty, and for the memories it holds;
the prayers and praises that have seeped into its walls.

Thank you for the people who worshipped here before us,
the ones whom we hope will come after us,
and those who are with us today.

This is a holy place, because we, your people, are in it;
when we leave, your church will go with us.

Eternal God, we pray for the peace and prosperity of your church throughout the world:
in places where the church is growing,
may they not mistake success for faithfulness;
in places where it is declining or even disappearing,
may we not panic and think you have abandoned us.

Remind us of Jesus - of the troubles he faced,
and which he promised to those who followed him.

Remind us of his strength, made perfect in weakness.

We pray for those who have lost, or who fear losing a building which was precious to them.

May they have space to grieve, with all the anguish that entails.

May there be rituals to accompany their loss, and people to travel with them into this new, unchosen future.

We pray for those who have to balance the books, and can only do so by making decisions

which they know will bring pain and upset.

May they know the guidance of your spirit, and be brave enough to follow where you lead, especially when that is counter-intuitive and seems like a recipe for disaster.

Remind us all of the topsy-turvy values of your kingdom, and grant us wisdom, strength and grace to be part of its flourishing here on earth. Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 39, Resources for 22 August 2021, p.125

Offering

Take a moment to reflect on God's goodness to us, to you.

What of your resources - time, skills, money etc - can you offer for the sharing of God's love in the world?

Magnificent God,
nothing but the best is good enough for you.

That much Solomon got right,
and the old cathedral builders.

You deserve the best of everything,
but the best is not always the showiest or most expensive.

Too much glitter can sometimes dazzle us and blind us to what is genuinely precious.

So may we not hold back, but give you
the best moments of our days,
the clearest thinking of our minds,
the deepest love of our hearts,
the costliest service of our lives. Amen

Spill The Beans, Issue 39, Resources for 22 August 2021, p.125

Sending

Song: May The Grace (NCYC 2003)
May The Grace of Jesus Christ
And the boundless love of God,
Holy Spirit be with us all. Evermore.

© 2002 Kylie Ellway

Sending and Blessing

From gathered space
in home or sanctuary,
virtual or in-person,
travel with us into this week.

May the presence of God be a blessing to us and those with whom we meet,
may we live out that blessing.

May the hope of God
never be contained or captured,
but allowed to grow and thrive
***in our lives,
in our homes,
in our communities,
in our world.***

Spill The Beans, Issue 39, Resources for 22 August 2021, p.127

Rev Kath Merrifield
22 August 2021