

## **Humanity Sunday**

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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 in a time of "growing". You might like to have another rock ready to your sacred space.  
Start by lighting the candle. The candle helps to centre us.  
Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

*A video can be found here:*

*<https://vimeo.com/602297457/2769d7ba06>*

***Note:** the readings are not included in the video this week, so you might like to read through them before you begin (see below).*



### **Introduction**

*Have you collected a stone this week?*

*What word or thought have you written on it?*

*Place it in your sacred space now asking God to speak to you today.*

### **Acknowledgement of Country**

From the roar of the blow hole to the cliffs of the escarpment, down gushing waterfalls and along winding creeks and rivers, we acknowledge the traditional custodians, the Wodi Wodi people, who have cared for this land, and ask Your blessing on them this day.

### **Call to Worship**

Holy God,  
you have shaped us in your likeness.  
You have formed us as part of creation.  
Your love is our ongoing inheritance.  
May our living reflect these holy gifts.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Creation 2, 12 September 21, p.36*

### **Psalm 19**

- <sup>1</sup> The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
- <sup>2</sup> Day to day pours forth speech,  
and night to night declares knowledge.
- <sup>3</sup> There is no speech, nor are there words;  
their voice is not heard;
- <sup>4</sup> yet their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.

**Listen / Sing - The Heavens Shall Declare** (*Together in Song 746*) - see video

### **Praise and Adoration**

*Take a moment to consider the environment in which we live -  
the ocean stretching out to the east as far as the eye can see  
the rolling hills of the Jamberoo valley  
the escarpment keeping watch  
the endless sky...  
All of it telling us of God's beauty, telling us of God's love.  
Give thanks to God...*

### **Prayer of Confession**

*Let's enter into the quiet of our spirits, ...  
conscious of Earth, our home and the home of every other living and inanimate creature we  
know ...  
just a dot in the vast expanse of the Milky Way ...  
the Milky Way itself but a small dot in the vast expanse of the Universe...  
conscious of the destruction and suffering on Earth  
from overconsumption, exploitation, and the crisis of dangerously-rising temperatures  
globally ...  
yet home to millions of people rising up to restore, heal, and save our common home....*

Creator God, we often lose hope in the face of widespread destruction from fires, floods, droughts, violent storms and other devastation from our changing climate, from the urgency of the needs, and the slowness of our response.

***Creator Spirit of God, have mercy.***

Christ Jesus, you call forth compassion and insist that we must be ready to suffer and sacrifice, taking up our crosses in your spirit of love and healing forgiveness.

***Word of God, have mercy.***

Holy Spirit of God, you call us to be the voice of the voiceless suffering among us on Earth, our common home.

***Wisdom of God, have mercy.***

### **Words of Assurance**

May God, the Creator of all time and space, Who through the death of a star brought forth the vast Web of Life in which we live, have mercy on us, free us from our sins, and guide us into the fullness of divine Life.

***In conscious awe, we join our voices with all the stars and planets, all the inanimate and living inhabitants of our galaxy and of all creation, to praise and glorify God.***

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

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### **Reading: Genesis 1:26-28**

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

<sup>27</sup> So God created humankind in his image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'

### **Reading: Mark 8:27-38**

<sup>27</sup> Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' <sup>28</sup>And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' <sup>29</sup>He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.' <sup>30</sup>And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

<sup>31</sup> Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup>He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

<sup>34</sup> He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. <sup>36</sup>For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup>Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <sup>38</sup>Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

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

***Thanks be to God!***

**Video - a message from Rev Sharon Hollis**, President of the Uniting Church in Australia, Assembly (*Scroll down to the video link*)

<https://uniting.church/season-of-creation-2021/>

In the video, Nungalina teacher and bible translator Wangarr Dhamarrandji from Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island) speaks in Djambarrpunu language about the way reflecting more closely on creation enables us to understand God's love. Wangarr says, "If we see God's creation, looking closer to our surroundings and we see closer to God's creation, we also see God's love in that creation."

### **Reflection**

Pslam 19:

<sup>14</sup> Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable to you,  
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

As I have pondered the readings, and reflected on being stuck at home for a few weeks yet, I simply want to throw out some questions for further reflection - for you to ponder, perhaps to chat with your family about, or reflect upon as you sit in the garden or walk along the beach...

The reading from Genesis places before us the beginning of our story - the story of God creating humanity in God's own likeness and then entrusting the care of the earth to us. How are we doing with that?

The words that are translated for us as “have dominion over” and “subdue” have been used as an excuse to denude the earth of its resources without concern for its sustaining. How does that sit with us today as we watch resources reaching their limit, species of animals, birds and plants disappearing, natural resources being polluted to such an extent they can no longer be used.

In the video, Nungalinya teacher and bible translator Wangarr Dhamarrandji from Galiwin’ku (Elcho Island) speaks in Djambarrpunu language about the way reflecting more closely on creation enables us to understand God’s love. Wangarr says, “If we see God’s creation, looking closer to our surroundings and we see closer to God’s creation, we also see God’s love in that creation.

And then along comes Jesus, asking us today, “who do *you* say that I am?”

This is the pivot point in Mark’s gospel - from this point, Jesus stops going from village to village and crossing the lake, and begins his journey towards Jerusalem.

His conversation with Peter and the disciples reminds us that there is no escaping from the narrative of suffering and death that leads to resurrection.

This path that God, that God places before us, the choice to follow Jesus, presents a paradox of life in all its fullness at the same time as we confront the pain of rejection and even death.

If we look closely, we see the same paradox in creation - in life that emerges after a bushfire, after a flood, after the winter has passed and spring begins to warm the soil again. As Wangarr says, if we look closely enough, we see the love of God flourishing in God’s good creation. What of God do you see as you look closely...?

Creator God, you call us to remember our humanity, because in knowing ourselves we know you more fully. May we be reminded that we are your creation and that you call us to responsibility. In the beauty around and within us, may we embrace your ways and remember our kinship with all creation. Amen.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Creation 2, 12 September 21, p.34*

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## Responding

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**Prayers of the People** - prepared by Helen Laidlaw

We begin by reading something written by an aboriginal theologian – Deacon Boniface Perdjert. On this Sunday when we can’t meet together and we are locked down in our houses, in our community, this reminds me how much I have and how much I have to share. He wrote:

*“When I read the gospels, I read them as an Aboriginal...so many of the things Christ said and did and the way He lived, make me think of the good things of our way of life. Christ did not get worried about material things.....He looked on them as things that get in the way and make it hard to get to our true country. He was born in the countryside in a cave, like many of us have been born. He walked about like us and with nowhere to lay His head. He died with nothing on a cross. So many of our people die with nothing. .... He was strong on sharing. We do a lot of things like that. Of course He went a bit further. In the Eucharist He shared Himself as nobody else could.”*

Loving God – many of us have wept for the deaths, destruction and pain caused by the events in Afghanistan, the earthquake in Mexico, the fires and floods in Europe and the US. We thank you for our good weather, but we also must remember that in

the days ahead, we will need your strength to act wisely and with compassion. Help us not to become complacent and wrapped up in our own activities, and mourning what we can't do! Remind us to pray for all who are touched by these tragedies and be generous in our giving.

We are so fortunate that so far we have not had Covid in our community.

Particularly we pray for the people of Sydney after eleven weeks of lockdown.

We pray for the co-ordinators of financial and material support that it may be quickly and prudently distributed to those with no jobs and no way of buying adequate food. Help us to care for those around us who are isolated.

We pray for those making decisions about restrictions and vaccinations, and when the restrictions are to be lifted or reduced. Give them wisdom and strength to make good decisions.

We pray for the families of those who have died. We also pray for the medical staff who are treating the infected and that they find the resilience to comfort heart-broken people while keeping themselves and their own families safe. I want to pray particularly for those people who are resisting vaccination through fear and social media misinformation. Help them to understand that it is necessary to support everyone else!

We pray for the teachers as schools go back in in some areas and for parents and grandparents who are home schooling the children. Give the teachers the wisdom and skills to prepare adequately for this situation. Give the parents the patience and understanding that being away from your mates is difficult.

But our Creator God, we pray most deeply for the First Peoples of this country, who see so much of their history wiped out. Previously we have taken the land, and belittled their culture, refused to allow them to speak their languages. Help us to be aware of the prejudices we hold, and actively change how we act. And we pray for them as they face the ultimate challenge as Covid infiltrates their communities. Help us to find the courage to listen, to see, to feel, to name -

the pain and loss of all Indigenous peoples.

Finally we pray for our own government that they will realise what needs to be done to reverse the changes in our climate and care for the planet you have given us.

In Jesus' name, Amen

### **Holy Communion**

Please join us at 9.30am on Sunday 12 September for Communion via Zoom - either using the link:

<https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/93369011990?pwd=bnAxcVZEblkvU1lqRTcrT3B5WHVLU09>

Or by phone: 02 8015 6011

Meeting ID: 933 6901 1990

Passcode: 893530

### **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? How can you make better use of the resources entrusted to your care?*

Let us pray,  
Creator of all that is, you shaped every part of this world and made it good.  
You have entrusted us to be stewards of the land, and sea and sky.  
You call us to be wise about how we make use of and care for all that you have given us.  
Prompt our hearts and our minds, and help us to shape our actions to act in ways that  
show your love for all creation. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

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### Sending

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**Sing** - God The Maker of The Heavens (Tune: What A Friend We Have in Jesus)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyYwCG4Tf\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyYwCG4Tf_c)

### Blessing

May the God who formed the singing cicada bring us peace.  
May the God who formed the rushing wave grant us strength.  
May the God who formed the graceful sea eagle grant us wisdom.  
May the God whose image we reflect bless and guide us. Amen.

*Adapted from Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Creation 2, 12 September 21, p.38*

Rev Kath Merrifield  
12 September 2021