

## ***Caring for All***

---

### **Gathering**

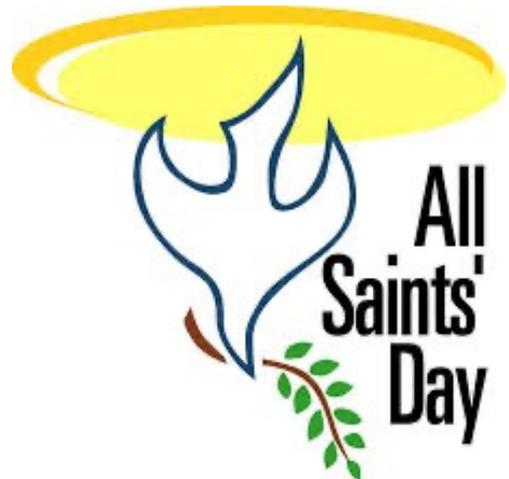
---

*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 white cloth or scarf to signify this is a special day.*

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

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



### **Acknowledgement**

As we begin worship this morning in a new space, I want to offer a prayer.

We will celebrate more fully in a few week's time but I think it is important to acknowledge where we are today:

First - this building stands on land that has been cared for since time immemorial by the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation.

We are deeply grateful for their care and concern for this land.

We pay our respects to their elders past present and emerging.

And we commit ourselves to continuing the work of reconciliation and justice for all First Peoples of this land.

### **Introduction**

A building is more than a space to be.

A building like this is the culmination of ideas and hard work, of conversations and decisions,

of cooperation between designers and bricklayers, plumbers and roofers and carpenters and plasterers - and of you and me and everyone who calls this place "home".

A new building is the earth from which a new community grows.

It is not yet complete - there are gardens to grow, furnishings to be added, signs and decorations to be hung.

It is the starting place from which we adventure and engage with a greater community.

It is not just a foyer and new toilets and kitchen, but a meeting place between life and rest, loneliness and company, belonging and safety. It is home.

And all this rests on sacred ground.

As we stand on Holy ground we pray,  
God,

Bless our diversity and differences – let them be.

May this be a safe place for all to find peace.

Bless the bricks and mortar as they will absorb the knocks and bumps of our living.

Bless the comings and goings, the standing still and the leavings as they shape our living.

Bless the foundations that keep us safe, the earth that keeps us grounded.

Bless all of us who come and go here -

And of us that make that possible. Amen

## **Sing - 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

## **Introduction**

*Today we are celebrating All Saints Day - the Sunday after 1 November.*

*In the reformed tradition, of which we are a part, we believe that not only are there people who are especially recognised in what I would call, "Capital S - Saints" - people like St Mary Mackillop and St Theresa and Saints like Peter and Paul - but also that we all belong to the "communion of saints".*

*And so today we recognise people who have gone before us, who have set for us an example of faith, who have nurtured us and taught us and loved us into God's kingdom.*

*We recognise that we are always surrounded by what we call a "cloud of witnesses" - people throughout the ages, followers of Jesus, who point us to God.*

*And we celebrate our place in God's family today - that each one of us here is loved and valued and contributes to who we are as a community together and who we are called to be. We know we are not perfect - we are each and together broken and flawed - but God draws us into God's church and invites us to live into the renewal and transformation God promises.*

**Prayer** - A God who makes all things new  
(*inspired by a reading of Revelation 21*)

Living God,  
Maker of heaven and earth,  
we come into your presence  
and we know ourselves to be recipients of  
great and wonderful gifts —  
the earth, the sky, the waters —  
given to us here in such abundance and beauty.  
We lead enormously privileged lives.  
Don't let our comfort blind us to the newness  
you are making in our midst —  
a newness that is taking us in directions  
we would not choose on our own;  
a newness that moves our safe horizons  
out beyond what we can control.

This much does not change:  
You are our God; we are your people,  
bound to you by the love of Jesus Christ  
and by the call of your Holy Spirit.  
Faithful God, hold us deep in that truth  
even as you move us into your new creation.

Creating and re-creating God,  
take us in our uncertainties  
and make us new.  
We pray in the name of your Son,  
who has gone ahead of us into your new future  
and who beckons us follow. Amen.

*~ posted on Christine Jerrett. <https://christinejerrett.wordpress.com/>*

### **A prayer of thanksgiving – All Saints**

We thank you, God, for deep and lasting relationships that give without counting the cost.  
We thank you for that great commandment to love God  
with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength  
and our neighbour as ourselves.  
We thank you this day for prophets and apostles, women, men, and children who declare  
the good news of your love;  
for those who give up their lives and freedoms  
so that others might live freely;  
for those who speak out to give voice for those  
who have been silenced;  
for all families, however they are formed;  
and for all who seek to love and support others  
in their journey through this life.  
And we thank you for Jesus  
who brings us new life even now, and in whose name we pray. Amen.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 31 October 2021, p.123*

---

## Listening for God's Voice

---

### Reading: Mark 12:38-44 (Stephanie Pryor)

<sup>38</sup> As he taught, he said, 'Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the market-places, <sup>39</sup>and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets! <sup>40</sup>They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.'

<sup>41</sup> He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. <sup>42</sup>A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. <sup>43</sup>Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. <sup>44</sup>For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.'

For the Word of God in Scripture,  
for the Word of God among us,  
for the Word of God within us,  
**Thanks be to God!**

### Reflection

Let's pray,

O God, open our hearts and our minds to understanding and compassion.

Open our being to living out your love in the world. Amen.

Isn't it wonderful to be gathered here in-person again!

While we have tried to maintain connections over the past months, using the technology available to us, for us, there is something about greeting each other "in the flesh", about the physical embodiment of being the people of God, the body of Christ, together.

In my reading this week, I came across this from Lisa Cressman:

*It's one thing to appreciate, admire, and learn from saints.*

*It's another to revere them to the point of mythologising them.*

*Because when we mythologise we dehumanise.*

*And then we're not preaching the truth: that saints are holy and human.*

*Just like the rest of us.*

Lisa Cressman

<https://www.backstorypreaching.com/blog/>

In the Uniting Church, we hold to the idea that we are all equal in the eyes of God, called as followers of Jesus to value each individual as part of the whole body of Christ, part of the priesthood of all believers.

So our question this morning - is who do we see? Who do we value?

Of course, we want to say, we see everyone, and we value everyone.

But do our actions reflect this?

In our reading from Mark's gospel this week, Jesus is fairly blunt about what he thinks about people, particularly in this case, the religious leaders, who put on a show of themselves and expect to attract attention and special treatment, but they do not care about the needs of the vulnerable people in their community (12:38-40).

Jesus' language is particularly strong - they "devour" widow's houses (12:40). In fact, they are acting contrary to their own law - the law of Moses that insists that widows and orphans be cared for - certainly not exploited and left homeless as Jesus implies.

Many translations and printings of the Bible insert an unfortunate heading before 12:41, breaking the flow of the story between Jesus' comments about the scribes and his encounter with the widow at the temple. As a result, in considering the widow at the temple and what Jesus had to say about her, we have focussed on a message of piety and self-less giving, and sometimes coming dangerously close to demanding more from the very people who have less. (Remember what we said last week about the church demanding payment from people for indulgences - payments for prayers and forgiveness?!)

But when we consider this encounter in the light of Jesus' interaction with the scribes in the previous verses, the encounter has a much broader economic critique. Jesus is not only blessing the woman for her generous giving, albeit small in relative terms, Jesus is also criticising the system that puts her in the place of "giving all she has to live on" to the temple.

The Hebrew law required everyone to tithe - 10% of their income was to be given to the temple. But this woman is not tithing - that would require only 10% - she puts in everything she has.

The Hebrew law also required people such as this woman to be cared for.

The temple taxes were paid supposedly in order to support women just like her.

So the question behind this is why is she not being supported?

Why is she putting the last of what she has into the temple plate?

Jesus draws attention to her unseen presence and struggle.

Her gift, though small, is immeasurably precious - it all contributes to the greater whole. In giving all of what she has, Jesus sees her and blesses her.

And at the same time, Jesus challenges all of us to think about how we ensure that people who are most vulnerable are cared for and valued.

How do we care for people who are living on their own?

Are there people in our community we "don't see"?

How do we look afresh around our community and open our eyes to people in the shadows?

As we begin to bring life to these fabulous facilities, as we think about who we might meet at Jamberoo, how can we show we care about the people in our community who are most often overlooked?

Over the next few weeks, I hope to facilitate a number of conversations to help us process what we have experienced over the last two years or so, and to think about and pray about what we believe God is now calling us into. And I encourage you to be praying about that and talking with each other about what you believe God is saying to you.

The Psalm set down for today is Psalm 127. Perhaps this is a good verse to leave ringing in our ears...

Unless the LORD builds the house,  
those who build it labour in vain.

Let's pray...

God, we are blessed.

As we begin to move more freely around our community, keep our eyes and hearts open to people around us who might be struggling.

Holy Spirit, nudge and prompt us into responding with practical care and concern.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

---

## Responding

---

### **Sing / Listen:** Shelter (Seasons 5-32)

When you feel your day is at its end,  
when you pray for rest around each  
bend.

When the road you walk has been too  
long,  
may our love keep you strong.

When the words you speak have lost  
their flow  
and both the sun and spirit low.  
When steps are hard and shadows long,  
may our love keep you strong.

*May you find your shelter in these walls.  
Let us share your journey's trials and  
joys.  
May your feet find rest when day is long.  
May the peace of God be in your song.*

When you feel that all you know has  
changed,  
seasons pass but truth remains.  
When times of hardship come along,  
may our love keep you strong.

When the light of life begins to fade,  
Christ be near, in Christ proclaim.  
God's mercy, grace and peace live on,  
may God's love keep you strong.

*May you find your shelter in these walls.  
Let us share your journey's trials and  
joys.  
May your feet find rest when day is long.  
May the peace of God be in your song.*

© 2005 Jared and Rebecca Haschek  
Seasons of the Spirit 5-32

### **A Time of Remembering**

*All Saints Day gives us an opportunity to remember people from our own community who have died and now rest in Love's Eternal embrace. It has been particularly hard this year when we have not been able to gather and show our support or say our farewells as we would have liked. So we are going to take some time now to remember - and give thanks...*

Let us pray...

Living God, in whom there is no shadow or change, we thank you for the gift of life eternal, and for all those who, having served you well, now rest from their labours.

We thank you for all the saints remembered and forgotten, for those dear souls most precious to us.

Today we give thanks for those who during the last twelve months have died and entered into your eternal presence. We bless you for their life and love, and rejoice for them "all is well, and all manner of things will be well."

We remember those who were part of our church family here:

- Perc Chittick
- Sandra Fowlie
- Hazel Little
- Carmen Fargie
- Ian Maurer
- Ron Berry
- Wendy Farquhar
- Shirley Wall

And those who were close to us, part of our extended family:

- Val (Reuben's sister)
- Graham (Ian's brother)
- Tresham (Julia's mum)

And in the silence we remember those who have gone from among us, not just this year, people who have lived in ways that have left an indelible imprint on our lives, an example of faith we are drawn to emulate...

God of Jesus and our God, mindful of all those choice souls who have gone on ahead of us, teach us, and each twenty-first century disciple of every race and place,

- to follow their example to the best of our ability,
- to feed the poor in body or spirit,
- to support and comfort the mourners and the repentant,
- to encourage the meek and stand with them in crises,
- to affirm those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
- to cherish and learn from the merciful,
- to be humbled by, and stand with, the peacemakers.

Let us clearly recognise what it means to be called the children of God, and to know we are to be your saints neither by our own inclination nor in our own strength but simply by the call and the healing holiness of Christ Jesus our Saviour. Amen!

— based on a prayer written by Bruce Prewer and posted on his website, *Bruce Prewer's Homepage*.

### **Prayers of the People - Rhonda Back**

God, our creator, you made the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them is your own: hear the prayers we bring for your people.

God our Freedom, we pray for all who live in bondage.

Teach us how to unbind the captive - those imprisoned in their own country under repressive regimes, or living in refugee camps. Bring justice to those who are oppressed, so that your people will be our people.

God in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

God our Peace, we pray for all in places of conflict or war throughout your world.

Teach us how to resolve our disputes, to live in harmony with one another, so that your people shall be our people.

God in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

God, our Welcome, we pray for all who are alienated and rejected.  
As we move forward in faith with our new extensions, teach us how to open our arms to the friendless, to offer hospitality to the stranger, so that your people shall be our people.  
God in your mercy  
Hear our prayer

God our Hope, we pray for all who are in trouble or distress - Those who are suffering in body, mind or spirit, for the unemployed, for those trapped in addictions, for the lonely and sorrowing and for the sick and all in pain.  
Teach us how to heal the wounded, to bring comfort to the sad, so that your people shall be our people  
God in your mercy  
Hear our prayer

God, our Salvation, we pray for your church, for its leaders and all who minister in your name, and for all who worship together here once again this place. We pray for those persecuted for their faith and for those whose faith is weak.  
By your grace, rescue the lost and increase in us our love for you,  
So that we may be your people and you may be our God.  
God, in your mercy.  
Hear our prayer.

God our Promise, we remember those who have died in your love,  
All who have loved you with heart and mind and soul and strength.  
We thank you for the saints of all ages, for the great souls who saw visions of larger truth and dared to declare it, for the multitude of quiet and gracious souls whose presence has sanctified the world, and for those known and loved by us, who have been brought home to your eternal presence, that we may enter into the inheritance that you prepare for all your people.  
God, our God, in your mercy  
Hear our prayer.  
Amen

### **Offering**

*In responding to what we have heard and how we have heard or felt God speak to us, we commit ourselves to moving with God's Spirit, breathing life in the world around us.*

God of truth and grace, we give you thanks for opportunities to give. Teach us not only where our gifts may best be used, but how we might give wholly of ourselves to you and to others.

May these gifts be multiplied as we reflect God's abundant love and share the ways of love and justice in our world. Amen.

*Adapted from Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 7 November 2021, pp130 and 134*

---

## Sending

---

**Song:** Song of Faith (tune: Ode To Joy - TIS 698)

*The words of this hymn are sung to a familiar tune. Shirley Murray invites us to celebrate the song of faith that is sung through God's people throughout the ages.*

Song of faith that sings forever  
through God's people, ages long,  
Word that holds the world together  
when our hearts take up the song,  
always, always somewhere sounding,  
though the source we do not see,  
counterpoint to all despairing  
it is hope that sets the key.

And when life would overwhelm us,  
when there seems no song to sing,  
hear the constant voice of courage  
out of fear and suffering:  
all who've loved and trusted Jesus,  
all who lift us to be strong,  
endless, endless are the voices  
of the faith that makes the song.

Song of faith in exultation,  
rising through the vaults of prayer,  
tune of simple celebration  
offered up in open air,  
song in chapel and cathedral,  
descant to our daily tone,  
song from sickbed or in prison:  
faith must often sing alone.

*Shirley Murray*

### **Sending and Blessing**

Saints of God,  
Precious, children of God,  
go from this place to grow God's kingdom life amongst this community.

And as you do,  
May the love of your Creator embrace you;  
the life of your Saviour inspire you;  
and the breath of the Spirit guide and enable you;  
this day and always. Amen.

### **Sing - As We Go Now**

As we go now from this moment,  
as we leave behind our time together.  
May we walk with one another,  
may we help each other on the way.

As we go now from this moment,  
as we go into the future together.  
May we treasure one another,  
may we realise how precious we are.

© *Fischy Music.*  
*Words and Music: Stephen Fischbacher*  
*Seasons of the Spirit 6-6*

Rev Kath Merrifield  
7 November 2021