

Facing Changes Together

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

Acknowledgement of Country

Across the vast and beautiful land that is now called Australia, indigenous peoples have cared for the earth since time immemorial.

In this place, between the ocean and the mountains, the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation have lived in harmony with the land and waters and its flora and fauna. We give thanks for them and this place.

We pay our respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

And we pray that we will learn to walk together and to care for one another and this land in ways that honour our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.



 Justin Luebke

Light Candle

We light a candle to centre us and to draw us towards Christ.

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

Call to Worship

Come, let us give thanks to God.

We gather together to praise the One who strengthens the weak and hears the prayers of the forgotten.

Come, let us give thanks to Christ.

We gather together to sing of the One who calls us to serve those who are empty, who hunger, who are alone.

Come, let us give thanks to the Spirit.

We gather together to exalt the One who prompts us to love, not only our family and friends, but the guests among us.

Let us pray...

O God, you are the source of our life and the hope of our hearts. We are filled with wonder and we worship you. Every living cell of this universe is filled with your Spirit and every moment of our lives is full of your life-giving presence. You amaze us. Our desire for you is unending. In this time of worship accept our praise, and open us to experience the challenge of your word. We pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 14 November 2021, p.144

Sing - Praise With Joy The World's Creator (TIS 179 - tune: "Praise My Soul")

Praise with joy the world's Creator,
God of justice, love and peace,
source and end of human knowledge,
force of greatness without cease.
Celebrate the Maker's glory,
power to rescue and release.

Praise the Spirit sent among us,
liberating truth from pride,
forging bonds where race or gender,
age or nation dare divide.
Celebrate the Spirit's treasure –
Foolishness none dare deride.

Praise the Son who feeds the hungry,
frees the captive, finds the lost,
heals the sick, upsets religion,
fearless both of fate and cost.
Celebrate Christ's constant presence –
Friend and Stranger, Guest and Host.

Praise the Maker, Son and Spirit,
one God in community,
calling Christians to embody
oneness and diversity.
Thus the world shall yet believe when
shown Christ's vibrant unity.

Words: John Bell and Graham Maule

Prayer

What is your deepest longing in this moment?

Silent reflection

When our deepest longings crash against us like waves and threaten to pull us into a sea of hopelessness, we pour out our souls to you, O God (pause).

When our happiness seems like distant stars –
unattainable, dim, and clouded from view,
we pour out our souls to you (pause).

Words of affirmation

Our prayers are heard by One who is always good.

God knows the desires of our hearts and fills us with love.

Peace be with you.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 14 November 2021, pp144-5

Listening for God's Voice

Reading: Colossians 3:12-17

¹² As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Reading: Mark 13:1-8

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" ² Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

³ When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" ⁵ Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. ⁶ Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. ⁸ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

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 us pray,

Eternal God, as our world changes before our eyes, keep us grounded in your love, open to your leading, committed to your people and ready to change ourselves. Amen.

Sometimes it feels like nothing stands still for very long any more.

The world around us is constantly changing, and possibly even more so in the last 2 years or so. We have had to cope with so much - changes to our routines at home when the pandemic meant we couldn't shop like we once did, we couldn't meet with friends and family, even going to the doctor was different.

And, as the pandemic begins to fade, and we begin to emerge from our cocoons, we are discovering that the world has changed - and so have we.

We have had to learn new skills - even to come to church we have had to learn how to use the QR code!

And here at Kiama, in the time we have been away from here, the buildings have changed - hopefully for the better - but they have changed and even the way in and out of the building is different!

And if you spend any time reading, listening to or watching the news it doesn't take long to realise that there is change and upheaval all over the world - whether by natural events like earthquake, fire and flooding, or human-made events like power-grabs that lead to violence and war.

Jesus knew that changes in the world were inevitable.

Even the beautiful, magnificent and impressive temple in Jerusalem would one day lie in ruins - something the Jewish people could not imagine.

So he tells his disciples not to get drawn into prediction about the end days - whatever that is. Rather, he says, the wars and natural disasters are part of the reality of this world - the earth re-sets itself, bubbling and settling as it does; nations struggle for power. And we all live in the midst of it.

What Jesus asks of us is to remain focussed on what matters today - on following the way he has shown, on living in ways that reflect God's way in the world.

Our faith doesn't remove us from the uncertainty or sometimes unpredictability of life - rather, we are inspired to hope and to offer a way of being and living in the world that brings hope and life and love and light, that names injustice and fights for change.

That being and living is teased out a bit in the reading we have heard from Colossians 3. When the world is strutting about and lusting for power, clothe yourselves with "compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience" (3:12) and love (3:14). Learn to hang in there with each other - remaining committed to the Christian community can sometimes be really hard - meeting regularly, turning up when we are tired, sorting out our differences, remaining in community when we have been hurt - it's all hard. Learning to forgive those who hurt you.

And it goes on - Let peace guide your actions.
Be thankful.

Immerse yourself in the Scriptures - learn and discover together how God might be speaking to us - and then shape our lives to reflect what we have heard.
Whatever we do - do it in a way that reflects the presence of God (3:17).

Here in this community, we seek to be a community that embodies God's way for the world. Our gathering around the table reminds us again and again of God's all-embracing love for us and for the world - each one is welcome here and valued - you are welcome and valued.

And just as this table draws us together, it also send us - into the world to re-live its love and grace in our own lives and relationships.

Today we attend to the business of being together - our Annual General meeting is a vital part of the way we hold each other accountable and the way in which we are accountable to our wider community. I hope you will stay on and participate.

Over the next few weeks, as we settle into a new way of being here, I want to invite you to join in a conversation about what we have learned and who we are now seeking to be in this community. I hope you will be a part of that.

Let's pray...

Eternal God, help us to discern and hold fast to your presence in the midst of every changing circumstance, that we may live with hope and love with courage at all times.
Amen.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 14 November 2021, p.142

Responding

Sing - God Who Sets Us On A Journey (tune: Ode to Joy TIS 698)

This hymn is a prayer that God will keep us moving - into God's future.

1. God who sets us on a journey
to discover, dream and grow,
lead us as you led your people
in the desert long ago;
journey inward, journey outward,
stir the spirit, stretch the mind,
love for God and self and neighbour
marks the way that Christ defined.

2. Exploration brings new insights,
changes, choices we must face;
give us wisdom in deciding,
mindful always of your grace;
should we stumble, lose our bearings,
find it hard to know what's right,
we regain our true direction
focused on the Jesus light.

3. End our longing for the old days,
grant the vision that we lack –
once we've started on this journey
there can be no turning back;
let us travel light, discarding
excess baggage from our past,
cherish only what's essential,
choosing treasure that will last.

4. When we set up camp and settle
to avoid love's risk and pain,
you disturb complacent comfort,
pull the tent pegs up again;
keep us travelling in the knowledge
you are always at our side;
give us courage for the journey,
Christ our goal and Christ our guide.

Joy Dine

Prayers of the People - Helen Laidlaw

Our loving and accepting God

We have so much to be thankful for –

as the weather warms, as the lockdown ends, as our community continues to be vaccinated and protected from the worst of the Covid virus. We are so grateful that we live in a safe and beautiful place, with often only our own foolishness the only thing to make us unsafe.

Thank you that despite our failings you love us and accept who we are. When we are feeling low, help us to let go and rest in the assurance that you accept us and support us. We are all different and unique so need to accept that we won't all agree all the time. Help us not to hurt others with our strident opinions and criticisms.

Father God, we pray for all the new beginnings in the church, as groups are able to reform and meet again. We thank you for the new site for Men's Shed; the ability to sing together soon; the hard work that has gone into the refurbishment of the building; for our reunions with family and friends who have been cut off – sometimes for long periods. We also pray for the people who have nominated for positions as Elders and Council members. Be with them as they care for us and the church business which is so essential – but often hidden.

However as we read the papers and watch the news the horrors for others impinge on us. The situation in Afghanistan where there has been drought, a severe winter is forecast and starvation for many is imminent. The fighting in Ethiopia, which is descending into Civil War. The continuing surges of Covid deaths in the northern hemisphere as winter approaches. The refugees trying to leave Belarus on the Polish border and being shot at and starving. The low vaccination rates in poor countries which is contributing to many deaths because of vaccine lack. I particularly pray for Tonga which has had its first positive Covid infection. Please show us how we can make a difference.

We also pray for the outcome of the COP meetings in Glasgow. So much is promised – but there is so much pessimism as the failures of the past are aired. We pray for our government that bold and important decisions and promises are made and kept - to keep this wonderful planet liveable for those who will come after us.

In Jesus' name, who taught us that love of our neighbour is essential in God's world,
Amen

Sing: Table of Plenty (As One Voice)

*Come to the feast of heaven and earth!
Come to the table of plenty!
God will provide for all that we need,
here at the table of plenty.*

O, come and sit at my table
where saints and sinners are friends.
I wait to welcome the lost and lonely
to share the cup of my love.
Come to the feast...

O, come and eat without money;
come to drink without price.
My feast of gladness will feed your spirit
with faith and fullness of life.
Come to the feast...

My bread will ever sustain you
through days of sorrow and woe.
My wine will flow like a sea of gladness
to flood the depth of your soul.
Come to the feast...

Your fields will flower in fullness;
your homes will flourish in peace.
For I, the giver of home and harvest,
will send my rain on the soil.
Come to the feast...

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Holy Communion

If you would like to share in Communion and are unable to join with us in-person, please let Rev Kath or Rhonda Back know. We would love to bring Communion to you in your home at a time that suits you.

Offering

*Take a moment to reflect on God's goodness to us, to you.
Think about the changes you have faced this past year - and the changes perhaps still to come. What can you offer to God in those spaces?
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.*

Thank you, O God, for this opportunity to share our resources to strengthen your work in this world. Create in us open and eager hearts to do your work. We offer you our financial gifts along with our commitment to change the world as you would have us do. Amen.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 14 November 2021, p.146

Sending

Song: Companions On The Journey (Seasons 8-8)

This song reminds us that as we have shared at Christ's table, we are bound together in our adventures through life.

*We are companions on the journey,
breaking bread and sharing life;
and in the love we bear is the hope
we share
for we believe in the love of our God,
we believe in the love of our God.*

1. No longer strangers to each other,
no longer strangers in God's house;
we are fed and we are nourished
by the strength of those who care,
by the strength of those who care.
We are companions...

2. We have been gifted with each other,
and we are called by the Word of the
Lord:

to act with justice, to love tenderly,
and to walk humbly with our God,
to walk humbly with our God.

We are companions...

Words and Music: Carey Landry

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Sending

From where we are to where you need us

Jesus, lead us on.

From the familiarity of what we know to the wonder of what you will reveal

Jesus, lead us on.

To transform the fabric of this world until it resembles the shape of your kingdom

Jesus, lead us on.

Based on Wild Good Resources Group, A Wee Worship Book, 5th Edition, 2015, pp24-25

Blessing

May God bless you

in your bodies with strength for each day,

in your minds with understanding,

in your souls with the company of the Holy Spirit,

that together we may produce a harvest of light

to the glory of Christ our Saviour

whose flesh we are,

whose name we bear,

whose love is all. Amen.

Based on Wild Good Resources Group, A Wee Worship Book, 5th Edition, 2015, p42

Rev Kath Merrifield

14 November 2021