

## ***God Revealed - in Community***

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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 the time of "Epiphany".*

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

#### **Light Candle**

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

The writer of the gospel attributed to John assures us:

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

*John 1:5*



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#### **Acknowledgement of Country**

As we gather in this place, between the mountains and the sea, we give thanks for the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation.

We acknowledge the commitment their ancestors made, across the generations, to nurturing this land.

Together, may we walk into the future,

recognising the sacred footsteps that continue to lead us to the promise of [God's Way].

*Amelia Koh-Butler, Wide and Deep, p.11*

#### **Call to Worship**

Psalm 138:

- <sup>1</sup> I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart;  
before the gods I sing your praise;
- <sup>2</sup> I bow down towards your holy temple  
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness;  
for you have exalted your name and your word  
above everything.
- <sup>3</sup> On the day I called, you answered me,  
you increased my strength of soul.

O God, we have searched deep and wide for answers to our questions,  
for solutions to our problems and for relief from those things that threaten to destroy us.

And you have brought us here,  
to the last place the worldly-minded think of turning.

Through Jesus Christ, you fill our nets to bursting and renew us in your Holy Spirit.

Thanks and praise to you, our God. Amen.

*Our Scripture readings this morning tell two different stories of the way God calls to us, inviting us to follow God's way.*

*So we are going to break it up a bit and I hope the readings, prayer and the song we sing will offer some new insights...*

*The song is "I, The Lord of Sea and Sky". Rather than singing the song lustily, perhaps you can speak the words as the group sings. The chorus invites a commitment - both about being open to hearing God speak now, and about responding - doing something about the what we hear. Perhaps, if you want to show the commitment we sing about, you might want to stand at that point.*

*We begin with the first part of the reading...*

**Reading:** Isaiah 6:1-8 (Stephanie Pryor)

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup>Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. <sup>3</sup>And one called to another and said:

'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory.'

<sup>4</sup>The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup>And I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!'

<sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. <sup>7</sup>The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: 'Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.' <sup>8</sup>Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'

**Sing** - I, The Lord of Sea and Sky (TIS 658) - verse 1

I, the Lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard my people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.  
I who made the stars of night,  
I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear my light to them?  
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord; is it I, Lord?  
I have heard you calling in the night;  
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.  
I will hold your people in my heart.*

**Reading:** Isaiah 6:9-13 (Stephanie Pryor)

<sup>9</sup>And he said, 'Go and say to this people:  
"Keep listening, but do not comprehend;  
keep looking, but do not understand."

<sup>10</sup> Make the mind of this people dull,  
and stop their ears,  
and shut their eyes,  
so that they may not look with their eyes,  
and listen with their ears,

and comprehend with their minds,  
and turn and be healed.'

<sup>11</sup> Then I said, 'How long, O Lord?' And he said:

'Until cities lie waste  
without inhabitant,

and houses without people,  
and the land is utterly desolate;

<sup>12</sup> until the Lord sends everyone far away,  
and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land.

<sup>13</sup> Even if a tenth part remains in it,  
it will be burned again,  
like a terebinth or an oak  
whose stump remains standing  
when it is felled.'

The holy seed is its stump.

**Sing** - I, The Lord of Sea and Sky (TIS 658) - verse 2

I, the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have borne my people's pain;  
I have wept for love of them.

They turn away.

I will break their hearts of stone,  
give them hearts for love alone.

I will speak my word to them.

Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord; is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night;

I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

### **Prayer - Confession**

Inviting God,

in the midst of our business-as-usual, you come close;  
you draw us in and invite us to go deep.

You assure us that, in the deep places, we will find new life in abundance.

You ask us to trust and to take risks –

to cast ourselves fully into the depths of community where we will find our true selves  
and be empowered to serve.

We hear your invitation

but we do not always respond in faith.

Because of fear, habit, and closed hearts,  
we hold back and do not follow your lead.

When we recognise how we have fallen short,  
we can be tempted to run away.

What you offer is what we need,  
yet we often reject your love

with negative self-talk and resistance.

Search for us again, O Love of our hearts,

and may we be mindful of who we are in your love so we can become all you have created  
us to be.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 6 February 2022, p.162*

## Assurance

Psalm 138 continues...

- <sup>4</sup> All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord,  
for they have heard the words of your mouth.
- <sup>5</sup> They shall sing of the ways of the Lord,  
for great is the glory of the Lord.
- <sup>6</sup> For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly;  
but the haughty he perceives from far away.
- <sup>7</sup> Though I walk in the midst of trouble,  
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;  
you stretch out your hand,  
and your right hand delivers me.
- <sup>8</sup> The Lord will fulfil his purpose for me;  
your steadfast love, O Lord, endures for ever.  
Do not forsake the work of your hands.

**Sing** - I, The Lord of Sea and Sky (TIS 658) - verse 3

I, the Lord of wind and flame,  
I will tend the poor and lame,  
I will set a feast for them.

My hand will save.

Finest bread I will provide,  
till their hearts are satisfied.

I will give my life to them.

Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord; is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night;

I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

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## Listening for God's Voice

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**Reading:** Luke 5:1-11 (Stephanie Pryor)

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, <sup>2</sup>he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. <sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' <sup>5</sup>Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' <sup>6</sup>When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. <sup>7</sup>So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup>But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' <sup>9</sup>For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; <sup>10</sup>and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.' <sup>11</sup>When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

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**

God, for this moment, help us to put aside our every day worries, our feelings of inadequacy, and help us to hear again your call of grace and love on our lives. Here we are, hearts and minds open, waiting to hear and respond to your call. Speak to us, speak through us, and inspire us to live in ways that point to you. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Can you remember the first time you heard or felt or understood God to be calling to you? Perhaps you "heard a voice". Perhaps you had a dream or vision. Perhaps it was a dawning of understanding or even a growing in conviction. Perhaps you heard through the words of someone else - a friend or parent's nudging, a preacher even! Or maybe, like me, you have stood in a beautiful place, dwarfed by the magnificence of creation, and just known...

As we have heard this morning, there are lots of different ways God calls to us. Heaven knows we sometimes need to hear and experience something several times before it sinks in! Isaiah has this amazing vision. Peter, James and John are just out working at their everyday trade when God breaks into their not so good day and turns them around. They had caught nothing all night, they were packing up and preparing to go home empty handed, when Jesus shows up and starts teaching and then invites them to put the boats out again. Really?! We are all tired, we are all just a bit flat from our failure, and you want us to go out again - but this time to a different spot, to deeper water, where is it more dangerous and harder to catch anything. And here, there, they find more fish that they know what to do with!

What there is no doubt about is that God calls, beckons, invites, nudges - and sometimes, like the big catch of fish, jumps up and down in front of us until we notice!! More than that, God doesn't call us once and then never shows up again. God continues to call, to beckon, to invite, to nudge us. And there is always the possibility that, while we think we are doing what God has called us to do, God may want us to understand that it is time to mix things up again, time to take a different course, time to try another spot in the lake. We do sometimes get comfortable. We are creatures of routine - and we hold on to routines, particularly here in the Church, far longer than is helpful. I wonder... the disciples were having a bad day, they had got to a point where they were simply not catching any fish. And they had returned to the shore tired and probably hungry. As a church, can we identify with that? The people coming seems to be dwindling and we are tired. What happens? Jesus enters the scene, first he teaches - he spends some time reminding them all of what God had created them to be, what God had intended for the world. And then he sends them back out onto the lake - but to a different part - a deeper, less familiar part. And it is there they find abundance. Perhaps it is time for us all to spend some intentional time being reminded of the teachings of Jesus and immersing ourselves in the Scriptures. And I am convinced that when we do,

God's Spirit will nudge us into the deeper water where it might be hard work, but the catch, the harvest, will be abundant.

One thing I know is that God can be both patient and persistent!  
And even when we are actively trying to figure out what God is pointing us to, it sometimes takes us a while to figure it out. Which is why consistent prayer and seeking is so important to our growth as disciples or followers of Jesus. We need to stop often, to pray, to check in, and to be open to a nudge in another direction.

Sometimes God's call is to an individual - like Isaiah.  
Sometimes it is to a group - like the disciples. I wonder whether all the fisherfolk that day went with Jesus or just a few? What would it feel like to be left holding the nets, so to speak?  
Always God calls to us for the benefit of more than ourselves: Isaiah is sent to call the people of Israel back to God's way; the disciples are invited to come and learn of the ways of God in Jesus and then sent into all the world to share what they have discovered.

In both these stories there is a recognition that God's call can seem to be beyond our human capacity or worthiness. Isaiah says he has "unclean lips" and Peter declares himself to be a "sinful man".

And yet...

And yet - God persists and tells them to get up and get on with it.

No-one here is unworthy of God's love or God's sending - no-one!

Which means each one of us can hear or discern the prompting of God's Spirit - and we need to be open to how God might even sometimes surprise or amaze us.

There are so many ways we can read these stories of Isaiah and the first disciples - so many questions we can ask of the stories and ask of ourselves. I want to leave just some of my questions with you to ponder, pray and share with one another:

- How do we stay alert to how and when God might want to redirect us?
- How do we hold ourselves accountable to each other when discerning God's call - as an individual or as a group?
- How can we address the self-doubt we often experience when we embark on something new?
- How can we affirm and encourage each other to follow where God is leading, even when that seems surprising or out of the "ordinary"?

Creator God, you have drawn us from deep within ourselves into your loving net of grace. Strengthen us to cast such a net of justice and mercy into the depths of this community and world, that all might feel enfolded by your realm. Amen.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 6 February 2022, p.160*

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## Responding

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### **Sing** - The Galilee Song (Seasons 7-38)

Deep within my heart, I feel  
voices whispering to me.  
Words that I can't understand;  
meanings I must clearly hear.  
Calling me to follow close,  
lest I leave myself behind,  
calling me to go into  
evening shadows one more time.

*So I leave my boats behind,  
leave them on familiar shores.  
Set my heart upon the deep,  
follow you again, my Lord.*

In my memories, I know  
how you send familiar rains  
falling gently on my days;  
dancing patterns on my pain.  
And I need to learn once more,  
in the fortress of my mind  
to believe in falling rain  
as I travel deserts dry.

*So I leave my boats behind...*

As I gaze into the night,  
down the future of my years,  
I'm not sure I want to go  
past horizons that I know.  
And I need to learn once more,  
like a stirring deep within,  
restless 'til I live again  
beyond the fears that close me in.

*So I leave my boats behind...*

*Seasons of the Spirit 7-38  
Words and music: Frank Andersen, MSC.  
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### **Prayer for Others** (Narelle Dempster)

God of compassion, soften our hearts, and prepare us as we bring our concerns for others before you. We take hold of your promise that when we boldly approach your throne of grace, we will find mercy and grace in time of need.

Lord, you breathe through creation, calling all that we see and so much more into being. Yet as we look around our world, we see so much hardship, injustice and darkness. We are confronted everyday with the plight of our local communities, our neighbours in the Pacific, and in places far away like the Ukraine and Afghanistan for whom life will never be the same as they continue to struggle with ongoing impacts of a pandemic, natural disasters and consequences of excessive power and oppression. In our own strength, we can do very little so our trust is in you to bring hope and reconciliation in the midst of the chaos.

Loving God, hear our prayers today for those whom we know and care for that are affected by illness – for those who know what medical conditions they are dealing with and for those who are still seeking clarity and certainty. Breath peace into their hearts and minds and comfort to their bodies. We hold before you in silence those you've laid on our hearts [*silent prayer*]

In these times of uncertainty, we pray in particular for our leaders of nations, state and local government, church and community. We ask for them your wisdom and clarity of thought and reason as they engage with complex issues. We long for leaders all levels, including the church, to be courageous enough to show humility instead of pride and belligerence, and who seek understanding of what it means to work together for the common good rather than their own agendas.

As a congregation, help us to reflect on the word we've heard today. You don't call us to a religion or to practice rituals – instead you call us into relationship with you and each other, in response to your great love. So we ask again a heart to humble ourselves to be a people of prayer and dependence on you. Let your word and your way be the measure of our lives, and your love our motivation to look out for others.

Enlarge our hearts to support and encourage each other.  
For all of us, when we are strong, help us to carry each other and when we are weak, help us to let others carry us  
Lord in your name and by your grace we pray. Amen

### **Offering**

*Have you found yourself with an empty net?  
Have you felt God prompting you and tried to tell God you are not good enough?  
Here and now - as we listen and reflect - cast your net into the deeper water.  
know yourself loved and called by God.  
How will you respond?*

Loving God,  
we bring our empty nets  
and ask you to fill them.  
We bring our tiredness and discouragement  
and ask you to fill us with energy and hope.  
We bring the skills that we have  
and ask you to teach us new ways of using them .  
We bring such vision as we have of your kingdom  
and ask you to enlarge it.  
We bring ourselves, as we are,  
and ask you to use us, as you can,  
in the service of that kingdom of joy and peace. Amen.

*Spill The Beans, Issue 41, Resources for 6 February 2022, p.107*



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## Sending

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### **Sing** - The Summons (All Together 413)

*This is a song that invites us to grow into the words we sing.*

*Here is your invitation - will you come?*

Will you come and follow me if I but call  
your name?

Will you go where you don't know and  
never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown, will you  
let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown in you and  
you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call  
your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind and  
never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare should  
your life attract or scare?

Will you let me answer prayer in you and  
you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call  
your name?

Will you set the prisoners free and never  
be the same?

Will you kiss the leper clean, and do  
such as this unseen,  
and admit to what I mean in you and you  
in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but  
call your name?

Will you quell the fear inside and never  
be the same?

Will you use the faith you've found to  
reshape the world around  
through my sight and touch and sound in  
you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true when  
you but call my name.

Let me turn and follow you and never be  
the same.

In your company I'll go where your love  
and footsteps show.

Thus I'll move and live and grow in you  
and you in me.

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### **Benediction**

As we go from this place, let us take with us,  
the message of Jesus,  
the instruction of Jesus,  
and the hope of Jesus,  
to teach and to care,  
to feed and to heal,  
to look forward in faith,  
to a better world,  
and the coming of the Kingdom.

God calls to you today and everyday.

The blessing of God goes with you today and everyday.

The love of Christ surrounds you today and everyday.

The Spirit of Life will give you strength and wisdom today and everyday.

Rev Kath Merrifield  
6 February 2022