

## God's Justice

---

### 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 worshipping in "ordinary time". Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

### Welcome

Something I have been thinking about recently is how we wrap our hearts and minds around who God is and then how we talk about God in the wider world, and more particularly, what do we mean when we talk about God's kingdom?

Over the next 5 weeks, the last weeks of the Church year, I want us to think about what we are on about in the world we serve - what are we hoping for, what are we praying for, and, importantly, what are we *working towards*?

Today we begin by thinking about God's justice - what does God's justice look like and what part do we play in making it a reality in our world?



### Light Candle

We light the candle - focussing our attention, allowing ourselves to be drawn to its flame. We look to Jesus, the light of the world, a light that shines even in the darkest of times offering hope and healing.

### Acknowledgement of Country

As we look upon the hills and valleys, the oceans and rivers of this place, we see the love poured out upon this Land by those who have cared for it since time beyond measure.

We honour those who have gone before and those who are yet to come.

May we be mindful of the calling God places on all of humanity to care for Creation.

May we take the lead from the Wadi Wadi People of the Dharawal Nation, whose stories are entwined with the stewarding of this place.

May we learn from them and walk with them.

### Call to Worship

Here we are again -

***brought together in this wondrous community to find true life within it.***

Here, we will sing again:

***sing of joy and sorrow, praise and imperfection all held together in Divine Love.***

Here, we will listen again:

***listen to stories ancient and emerging  
and discover truths written deep in our hearts.***

Here, we will live again:

***live as people of the great shalom  
persistent in love, compassion, and justice.  
May it be so.***

*Seasons of the Spirit, resources for 16 October 2022, pp102*

We pray...

God of Life, we gather once more to offer our praise and gratitude,  
for your faithfulness  
your justice  
for this place and these people  
for the abundance we enjoy  
and the grace we know.

Open our eyes and ears, our hearts and minds,  
to your way of justice in the world  
and help us to commit our lives to reflecting your way of love in the world. Amen.

**Sing - Alive to God** (Tune: 'To God be the glory', 85 AHB / 147 TIS )

*I have tried to choose songs today that paint a picture of what living our God's reign in the world looks like. This song invites us to pay attention to the presence and purpose of God in the world.*

Alive to the presence and purpose of God  
in Christ's name we're gathered the people  
of God

Alive to God's presence and open to hear  
God's word in our lives  
and God's call to come near.

Come and sing! Praises bring!

In Jesus we live!

Come and praise, laugh and sing!

New hope God will give!

Alive to the presence and purpose of God  
God's word in our lives and God's call to  
come near.

Alive to God's purpose of justice and care  
To build a new future, defeating despair  
Alive to God's newness, new days will  
unfold

God's Spirit gives new ways  
in place of the old.

Come and sing! Praises bring!

In Jesus we live!

Come and praise, laugh and sing!

New hope God will give!

Alive to the presence and purpose of God  
God's Spirit gives new ways in place of the  
old.

Alive to the presence of God in the world  
who meets us in strangers, the young and  
the old

Alive to the closeness of Jesus, set free  
to live out the good news  
through you and through me.

Come and sing! Praises bring!

In Jesus we live!

Come and praise, laugh and sing!

New hope God will give!

Alive to the presence and purpose of God  
who lives out the good news through you  
and through me.

*David Manton/mgs*

### **Prayer - Based on Psalm 119:97–104**

Open our spirits to Wisdom calling:  
calling us not to stand still,  
not to believe in static truth,  
but to seek understanding in relationship,  
to find love in action,  
to achieve justice in engagement.

Open our ears that we may hear the cries for peace and equality and move towards them.

Open our mouths that we may speak - speak out in wisdom, in love, in justice, in truth.  
Let our speaking be our worship of you,  
O Just Spirit, O Divine Love,  
O Peaceful Wisdom, O God,  
our touchstone and our redeemer.

Forgiving God,  
we come to you knowing our frailty,  
confessing thoughts and deeds  
that separate us from one another, and from you.  
We seek to be reunited with our true selves,  
with one another,  
and with you.  
This can only happen in your grace and mercy.  
We trust your promise and receive forgiveness.

### **Affirmation**

Hear the words from Jeremiah 31:33–34:

“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says God: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people...I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more.”

*Prayer and Affirmation based on Seasons of the Spirit, resources for 16 October 2022, pp102-3*

---

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

---

### **Reading:** Jeremiah 31:27-34

<sup>27</sup> The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals. <sup>28</sup>And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord. <sup>29</sup>In those days they shall no longer say:

‘The parents have eaten sour grapes,  
and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’

<sup>30</sup>But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge.

<sup>31</sup> The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup>It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. <sup>33</sup>But this is the

covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup>No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

**Reading:** Luke 18:1-8

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. <sup>2</sup>He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. <sup>3</sup>In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, "Grant me justice against my opponent." <sup>4</sup>For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, "Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, <sup>5</sup>yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming." ' <sup>6</sup>And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup>And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? <sup>8</sup>I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'

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**

Faithful God, as we consider the nature of your justice, remind us of our power and urge us to use it for the good of all people. Grant us the courage to speak and to stand in the face of injustice, and assure us that you are with us so that we do not lose heart. Amen.

*Adapted from Seasons of the Spirit, resources for 16 October 2022, p.100*

Look closely for a minute at the image on the screen - what do you see in the images painted on the cross?

The cross hangs in my study at home - reminding me of the vision of God that is food enough to eat, land and a home, education, inclusion of women and children, and the grace of Jesus that underpins it all.

Part of the challenge for us as followers of Jesus Christ, is the question of how we put into words what we are on about in the world today.

This image helps to remind me that beyond the flowery language of the church, beyond even the images that are painted in the book of Revelation and other parts of the Bible, and scattered throughout our hymns and songs, of new cities, crystal seas and streets of gold, beyond all of the "shiny" stuff, if you like, is a vision that for me seems much more easy to grasp - a world where everyone has enough to eat and a roof over their head, where everyone has access to education and skills and meaningful work - a world where the destruction and upheaval of war or violence of any kind is no longer known, where power is not abused, where each human soul lives in harmony with the Creator, with all other human souls and with the land and its creatures..

This, I believe, is what God's kingdom or God's reign is all about. It is not some place we go after we die - God's reign comes amongst us when we seek to live into the way Jesus has shown us, the way to which God calls us.

Fundamental to God's intention for the world is the concept of justice.

In the Hebrew Bible (what Christians call the Old Testament), the word *zedek* is translated as either “justice” or “righteousness” depending on the translation you use. God is “just” or “righteous” and calls God’s people to the same.

So often, we get caught up in thinking that justice or righteousness demand right *behaviour*. Which, to some extent is true.

But when we consider the covenant God makes with God’s people, we discover that justice and righteousness are also about right *relationships*.

Jeremiah speaks about the covenant God makes with God’s people as not needing the written law anymore because all the understanding about how we should be will be embedded in our hearts, emanating from our intimate relationship with God, our “knowing” God (Jer 31:34).

If you hear only one thing today, may it be this: God’s justice is not about perpetrators being punished, it is about *restored relationships* - relationships with God, with one another and with the whole of creation.

Jeremiah speaks of God not remembering our sin, our brokenness, all the times we choose to walk a path different from the one God envisions for us. Instead, the foundation of this new covenant is that our *relationship* with God, and with one another, is restored.

Look again at the story Jesus tells of the persistent widow who hounds the judge for justice. We don’t know exactly what it is she wants, but we do know that widows in the time of Jesus faced many challenges - for food, for housing, for a place in the community. Cultural and religious expectation is that she would be taken care of by her extended family but that seems not to be the case for the woman in Jesus’ story. So she goes to the judge to seek “justice” (Luke 18:3) - not that someone be punished but more likely in the sense that she be recognised and her right to a living be affirmed. The judge isn’t very interested but the woman persists. Eventually the judge gives in and grants the woman what she wants - “so she won’t wear me out” - fun fact: the Greek here literally means so she won’t give me a black eye! It’s something like: “I’ll give her what she wants so she doesn’t punch me in the nose.”

Jesus assures us that God is *not like* the judge who ignores the woman’s plea and only grants justice to ensure his own peace, rather God will “grant justice” (18:8).

And the question is, do we believe that? So we live in a way that believes in the coming of God’s justice. How confident are we that God will bring about God’s justice? And how do we think that might happen?

Jesus asks will faith be found amongst us? Not faith that is passively waiting or is merely an intellectual belief in something or someone. And certainly not responding to the cries of the poor or abused simply because they become annoying.

But faith that is resilient, faith that demands and works to restore relationships.

What I mean is, we all know there are plenty of situations in the world where we long for and pray for God’s justice to come: the war in Ukraine, the nations of Africa struggling under debt imposed by wealthier nations, the struggle of vulnerable people all over the world and here in our own communities to secure homes and livelihoods, we long and pray for climate justice.

But what does it mean to *work* for the coming of God’s justice?

If justice is about restored relationships, then doesn’t that mean our work, our lives need to be about restoring relationships - with one another and with the world we live in.

It means, re-thinking the way we use the resources of the earth.

It means thinking about how our choices impact others - not just our friends and families and neighbours close by, but people in other parts of the world.

It means re-thinking our assumptions about economics and politics and rather than creating adversarial systems, rather than thinking there always needs to be winners and losers, we consider what it might look like if we were to take seriously our relatedness and equal value before our Creator and Sustainer.

What happens when we begin to see the world through the eyes of God's justice, restored relationships?

Perhaps for us too, it becomes less about seeking punishment or revenge and more about seeking to be restored and to help restore the relationships of those around us.

For example, a drug user steals to get money for his or her next fix. Justice is not putting them in prison, it is ensuring they get the help they need to be restored to health and to be restored to their families and communities.

Think again of the image of God's reign amongst us - and isn't it *all* about people living together in relationship? And through our relationship with God and with one another, we begin to recognise how we can attend to people who are hurting, lost, angry; how we can ensure that everyone has access to housing and food and education and health care; how we can be stewards of the earth's resources that ensure enough for today and for future generations.

Let us pray,  
God of justice,

as you promised through the prophet Jeremiah, write your way on our hearts.

Open us to the possibilities of restored relationships and your way of justice in the world.

Help us to develop the resilience of the woman in Jesus' story and to persevere in our longing, our hoping, our praying and our working for your justice, for relationships that are whole and healthy and hope-filled. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

---

## Responding

---

### **Sing** - Song of Hope (Seasons 2-34)

Just when our hope was defeated  
clear was the voice of the Spirit:  
"See how your brothers have not given up  
in the struggle to better the world.  
See how your sisters have not given up in  
the struggle to better the world."

*God is uplifting the people.  
God is the power within us.  
Hope is our music and freedom our  
song  
and together our voices will ring.*

Just when our hope was defeated  
clear was the voice of the Spirit:  
"Reach out to all of your brothers and build  
with each other, a world of peace.  
Reach out to all of your sisters and build  
with each other, a world of peace."  
*God is uplifting the people...*

Just when our hope was defeated  
clear was the voice of the Spirit:  
"I will be with you and I will uplift you and  
give you the strength to endure.  
I will be with you and I will uplift you and  
give you the strength to endure."  
*God is uplifting the people...*

*Words and Music: Ester Camac and Edwin Mora Guevara  
English translation: Bret Hesla  
© 1989, 1994 Abingdon Press*

### **Prayer for Others** (Narelle Dempster)

Lord we come before you with thanks for your constant love and unwavering faithfulness that we experience everyday. Yet our hearts also break for the many people, places and situations that are struggling with life and are in desperate need of change.

So we come before you with confidence that when we share our concerns with you, we will find your mercy and grace in our time of need.

Loving God, we pray for your world today as it continues to face seemingly insurmountable challenges, around climate change, war, inequality, poverty, and disease.

As our country and community continue to be plagued with problems and struggles, we pray for all those on the edges and the margins; the poor, the homeless, the despised, the excluded, the grieving and the broken.

We also recognise the global struggle of so many that don't have enough to eat because of natural disaster, poverty or the result of war and power struggles that restrict supply.

We stand in solidarity for those who go without but also pray for opportunities to be the change needed to make a difference in whatever way we can.

And closer to home, we think especially of those in our local community who are impacted by this weeks decision by council in relation to Blue Haven Bonaira, and what that decision might mean for those that call it their home and their place of work. May your peace and wisdom prevail in the midst of the anxiety and stress that might be experienced.

As we think of our church family, we bring before you those who are unwell, lonely, recovering from surgery or struggling with bodies that can't do what they once did.

We think of all those you lay on our hearts in need of healing and comfort

*Silence*

Lord we've been reminded today again of never giving up in seeking justice for our world, our community and for those who go without so continue to grow us into a people of prayer and dependence on you. In so doing, help us to reach out and connect with our community and our families to share your story of love, grace and of hope and see lives change.

Keep us humble and teachable, alert to your leading and to the needs of others around us, always. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

### **Offering**

*We make space now to think about what we have heard and seen today and consider our response.*

*As we make our offering - we remember again that this is not just about money - either here in the plate or through a bank transfer - this is also about how we are generous with our time and energy and gifts; and about how we resolve to live differently because we have encountered the living Christ.*

*And if this is your first time with us or if you are visiting, please don't feel obliged to give.*

*You are our guests, and we want you simply to enjoy the blessings of worshipping together.*

*We are glad you are here!*

*(Based on Luke 18:1-8)*

May these offerings turn our hearts away from our own needs

and turn the hearts of those who grant justice to those who demand it.

May our offerings be our unrelenting plea, week to week, to remember those whom others refuse. Amen

*Adapted from Seasons of the Spirit, resources for 16 October 2022, p.103*

---

## Sending

---

### **Sing - We Are Called (AOV2-60)**

*This song offers an invitation - not to wait for some heaven in the far off, but to live in the light right now, living, working, loving towards a time when all the nations will be one.*

Come! Live in the light!  
Shine with the joy and the love of the  
Lord!  
We are called to be light for the  
kingdom,  
to live in the freedom of the city of God!

*We are called to act with justice,  
we are called to love tenderly,  
we are called to serve one another;  
to walk humbly with God!*

Come! Open your heart!  
Show your mercy to all those in fear!  
We are called to be hope for the  
hopeless  
so hatred and blindness will be no  
more!

*We are called to act...*

Sing! Sing a new song!  
Sing of that great day when all will be  
one!  
God will reign, and we'll walk with each  
other  
as sisters and brothers united in love!  
*We are called to act...*

© 1988 GIA Publications.  
Words & Music: David Haas

### **Sending and Blessing - Based on 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5**

The time is coming.  
The time is near.  
Proclaim the message,  
be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable.  
Encourage one another with patience.  
Carry out your ministry fully,

and be blessed by God, our Creator, Saviour and Sustainer. Amen.

*Seasons of the Spirit, resources for 16 October 2022, p.104*

Rev Kath Merrifield  
16 October 2022