

## ***Called Together***

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

#### **Video - All Of This Is Us**

You might want to listen to this song as you prepare to worship: <https://vimeo.com/599454567>

#### **Gathering**

As the celebrations of Christmas and the New Year fade into the past, and as the summer months still stretch before us, I want to invite us, before the year gets mad again, to stop and consider who we are called to be and what we are called to do.

In the reading from Isaiah this morning, we will hear God calling us to "pay attention"!

So, just for now, try and lay aside whatever it is that distracts you - whether it is worry about the coming week or month or year, whether it is concern for loved ones (we will remember them in our prayers later in the service), whether it is longing for this moment to end so you can get to the beach - try to bring yourself to this moment, to this space, and open yourself to the moving of God amongst us.

#### **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.

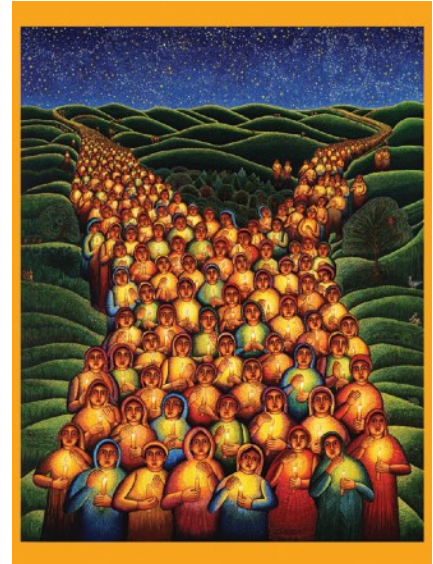
This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here.

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 humanity to care for Creation.

May we take our 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.



*Festival of Lights*  
by John August Swanson.  
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**Call to Worship** - based on 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Grace and peace to you from God our Mother and Father  
and from Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Friends,

in God we have been graced with wisdom and knowledge,  
we are not lacking in any spiritual gift.

We are continually encouraged and strengthened,  
called as partners in Christ's mission of love and service to the world.

We gather in hope.

We worship with the Spirit at play in our hearts.

Praise be to the God of goodness and light!

We pray...

You who gives all,

holding back nothing for the sake of fuller, wider expressions of love,  
prompt us today to take similar risks.

Grace us with renewed confidence,

and inspire us with an inviting, touchable vision for life, work, and service in your name.

Amen.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Sunday 15 January 2023, p.122*

**Sing** - Called As Partners (tune: Hyfrdol ("Love Divine") - TIS 217(i))

*We sing a song that reminds us that we are called, together, to embody Christ's love in the world.*

Called as partners in Christ's service,  
called to ministries of grace,  
we respond with deep commitment;  
fresh new lines of faith to trace.

May we learn the art of sharing,  
side by side and friend with friend,  
Equal partners in our caring;  
to fulfil God's chosen end.

Christ's example, Christ's inspiring,  
Christ's clear call to work and worth,  
let us follow, never faltering,  
reconciling folk on earth.

Men and women, richer, poorer;  
all God's people, young and old,  
blending human skills together;  
gracious gifts from God enfold.

Thus new patterns for Christ's mission,  
in a small or global sense,  
let us bear each other's burdens,  
breaking down each wall or fence.  
Words of comfort, words of vision,  
words of challenge, said with care,  
bring new power and strength for action;  
make us colleagues, free and fair.

So God grant us for tomorrow,  
ways to order human life  
that surround each person's sorrow  
with a calm that conquers strife.  
Make us partners in our living,  
our compassion to increase,  
messengers of faith, thus giving  
hope and confidence and peace.

*From "A Singing Faith"  
Words copyright 1981 Jane Parker Huber*

**Reading: Isaiah 49:1-7**

Listen to me, O coastlands,  
pay attention, you peoples from far away!

The Lord called me before I was born,  
while I was in my mother's womb he named me.

<sup>2</sup> He made my mouth like a sharp sword,  
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;  
he made me a polished arrow,

in his quiver he hid me away.

<sup>3</sup> And he said to me, 'You are my servant,  
Israel, in whom I will be glorified.'

<sup>4</sup> But I said, 'I have laboured in vain,  
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;  
yet surely my cause is with the Lord,  
and my reward with my God.'

<sup>5</sup> And now the Lord says,  
who formed me in the womb to be his servant,  
to bring Jacob back to him,  
and that Israel might be gathered to him,  
for I am honoured in the sight of the Lord,  
and my God has become my strength—

<sup>6</sup> he says,  
'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant  
to raise up the tribes of Jacob  
and to restore the survivors of Israel;  
I will give you as a light to the nations,  
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.'

<sup>7</sup> Thus says the Lord,  
the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,  
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations,  
the slave of rulers,  
'Kings shall see and stand up,  
princes, and they shall prostrate themselves,  
because of the Lord, who is faithful,  
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.'

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!***

### **Prayer**

O Holy One,  
who wondrously calls us into being,  
who knows us intimately, knitting us together,  
cell by cell,  
soul by soul,  
calling us into ways and being for life,  
we admit before you and to those around us,  
that at times it all seems too hard;  
when we see little fruit for our labours,  
receive ingratitude for honest endeavours,  
or feel self-belittlement after daring to express a still latent or developing gift.  
Forgive us,  
not just for a lack of belief in you but a lack of belief in who we are.  
Forgive us for negative conclusions and false humilities that would have us hide away and  
not hear the calls for creative love and justice that you place ever before us.

Forgive us when our dreams shrink or we aim low,  
and remind us that you are continually inviting us to reach, to stretch, towards the amazing possibilities for which you have created us and to which you call us.  
Self-giving God,  
restore in us the undying courage of Christ and the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit.  
Help us to lift our eyes and expectations, as we seek to be your people,  
light to the nations, in our time and place. Amen.

### **Affirmation**

The prophet Isaiah reminds us that:  
Before you were born, you were named with love and grace.

God is listening now and paying attention to the cry of our hearts and each honest confession.

You are heard.

You are forgiven.

You are redeemed.

You are loved.

Dare to grow into this affirmation of God's love.

*Adapted from Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Sunday 15 January 2023, p.123*

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

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### **Reading: John 1:29-42**

<sup>29</sup> The next day [John] saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup>This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me." <sup>31</sup>I myself did not know him; but I came baptising with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.' <sup>32</sup>And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. <sup>33</sup>I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptise with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptises with the Holy Spirit."  
<sup>34</sup>And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.'

<sup>35</sup> The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup>and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' <sup>37</sup>The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' <sup>39</sup>He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. <sup>40</sup>One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup>He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). <sup>42</sup>He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter).

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!**

## **Sing** - Called By Earth and Sky (Seasons 6-12)

*This is a new song - it speaks of our call to hold precious the creation of which we are a part.*

*Called by earth and sky,  
promise of hope held high.  
This is our sacred living trust,  
treasure of life sanctified,  
called by earth and sky.*

Precious these waters, endless seas,  
deep ocean's dreams.  
Waters of healing, rivers of rain,  
the wash of love again.  
*Called by earth and sky...*

Precious this gift, the air we breathe,  
wind born and free.  
Breath of the Spirit blow through this place,

our gathering, and our grace.  
*Called by earth and sky...*

Precious these mountains, ancient sands,  
vast, fragile land.  
Seeds of our wak'ning, rooted and strong,  
creation's faithful song.  
*Called by earth and sky...*

Precious the fire that lights the way,  
bright the dawning day.  
Fire of passion, sorrows undone,  
our faith and justice one.  
*Called by earth and sky...*

*Words and Music © Pat Mayberry SOCAN*

## **Reflection**

Faithful God, you invite us to be curious.

You ask big questions with us and allow us to share with you in creativity and wonder.

Help us to listen and remain open to where you are leading us. Amen.

*Adapted from Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Sunday 15 January 2023, p.120*

Over the past few weeks, I have been reflecting on the past couple of years as I plan for 2023.

We are slowly emerging from the worst of a global pandemic - and, while we are still careful and perhaps more aware of our responsibility to keep ourselves and others safe from contagious bugs, we are starting to travel and attend concerts and movies again and to find ourselves in more crowded spaces.

So I have been looking at our mission plan - the document that guides our life together - a plan we revised 2 years ago and then did some more work on about this time last year - a plan that has been interrupted several times but the restrictions of the pandemic.

What I notice, is that the plan has much to say about *doing* - and, in spite of the pandemic, we have done much of what it speaks about.

We have new accessible facilities here, and there are new facilities in the process of construction at Jamberoo. And we have made these facilities available to our neighbours. We have tried different forms of gatherings - discussion evenings, dinner at Jamberoo. But now it looks like the plan describes much of what we *do* but offers little in the way of charting a course for our future together.

As I ponder the question of "what now?", the questions that keep coming back to me are: what are we learning and how are we growing?

In the midst of all that we are *doing*, what are we learning and how are we growing?

You see, it is tempting as we get older to think that all our learning and growing is done - especially when physically it seems we are shrinking, and the mental effort of learning new things gets harder and harder.

But as followers of Jesus, our learning and growing never stops.

Perhaps it might help if we didn't think of "growing" as something that gets bigger, but rather as our life in Christ, our faith, as getting *deeper*.

Maybe then we can ask the questions: what are we learning and how are we growing?

*Maybe spend 2 minutes talking with the person next to you - can you answer those questions, or how do those questions make you feel?*

And maybe there is a further question - how do we remain open to what God wants to teach us?

I love the way the prophet Isaiah has God saying: "Pay attention, you peoples from far away!" (49:1) You can almost imagine God saying those words in God's best "teacher-voice"!

And then the prophet reminds us that God has created us - knitted us together in our mother's womb - known us intimately from the time of conception, shaped us and drawn us to Godself.

But we get tired, and we wonder whether our hard work is actually achieving anything. As we get older, we sometimes find ourselves wondering what life has been about or is about.

Into all of this, the prophet says something that I think speaks directly to us and our mission plan...

In Isaiah 49:6, Isaiah suggests that God invites us to something more:

that it is not enough that we look after our own people as important as that is, God invites us to *be* a light to *all* the nations (49:6).

And even though it sometimes feels like we are despised, ignored or looked down upon, the prophet assures us that people will take notice and kings and rulers will return to God (49:7).

So I am wondering whether the question we now need to be asking ourselves, rather than what are we doing, or what should we do; is more like, how are we together *being* "a light to the nations", a light to our community - so what is it about us, who we are and what we do, that shines light into the world around us?

And I am wondering whether this is where we are most needing to learn and grow?

So a couple of things to ponder from the other readings...

In the gospel attributed to John, we hear John proclaim, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (1:29)

[Now it gets a bit confusing here - the gospel-writer is John, not the same John as the John being described who, in other gospels is called John the Baptist - I'll come back to that...].

In John's gospel, Jesus is explicitly compared to the Passover lamb. In John's gospel, Jesus dies at the same time the passover lambs are being prepared for the meal.

But the passover lamb had nothing to do with a sacrifice for sin - it was about a sacrifice for freedom, the passover lamb was to guarantee Israel's freedom from slavery.

And in John's statement, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!", the word "sin" is singular - implying more than a moralistic sense of forgiveness or punishment for wrong-doing, it is about freeing the world for life in abundance (John 10:10).

So when we speak of Jesus to our friends and neighbours, may we be less about moralistic judgment and more about a call to freedom and life.

In John's gospel, this John is not known as the baptiser, that part is almost played down. Instead, John is a *witness* who testifies to what he has seen and heard in his encounter with Jesus. May we learn to share our own experiences, to be witnesses to what we have seen and heard in our own encounters with Jesus.

And then, look at the encounter between Jesus and John's disciples.

When they start following Jesus, he asks them, "What are you looking for?" (1:38).

They acknowledge him as a teacher, ("Rabbi", (1:39)) but he doesn't teach them, he invites them to "come and see" (1:39) - come and experience, come, listen and learn together - and in that experience, they are transformed - Simon is given a new name (1:42).

So perhaps for us it is not just about telling people about Jesus, but about inviting our friends to "come and see" for themselves trusting that their own encounter with Jesus will transform lives.

Lastly, in Paul's letter to the Corinthian church, if we read that letter as if it were addressed to us today, Paul speaks of the way that our speech and knowledge are enriched by the grace of God (1:5), that our witness to the Christ is strengthened (1:6) and that we are not lacking in any gift (1:7).

You have heard me say before that I firmly believe that we have all that we need to be the people God calls us to be. And even though we might feel tired or that we have missed the boat in some way:

Paul reminds us, that we have all we need to be the people God calls us to be;

Jesus invites us to experience his life and teaching and to be transformed;

and Isaiah reminds us that we are called to be light to the nations.

So what are you learning and how are you growing?

What do we need to learn together, how are we growing together?

How are we light to the community around us, to our friends and family?

Let us pray...

Light of the world, you call us to reflect your light into the world around us.

Remind us of your grace,

enrich our speech and knowledge and give us courage to invite those around us to "come and see",

enable us to use the gifts you have given us

that we may draw ever closer to you and your way for the world.

In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

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## Responding

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### **Sing - Borning Cry**

I was there to hear your borning cry,  
I'll be there when you are old.  
I rejoiced the day you were baptised to see  
your life unfold.  
I was there when you were but a child  
with a faith to suit you well;  
in a blaze of light you wandered off to find  
where demons dwell.

When you heard the wonder of the Word  
I was there to cheer you on.  
You were raised to praise the living Lord to  
whom you now belong.  
If you find someone to share your time,  
and you join your hearts as one,

I'll be there to make your verses rhyme  
from dusk til rising sun.

In the middle ages of your life,  
not to old, no longer young,  
I'll be there to guide you through the night,  
complete what I've begun.  
When the evening gently closes in  
and you shut your weary eyes,  
I'll be there as I have always been with just  
one more surprise.

I was there to hear your borning cry,  
I'll be there when you are old.  
I rejoiced the day you were baptised to see  
your life unfold.

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

Loving and faithful God, the one whose grace is sufficient for all our needs and whose very presence is our strength in times of weakness. Still our hearts and prepare us as we bring our concerns before you. We take hold of your promise with confidence that when we boldly approach your throne of grace we will find mercy and grace in time of need

In a volatile and uncertain world we pray for leaders of governments at all levels: - for those leaders who seek to act honourably, fill them with wisdom, gentleness and courage in their decision making toward justice and equity. For those leaders who are filled with self-importance and conceit, break through their pride and bring them to their knees in realisation of what they are doing and how much damage they are causing.

We pray for people and communities who struggle because they feel oppressed and fearful. For those dealing with physical or mental illness, recovery from natural disasters, people who are grieving loss from death, broken relationships, loss of jobs or acts of violence, Lord we ask for your peace to prevail in the midst of their torment. We think especially this week of those who are survivors of abuse and mistreatment at the hands of people who should know better and we ask that your peace would prevail in the midst of any trauma that may have been triggered by the death of George Pell.

Lord, hear our prayers today for those whom we know who are affected by sorrow or illness, by fear or weakness. Breathe into their lives and heal them. Speak their names and bring new life to their souls.

We hold before you in silence now people and situations you've laid on our hearts, those in our families and our community, particularly those who are in hospital or have been this week - Rhonda, Marie, Jan, for Travis and Glenice who are struggling with injury, and John Blackler...

As a congregation in Kiama-Jamberoo we ask your Holy Spirit to open our eyes and hearts to how you are leading us into the future. We seek your wisdom and gentleness,



humility and courage and a heart to humble ourselves to be a people of prayer and dependence on you to make you and your love known to our community.

Lord, without you we can do nothing. Keep us humble and teachable we pray and continue to speak your word into our hearts that your will might be done in our lives, your church, and our world. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

## **Offering**

*As we have received, so we consider our response...*

*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 worshiping together.*

*We are glad you are here!*

All that we are, O God,  
and all we are called to be,

we bring to this special moment of offering and hope.

may our gifts be used imaginatively for the well-being of all. Amen.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Sunday 15 January 2023, p.124*

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## **Sending**

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

*Throughout the service, we have been speaking about how God calls us - as individuals - and as a community together. We go into our days and the week ahead singing a song that leaves us with the questions - will you come and follow?*

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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### **Sending and Blessing**

Go now, beloved,  
to follow the love of God  
to be surprised by God's wonder  
to lift your voice for love and compassion.  
Dare to believe that you are people on a mission of healing and grace.  
Feel God's encouragement to be a blessing  
as you offer blessings with your heart and hands  
and know that you never, ever go alone. Amen

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Sunday 15 January 2023, p.124*

Rev Kath Merrifield  
15 January 2023