



## Chosen to Love

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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 **white or gold** cloth or scarf for this special celebration.*

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

**Video** - Let Us Be Known By Our Love (The Porters Gate)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FErmfaLbX2o>

### Light Candle

In the darkness before the dawn,  
amongst the darkest places of this world,  
in the shadows of our own lives,  
Jesus the Christ, the risen one, the Light of the World,  
breaks in.

*Light the candle*

Christ is risen!

***Christ is risen indeed!***

### Acknowledgement of Country

In this place,  
where the land meets the sea,  
where the sea makes a noise,  
since time beyond our imagining,  
the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation have cared for the land and the sea and its creatures great and small.

We pay our respects to their Elders and Leaders.

And we pray for our future together -

there is work to be done to build relationships that honour and respect those for whom this land is embedded in their being.

***We commit ourselves to the way of love.***

### Call to Worship - Based on Psalm 98

*The psalmist calls us to sing – to sing to God!*

***We will sing a song to God;***

***God has done marvellous things.***



The psalmist calls us to shout for joy – to shout for joy to God!

***We will shout for joy and burst into song;  
With all we have, we will make music to God.***

The sea resounds.

The rivers clap their hands.

The mountains sing for joy.

***We will join with all the earth to sing.***

***We will join with all creation to shout for joy.***

***Praise God!***

### **Opening prayer**

God who creates such an amazing world, we praise you.

We lift our voices in a joyful noise,  
joining our song to that of all creation.

We give thanks for your righteousness,  
your steadfast love,  
your faithfulness,  
your justice.

God of many blessings,

we give thanks for this day.

We give thanks for all that life holds.

We gather to worship you, share our joy, and receive your love.

Be with us now and always. Amen.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Lent-Easter 2021, p.166 and p.169*

### **Sing - Come O God of All The Earth (TIS 181)**

*As the psalmist calls us to sing to God, so we sing a song of praise and invitation to “sing of the God who loves us.”*

Come, O God of all the earth:  
come to us O Righteous One;  
come, and bring our love to birth:  
in the glory of your Son.

*Sing out, earth and skies!*

*Sing of the God who loves you;  
raise your joyful cries;  
dance to the life around you.*

Come, O God of wind and flame:  
fill the earth with righteousness;  
teach us all to sing your name:  
may our lives your love confess.

*Sing out, earth and skies...*

Come, O God of flashing light:

twinkling star and burning sun;  
God of day and God of night:  
in your light we all are one.

*Sing out, earth and skies...*

Come, O God of snow and rain:  
shower down upon the earth;  
come, O God of joy and pain:  
God of sorrow, God of mirth.

*Sing out, earth and skies...*

Come, O Justice, come, O Peace:  
come and shape our hearts anew;  
come and make oppression cease:  
bring us all to life in you.

*Sing out, earth and skies...*

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## **Prayer of Praise and Confession**

Lord of inclusive love,  
you make it so that nobody is left out.  
No person is excluded from the invitation to live within the circle of your love.

Though much of the life we know  
is about the separation between inner circle and outer -  
where some are poorer, hungrier, colder, sicker  
and made to feel more restricted than others -  
yours is a Kingdom where love is unconditional,  
and the potential within the created life is of equal possibility.

Today we worship you,  
the God who is Three-In-One,  
one person,  
who calls us to create a unity and oneness in the family of creation,  
where all are valued.

God, we confess that as humanity,  
we have created divisions and segregation between the peoples of the earth,  
through history and in the present.  
We have not listened to your eternal story from creation to redemption,  
and have not grasped, nor fostered,  
inclusive and mutual love in the way we should have.

We confess that sometimes we have been guilty of creating such comforts and security  
for ourselves as individuals or nations,  
that we have taken our eye off what it means to be people who look out for one another.

God, you invite us to sing a new song,  
yet so often we get caught up in old tunes and rhythms,  
returning to that which is familiar rather than being open to the new ways you are revealing  
to us,  
unwilling to learn something new and to experience the discomfort of unfamiliarity or even  
trying and failing and trying again.

As people who admit to such failure,  
today we seek to be challenged to do better.  
Accepting of your unwearying grace and mercy,  
we are humbled and left with such a gratitude,  
that we are ready to mend our ways and  
be more ready to live by the example of your son,  
who taught us about the true meaning of friendship,  
and so discover what it takes to be completely  
at one with you and all your people.

*Adapted from Spill The Beans, Issue 38, Resources for Easter 6, 2021, p.140*

Teach us a new song,  
as we lift our voices and shape our lives,  
to join with all of creation in making a joyful noise to you, our Creator. Amen.

**Sing** - Sing of The Lord's Goodness (TIS 183 - vv1,3,4)

*So we join with the psalmist in making a joyful noise as we sing of God's goodness...*

Sing of the Lord's goodness,  
Father of all wisdom,  
come to him and bless his name.  
Mercy he has shown us,  
his love is forever,  
faithful to the end of days.

comfort in our sorrow,  
Spirit of God most high;  
solace for the weary,  
pardon for the sinner,  
splendour of the living God.  
*Come then, all you nations...*

*Come then, all you nations,  
sing of your Lord's goodness,  
melodies of praise and thanks to God.  
Ring out the Lord's glory,  
praise him with your music,  
worship him and bless his name.*

Praise God with your singing,  
praise God with the trumpet,  
praise God with the lute and harp,  
praise God with the cymbals,  
praise God with your dancing,  
praise God till the end of days.  
*Come then, all you nations...*

Courage in our darkness,

© 1981 Ernest Sands

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### Listening for God's Voice

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**Reading:** John 15:9-17

*[Jesus continues talking with his disciples...]*

<sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

<sup>12</sup> 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup>I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

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 of Love,  
draw near to us now as we draw near to you.  
May our ears and minds be open to your leading,  
may our hearts be soft and willing to change,  
and may our hands be strong and willing to work  
for the coming of your realm amongst us. Amen.

What does it mean to *be* a friend?

Listen again to what Jesus says about friendship:

<sup>12</sup> 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

<sup>13</sup> No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

<sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends. (15:12-15)

Love one another - being prepared to offer all of ourselves for the sake of another.

But what does that mean?

Perhaps I should start with what it doesn't mean - I don't think that Jesus is asking us to place ourselves in situations that are abusive or to work in ways that are unhealthy and unsustainable. Sometimes love is deeply costly, but there is a difference between the choice to offer ourselves to another in love and service, and finding ourselves in a situation or in circumstances that are abusive.

That is partly what Jesus says when he says, we are friends, not servants. We are not compelled by anyone else to do anything we don't want to do - no-one is forcing us and no-one ought to be standing over us telling us to do more or to love more.

But what does it mean to offer all of ourselves for the sake of another?

First, whatever we choose to do, is motivated by love - and a reflection of the love Jesus has shown us.

In Paul's reckoning in his letter to the Corinthians, love is patient and kind.

Love bears, believes, hopes and endures. "Love never ends." (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

As Jesus speaks to his disciples for the last time before he is arrested, he reminds them, he reminds us, that we are chosen and appointed to bear fruit in the world that will last. We are chosen and sent to love - because fruit that lasts, is love that never ends.

"Abide in my love" (John 15:9) and "Love one another as I have loved you" (15:12).

These are more than a commandment - it is an invitation to a way of being.

Shape your living, your life in my love.

Know first that you, yourself, are loved.

Immerse yourself in the stories of Jesus, in the Scriptures that are a constant reminder of God's love for the world. Allow that love to transform your being and your living.

Immerse yourself in the Christian community who, though flawed, do try to show God's love in our life together. This is where we get to practice love - to ask questions and to take risks and to learn how to live together with all the richness of our differences, to disagree in a healthy way and yet to honour and value each precious child of God who gathers.

And then reflect the love you know to the world you encounter.

Because when we hold back, we limit the way of God in the world. The new relationship with God that Jesus announces and points to, is about shared participation and responsibility - friends, not servants - people who share life together, people who share love together.

When we hold back, we are holding back on the engagement with another that God seeks with and for us.

So - be the person who shows up or calls or sends a text when you know someone is struggling.

Be the person who speaks up when a racist joke is told or a woman is spoken down to.

Be the person who intervenes when you see injustice.

Be the person who crosses the street to help someone out.

In the story of the young sparrow, the man and the sparrow are both broken - as we all are in some way. But they find each other - they *notice* one another. And even though they are broken, they are able to offer love - in food and companionship - to one another. Sometimes it is our very brokenness, our own scars, that enables us to engage with the hurt or struggle of another.

Who do you need to *notice* today?

Who is God's Spirit prompting you to be a friend to?

Let us pray...

Jesus, you ask us to "Go and bear fruit",

and we commit ourselves to that simple and profound task:

to befriend others,

to welcome the ones on the edges,

to reconcile the ones who have been outcast,

to build bridges of care and concern.

Use us, our God,

use who we are,

and all that we bring,

that we can bear fruit in your name. Amen.

*Adapted from Spill The Beans, Issue 38, Resources for Easter 6, 2021, p.141*

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## Responding

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**Sing** - What A Friend We Have In Jesus (TIS 590)

*Jesus calls us his friends. This timeless hymn speaks of that friendship...*

What a friend we have in Jesus

all our sins and griefs to bear,

what a privilege to carry

everything to God in prayer:

O what peace we often forfeit,

O what needless pain we bear,

all because we do not carry

everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations,

is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged:

take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful

who will all our sorrow share?

Jesus knows our every weakness:

take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,

cumbered with a load of care?

Jesus is our only refuge:

take it to the Lord in prayer.

Do your friends despise, forsake you?

Take it to the Lord in prayer;

in his arms he'll take and shield you,

you will find a solace there.

*Joseph Medlicott Scriven*

## Prayer for Others

Lord of love,

you call us to love all people in the way you love us.

Today we first pause to recognise what your love for us looks like.

It is like nothing else.  
So often we fail,  
so often we mess up—  
yet you are there with unconditional love.  
Do we cherish this love you extend to us?  
Do we really acknowledge it with the gratitude we should?  
We take time to know your love for us.  
*Silence*

Lord of love we are now ready.  
Ready to take what we know about our inclusion in your circle of love,  
that we can extend our vision outwards and away from ourselves,  
focussing instead on the world around us,  
the people we live in community with,  
and the issues of the world itself.  
We pray for those who feel excluded, left out,  
for those who find society a place where it is easy to feel excluded from what others might  
take for granted.  
We pray for those who are made to feel, not just servants of others -  
at the beck-and-call of people around them -  
but indeed, slaves to powerful masters who create a real experience of fear and distress.  
We take time to know your love for them.  
*Silence*

We pray for those who feel unloved.  
Because of knowing little human love and affirmation in their life,  
we recognise how hard it must be for some to have any genuine sense of being loved by  
you.  
We take time to know your love for them.  
*Silence*

Today, across the world,  
and running deep into our communities,  
may your love be more widely known and more broadly shared.  
Let such a peace envelop your people,  
that any desire to exclude others will be anathema,  
for all will seek to welcome and befriend one another. Amen.

*Adapted from Spill The Beans, Issue 38, Resources for Easter 6, 2021, p.141*

## **Offering**

*This part of our service is not about money.  
It is about considering how we will respond to what we have seen and heard and  
experienced this morning, or perhaps throughout the week - how is God prompting you,  
nudging you, inspiring you - and what will you do about it?  
Each one of us is precious.  
Each one of us has something to offer in terms of resources - time, energy, skills, money.  
How will you respond?*

God, we love you with our whole hearts.  
We believe with our whole lives.  
We dedicate all that we are in service to you.

Take us, use us, mould us, make us.  
Take all that we are and all that we offer and use our gifts  
to the service of love. Amen.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Lent-Easter 2021, p.170*

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### Sending

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**Sing** - Everyday Loving (Seasons 5-16) [10 Mar 24]

*Jesus invites us to “Abide in my love”. As we go we sing a song that speaks about how that is not a “once-off” or “special occasion” thing but an everyday thing...*

This welcome here is simply free.  
It's for the world, for you and me.  
We bring our smiles and cares,  
our heart's own prayers  
and the stories of our days,  
to worship God in many ways.  
And together we're...

*Ev'ryday loving! Ev'ryday loving!  
We're just ev'ryday loving!  
The way that God loves us!*

God's love is deep. God's love is wide.  
It's all around, and here inside.  
So when we lend a hand or take a  
stand,  
it's love we're sending round.  
In ev'ry day, that's where it's found.  
And together we're...  
*Ev'ryday loving!...*

Then can we dare to use our eyes,  
and tune our ears to others' cries?  
To hear the silent words of those  
unheard,  
and sing with them their song.  
We know that God will lead us on.  
And together we're...  
*Ev'ryday loving!...*

O God of Earth, you hear us call.  
Shower your love upon us all.  
And like a mustard seed, the faith we  
need  
will blossom as we grow.  
Give us your faith, to live and show,  
that what you're giving is...  
*Ev'ryday loving!...*

*Words and Music: Linnea Good*

### Sending and Blessing

Go into this week, knowing deep within your being,  
that you are loved.  
And then go to love and serve God.  
May Christ's light guide your path.  
May peace grace each step.  
May hope lead the way.  
And may you always find love embracing you and those you meet.

*Adapted from Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Lent-Easter 2021, p.170*

Liturgy drawn from:

Michelle Eastwood , L3, Mediacom, resources for Easter 3, Sunday 5 May 2024  
*Spill The Beans*, Issue 38, Resources for Lent-Easter 2021  
*Seasons of the Spirit*, Resources for Lent-Easter 2021

Rev Kath Merrifield  
5 May 2024