



The Offering

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 since today is part of "ordinary" time.*

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

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

You might want to watch this video of a song by The Porters Gate, Let Us Be Known By Our Love.

Light Candle

We light a candle to remember.

We remember Jesus - the Light of the World - the light that shines even in the darkness and cannot be snuffed out.

We remember that we too are called to be Light to the World.



Acknowledgement of Country

As we gather together in this time and place,
we acknowledge the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation
who have cared for this land,
who have gathered, collected and shared food, and
who have nourished each other in story and song
for thousands of years.

We pay our respects to their elders, past and present
who have handed down stories, songs, and wisdom.
Let us learn from the First Peoples of this land,
listening to their innate knowledge
of how to live in this land in harmony with all living things.

May we walk gently and faithfully upon these lands.

Call to Worship

God is the one who gathers us here.

We come to worship, O God.

Christ is the foundation of our gathering.

We come to worship, O Christ.

The Spirit will unsettle us to work for justice.

We come to worship, O Spirit of Love.

We come to worship.

Let us bring our thanks and praise.

Let us pray...

God, we name you as the one who is always on the side of the poor and the marginalised.
Open our eyes this day to see those we might miss.
Open our hearts to respond to your call for justice.
In our worship, transform us to your likeness and ways. Amen.

Sing - Come O God Of All The Earth (TIS 181)

We sing a song to invite God to be in our midst as we join our voices to the song of praise sung by all of creation.

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

Creator God, as you come to us, so we come to you,
offering our praise and thanks for
this new day,
the beauty we see in the ocean, mountains, rivers, beaches and forests that surround us,
this community in which we gather.

God of new life,
in Jesus, you have shown us your vision for the world,
a world where love and peace reign,
where justice and equity and known and shared
where the first are last and the last are first.

Come, O Justice,
come, O Peace,
shape our hearts and help us to build lives that reflect your vision
here - in our families, in our workplaces, in this community.

God, your heart is for the poor,
the marginalised, the dispossessed, and lonely.
When we fail to see others,
may your Spirit break open our eyes.

God, since the beginning,
you have desired communities of and in creation

where all might flourish,
the human, the animal, the plants, the soil.
When we fail to prioritise the flourishing of all,
may your Spirit break open our hands.

God, your name is justice, peace, and compassion.
When we fail to live your Ways,
may your Spirit break open our hearts.

Transform us into the likeness of Christ,
even when it breaks us open,
even when it calls for radical change.
May we align our lives
with your eyes, hands, and heart.
In the name of the Christ
who walked with justice. Amen.

Words of Grace

God's name is justice.
God's name is peace.
God's name is compassion.
God's name is mercy.

Each of these is for you, for us, for all things, for all creation.
Turn your lives around, then, and follow after God.

Let us follow.

Let us be people of God.

Sing - The Anointing (Seasons 9-12)

We continue in prayer as we sing, asking God to help us listen, and to open our hearts and minds to God's wisdom in a way that leads us to live lives that reflect God's grace.

*Lead us to listen,
to hear the heart speak.
O God in the quiet voice,
draw us to you.
Awaken our wisdom,
enlighten our vision.
Anoint us to heal
and to love as you do.*

give us hope that is bright.
May the small voice be our concern,
may we make burdens light.
Lead us to listen...

May we be slow to judge,
may we learn to forgive.
Through compassion and kindness,
may we let others live.

Give us faith that is strong,

Lead us to listen...

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Listening for God's Voice

Reading: Mark 12:38-44

³⁸ As he taught, [Jesus] said, 'Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the market-places, ³⁹and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets! ⁴⁰They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.'

⁴¹ He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴²A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. ⁴³Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.'

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

Living God, as we wrestle with the words of Jesus,
as we yearn to hear your good news today,
open our minds and hearts to be shaped by your love. Amen.

The story that we heard from the gospel attributed to Mark offers us perhaps deeper insight.

There is no doubt that the widow has given all that she has - and we are invited to think about how generous we are, how committed we are to the ways of God, and how willing we are to give of what we have for the greater good.

But that is not all there is to this story, that is not all there is to Jesus words to his disciples: 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.' (Mark 12:43-44)

Jesus' observation of this woman comes right after he has been scathing of the religious leaders for ignoring the plight of women like her. "You might think you look good", Jesus says, but "you devour widow's houses" (12:38-40). So while Jesus is affirming the widow's offering, he is at the same time, condemning again the people who create the systems that keep her impoverished.

Your plenty, your respectable lives, even your reputation, says Jesus, is at the expense of this widow and others like her - and that's not OK.

Sometimes, theologians talk about God's preferential option for the poor, the idea that God desires to be in solidarity with those the world discards. The Hebrew Scriptures repeat often that God expects God's people to care for the widows and orphans, and to take in the foreigner (see Deuteronomy 14:29, 15:11, 24:19, 24:21). These are the people who have no family to provide for them and to protect them. They are the ones left to beg for alms in the streets. And the prophets are frequently outspoken when the nation has failed to care for them.

The liberation theologians frame it a little differently to speak of the freedom God promises and the justice sought for those who have been enslaved and abused.

Today, Jesus' words challenge us to think deeply about what we offer to God - our money and physical resources - yes; and - how we commit ourselves to working for and shaping a world where no widow, orphan or stranger is ever in danger of being hungry, thirsty, or in fear of their safety.

Let me share with you a story from a Canadian woman, Adele Halliday. When she wrote this story, she was working for the United Church of Canada.

I grew up in a city in Canada and spent most of my years there. But, for one year, I lived in a small village in Kenya, East Africa, where I taught mentally challenged children. I wasn't fluent in the local language, Kikuyu, but I was accepted into the community as one of their own. I used to go to the church in my village, but the services were all in Kikuyu. I didn't always understand everything, but over time, I got used to the routines and what to expect, when to stand and when to sit.

One day, something out of the ordinary happened in church. After the offering plates were brought to the front of the church, a very old woman stood up and slowly started shuffling forward. I wondered what was happening. And, as I glanced around the church, I saw other people straining their necks with curiosity also to see where the woman was going. They too seemed bewildered.

We watched quietly as the woman slowly shuffled forward until she was standing in front of the table where the offering plates sat. The entire congregation watched her expectantly, and there was a hushed silence in the sanctuary. She gently laid something on the table, and slowly began to shuffle her way back to her seat. I sat there in slightly stunned silence, wondering what she had brought to the front. The service continued, but I discovered that I wasn't to wait long to find out what she had offered.

That morning, as she prepared to go to church, the woman had considered what her offering would be to God. She was very poor and had no money to give. Still, she wanted to offer something to her Creator. She looked around her small home, and to her delight, her hen had laid two perfect eggs that very morning. She gathered up those eggs and brought them to church with her. It was these eggs, all that she had, that were offered on that Sunday morning.

Now, if that were all that had happened that day, it would be a nice story about giving all that you have to God. But, the story doesn't end there. After church that day, the community had what is called a *Harambee*. It was a fundraiser, where people bring things that are sold and the money raised goes to support the work of the church.

Those two eggs that the woman had offered during worship were eventually sold at that *Harambee*. They were only two eggs. I could buy those eggs at the market for just a few cents. But the community knew this woman and knew what a great gift she was offering. And that day, her two eggs were sold for over ten dollars – more than some people would earn in an entire week!

The woman's simple gift was offered with love. It was received with great mercy from her loving neighbours and given its true worth during the *Harambee*. It was never really about the eggs. It was about giving and receiving, of mercy and love, of grace and offering what you can to your friends and strangers, and trusting that your community will support you when you give of yourself to others.

The word *harambee* is a Kiswahili word. It doesn't mean fundraiser. It means "let's all pull together." And that day, the whole community pulled together in an amazing way. I never did know the name of this Kikuyu woman. But I have carried her story with me for many years. And this woman, this stranger, taught me a lesson that I will never forget.

I think there is something in Jesus' words that remind us that we are never helpless - even the widow still has something to offer just as the religious authorities have great responsibility to challenge and re-shape the systems that keep her impoverished. So perhaps it is more about how or where we see ourselves in the scheme of things. Are we widows and orphans seeking for crumbs, seemingly powerless, yet giving what we can from our poverty?
Or are we much better off, able to afford nice clothes and to share in feasting and decision-making, saying our prayers and reading our Bibles, coming to church - needing to pay attention to the cry of people in our community who are hungry and homeless?

Perhaps we are both.

Let us pray...

God of the widow, God of the scribes,
you call us to offer all that we have in serving you and caring for your people.
Whether we have little, or whether we have much,
you call us to pay attention to the people around us
that all may share in the abundance of your realm.
Open our eyes and our hearts to see. Amen.

Responding

Sing - For Everyone Born (Seasons 4-14)

As we gather around the table, there is a place here for everyone of God's children - there is a place here for you.

For everyone born, a place at the table,
for everyone born, clean water and bread,
a shelter, a space, a safe place for
growing,
for everyone born, a star overhead,
*and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!*

For woman and man, a place at the table,
revising the roles, deciding the share,
with wisdom and grace, dividing the power,
for woman and man, a system that's fair,
and God will delight...

For young and for old, a place at the table,
a voice to be heard, a part in the song,

the hands of a child in hands that are
wrinkled,
for young and for old, the right to belong,
and God will delight...

For just and unjust, a place at the table,
abuser, abused, with need to forgive,
in anger, in hurt, a mindset of mercy,
for just and unjust, a new way to live,
and God will delight...

For everyone born, a place at the table,
to live without fear, and simply to be,
to work, to speak out, to witness and
worship,
for everyone born, the right to be free,
and God will delight...

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.

Prayer for Others

Gracious God,

Help us give from our hearts, as the widow did, offering what we have to serve others. May we take responsibility for caring for others. May we take responsibility for caring for those in need, so no-one is left in poverty or despair. Guide us to act with compassion, lifting up the vulnerable and sharing your love in all we do.

God, you ask us to pray for our leaders. We pray for our Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese and all those elected to represent us in Federal, State and local governments. Guide their deliberations and their decision-making, we pray, that decisions they make may shape our community in ways that reflect your reign. And we lift Donald Trump to you. Place your guiding hand on his head and heart and guide him with wisdom, strength and compassion. May he seek your will in all that he does, and may his actions be led by your love and truth. Grant him peace and clarity and surround him with those who will support him in being righteous.

Pray for the people of Spain for all those affected by devastating floods and for the families who have lost loved ones, those who have been displaced, and the courageous first responders working tirelessly to rescue and provide relief. May those who are suffering find strength and resilience. We pray for swift recovery, for safety and hope to endure as they rebuild their lives and communities.

We lift up in prayer all those in our congregation who are unwell, especially those in hospital or undergoing tests. May God's healing presence be with them, bringing comfort, strength and peace in body and spirit. We pray for wisdom and medical guidance for the medical team's care for them, and for patients and hope for their families and loved ones. May each person feel surrounded by love and know that they are held closely in our thoughts and prayers.

We pray for those who are grieving, asking God's comfort and peace to surround them. May they find strength in love and hope, even in sorrow.

Lord, we come before you, seeking your guidance and strength. Help us walk in your love sharing it with those around us. Open our hearts to give generously and our hands are willing, so we may be a source of hope and comfort to others. May we grow closer to each day, finding peace and purpose in your presence.

We lift our hearts in praise, giving thanks for your endless love and faithfulness.
Amen

Offering

This part of our service is not about the 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?

Let us pray...

We celebrate gifts offered from the heart.

We celebrate gifts that build up the community.

We celebrate gifts given to follow after Christ.

God, use us and these gifts

to bring justice and compassion to our world. Amen.

Sending

Sing - Hymn To Christ The Companion (tune: TIS 361)

This song is sung to a familiar tune - it speaks of Christ's presence with us as we seek to care for the more vulnerable people in our midst.

Where two or three are gathered
here in the name of Christ,
then will we know his presence,
share in a love unpriced.
He will be with us always,
e'en to our journey's end;
found in our humblest neighbour,
present in foe and friend.

Spur us to seek each other,
follow the pilgrim way,
and, if our footsteps falter,
feed and sustain, we pray.
Broken the bread you offer,
shared is the cup you pour,
calling to true communion
now and for ever more.

Forward our path together,
through a mysterious land,
darkened by our unknowing,
desert of rock and sand.
Spirit of Christ before us,
lead us through storm and night;
beacon of hope unfailing,
draw us towards your light.

O loving Christ-companion,
bond us, that we may be
one in our common purpose,
one in our loyalty;
strong for the weak and powerless,
open to truth, and pain,
daring to stand for justice,
working to bring your reign.

C Gibson

Sending and Blessing

May God break open your eyes.

May God break open your hands.

May God break open your heart.

That through God's Spirit

you might be people who bear justice, compassion, and peace.

And the blessing of God - Divine Creator, Divine Word, Divine Presence - be with you today and always. Amen.

Liturgy and Reflections drawn from:

Rev Dr Bec Lindsay, *Liturgy, Life and Learning*, Resources for 10 November 2024

Rev Kath Merrifield

10 November 2024