



Weekly Worship

Fourth Sunday in Epiphany

Sunday January 30, 2022

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

Spend a moment being still,
notice your breathing, the rise and fall,
give thanks for breath,
for life, for light. God is with us
light the candle, Christ is the light of the world.

Call to worship *based on Psalm 71:1-6*

We come, gathering under your wing
so draw us in, God of unending love.
Rescue us, deliver us, hear us;
be our refuge and safe place,
a steady shelter in life's whirlwind,
because it has always been you
that we turn to;
from our first days to our last.
With every breath, we will sing your song.

Acknowledging

As we gather, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and these waters. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

*As we continue our worship in song,
we imagine the voice of God, calling us to come ...*



Singing: Come as you are **TiS 693**

Come as you are, that's how I want you
Come as you are, feel quite at home
Close to my heart, loved and forgiven
Come as you are, why stand alone?

No need to fear, love sets no limits
No need to fear, love never ends
Don't run away, shamed and disheartened
Rest in my love, trust me again

I came to call sinners, not just the virtuous
I came to bring peace, not to condemn
Each time you fail to live by my promise
Why do you think I'd love you the less?

Come as you are, that's how I love you
Come as you are, trust me again
Nothing can change, the love that I bear you
All will be well, just come as you are.

'Deidre Browne





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Prayer

Including a reading from 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

God of breath and life and all,
Let my words be laced with love.
Let love be the language,
of my hearing and my heart.

And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

God of breath, and life and all,
Let my mind be filled
with the knowledge of you.
Let love be the bedrock of faith,
the basis of my understanding.

If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

God of breath, and life and all,
Let my body move to the music of love.
Let love be the planting and the harvest,
the treasure, the storehouse, the goal.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

For your love is breath, and life, and all;
creating, persisting, healing, hoping.
Holding on when all else is lost,
believing, forgiving, foraging for good;
accepting fragments with grace
and singing when all is whole.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.

For your love is breath, and life, and all
overflowing from the source;
and all our insight cannot grasp
the fullness of your outpouring,
until we lean in, one last time.

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

For your love is breath, and life, and all
and we move through times of longing;
speaking, thinking, growing in our being,
until all we can see is huff on the glass,
too close, until you call us home.

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Amen.

Listening

Read: Jeremiah 1: 4-10 & Luke 4: 21-30

For these words of faith and for Jesus the Word:

Thanks be to God.

Reflecting

Rev. Deacon Peter Harvey

Jesus was a Jew – he attended Synagogue, he studied the Torah, he learnt from the sacred writings of the faith. And he was respected for his wisdom and understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures by his contemporaries. So, when Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah in the Synagogue of his hometown of Nazareth, the people listened attentively. And when he claimed that he was the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, they were amazed, and questioned how it could be, but they were still open to Jesus' message.

Reflecting continues

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Reflecting continues

But it was only when Jesus began to challenge the sense of entitlement of the religious leaders, and their claims of authority and influence, and when he pointed out God's concern for outsiders – for people outside the tent, well, that's when they got murderously angry, that's when these people who knew him and respected him changed.

The radical inclusivity of Jesus was scandalous and offensive to these people. They wanted to believe that they were "in" with God, and that meant there had to be others who were "out". But, when Jesus suggested that, quite literally, those outside the tent were the true insiders, they refused to let go of their stereotypes, their sense of privilege, and their need for exclusivity.

How often has the modern church seemed more like the Synagogue of Nazareth than the true people of God. It is tragic when those who claim to be God's people are more like the people of Nazareth, than the people of God. We love to talk about Jesus as Messiah, and to proclaim that Jesus died for us, and to hear how God's reign has come to us. But, sometimes, when we are challenged by the call of Jesus to follow him, when we are challenged by the message of the Gospel to welcome those whom we see as different, whom we believe are "sinners" or "outside" of God's "chosen ones", it's easier to change the message than change ourselves. How often do we prefer to attack the message as not relevant in our modern times, rather than do the difficult work of opening our hearts to the call to follow the way of the Christ.

We all have those whom we struggle to love. We all have those whom we believe are undeserving of God's grace. But, if God's favour could be earned simply by meeting our lowly standards, it wouldn't be grace. The challenge of the Gospel is the way it calls us to constantly expand our welcome, to constantly be open to all, especially those outside the tent, and to include all God's people in the journey of discovery that they are actually "in" with God. This challenging journey into radical, inclusive grace is the call of the gospel message this week – the call to each of us who claim the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

Editor's note: *Rev. Deacon Peter Harvey works in the Gippsland Presbytery as Frontier Services Bush Chaplain, connecting with communities who have been bushfire affected. As Deacon and Bush Chaplain, his calling and work are to those on the 'outside'. If you would like to hear more about this work, he'll be offering this reflection at our **online Fig Tree Evening Worship at 5pm on January 30th. For a Zoom link please email Deb Bye on gippspreszoom@gmail.com***

Responding: Prayers for the World and Community

The refrain for this prayer, Send me, Jesus TiS 749, echoes the call of Jeremiah and reflects the mission of Jesus; to be sent by God into the places of hurt, to be given words that are sometimes hard for people to hear, but that will bring justice and healing for all God's creation. We cannot possibly all be sent into all the places of pain and harm in the world, but by praying 'send me, Jesus', we are asking for God to show us, as a local and a global community of faith, the many ways that we can bring the unending power of God's life-giving love to our world. We are asking to be made aware of the movements of the Spirit so that we may participate as we are able and call others to do the same.

Prayer continues



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Prayer continues

Let us pray; We pray for people who are hungry, thirsty, struggling to survive, that the rest of us might find ways of sharing what we have:

Prayer refrain: Send me, Jesus TiS 749

you might want to use the original first verse from South Africa, and/or:

One: Send me Lord.

**All: Send me, Jesus; send me, Jesus;
send me, Jesus, send me, Lord.**

We pray for people who are homeless, stateless or trapped in indefinite detention, that we might find ways of opening hearts and doors:

One: Send me Lord.

**All: Send me, Jesus; send me, Jesus;
send me, Jesus, send me, Lord.**

We pray for people who are living in the midst of brokenness; bodies, minds, relationships, lives and livelihoods, that we might find ways of bringing wholeness.

One: Send me Lord.

**All: Send me, Jesus; send me, Jesus;
send me, Jesus, send me, Lord.**

We pray for people who are dispossessed of land, culture, language, rights and identity, that we might understand the impact of colonisation and walk with respect in the way of justice and covenant, listening and learning.

One: Send me Lord.

**All: Send me, Jesus; send me, Jesus;
send me, Jesus, send me, Lord.**

We pray for people who are experiencing the aftermath of catastrophic events; volcanic eruption, tsunami, landslide, earthquake; that we might find ways of sending assistance, bringing help, holding grief, rebuilding lives.

One: Send me Lord.

**All: Send me, Jesus; send me, Jesus;
send me, Jesus, send me, Lord.**

We pray for people who might be invisible, the outsiders, the forgotten people on the edges of our towns, cities and communities, that we might see them as brothers and sisters and join them at a table of welcome.

One: Send me Lord.

**All: Send me, Jesus; send me, Jesus;
send me, Jesus, send me, Lord.**

We pray for all creatures and living things on this planet; threatened species, those pushed out of habitats by greed and development, the effects of a disrupted ecosystem and a damaged planet, that we might learn to live lighter and restore balance, taking only what we need.

One: Send me Lord.

**All: Send me, Jesus; send me, Jesus;
send me, Jesus, send me, Lord.**

We pray all the prayers of our hearts for people we know and people we have heard about; friends and strangers, family near and those across the globe.
(time of quiet)

and we pray together in words that Jesus gave us:

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

Passing the peace

May the Peace of God dwell with you:
and also with you.

Offering

We bring our gifts to you, God of abundance, in the hope that you will bless them and use them in your service. Bless us, as we offer ourselves again, to be sent to where we are needed, with courage in our step, words of healing on our lips and your love overflowing in our hearts,
in Jesus' name, Amen.





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Notices

February 1st begins World Interfaith Harmony Week. Do you know people who belong to other faiths in your community? Could you share a meal, a conversation, a blessing?

Remember, you can join the Presbytery of Gippsland's online Fig Tree Evening worship service on Jan 30th at 5pm. Email Deb Bye on gippspreszoom@gmail.com for the Zoom link.

Singing: Loving Spirit ^{TiS 417}

Loving Spirit, loving Spirit,
you have chosen me to be --
you have drawn me to your wonder,
you have set your sign on me.

Like a mother you enfold me,
hold my life within your own,
feed me with your very body,
form me of your flesh and bone.

Like a father you protect me,
teach me the discerning eye,
hoist me up upon your shoulder,
let me see the world from high.

Friend and lover, in your closeness
I am known and held and blessed:
in your promise is my comfort,
in your presence I may rest.

Loving Spirit, loving Spirit,
you have chosen me to be -
you have drawn me to your wonder,
you have set your sign on me.

²Shirley E Murray, M: C A Gibson

Blessing

Send us out, God of unending love,
send us to where we are needed,
to bring your refuge and to be a safe place,
a steady shelter in life's whirlwind,
because it has always been you
that we turn to; from our first days to our last.

**With every breath, we will sing your song.
Amen.**

Contributors this week:

Reflection: Rev. Deacon Peter Harvey,
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