Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Psalm 80: 19

... give us life,
and we will call on your name.
Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine,
that we may be saved.

God of all,
send your Spirit
to be with us in this time together.
Open our ears to your word,
our eyes to your presence,
our hearts to your love,
and our lives to your will.

For now and for always,
And all the people say: **Amen.**

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging
The Ancient of Days breathed life into this land and her peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the (please name the people on whose land you gather) People, the Traditional Custodians, have blessed this place through their law and customs, their care and life. We pay respects to their Elders and leaders past and present, and pray for the future of their communities. May we walk gently and respectfully on this Land.

Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress

Singing: Christ is alive TiS 387

OR: God has spoken by his prophets TiS 158

Prayer

*Abba, Father,
parent God,
source of all life,
answer our call as a mother responds
to the cry of a child in the night.

Jesus Christ, brother and friend,
incarnate redeemer,
stand beside us
as a bearer of our humanity
and sharer of God's glory.

Spirit of God,
giver of new life
persistent guest,
prod us to praise,
calling us to be a people
of hope and faith in Christ Jesus.*
Amen

In the quiet we come to you
as disciples of Christ
and as the church, the community of Christ,
bringing the burdens that weigh us down.

We confess the things that we have done
that have caused pain to others and to you.

hold a time of quiet

We confess the things that we have failed to do,
missed opportunities for being your people.

hold a time of quiet

We confess that we have sought easy answers
and avoided the hard questions.

hold a time of quiet

From Hebrews 12: 1-2:
Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the

Prayer continues

Prayer continues

sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

hold a time of quiet

Loving parent God, hear us.
Send your Spirit to release us.
Take the burdens and lift us up,
to be the full measure of your people.

hold a time of quiet

Siblings in Christ:
Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:
'Your sins are forgiven'
Thanks be to God.

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Isaiah 5:1-7
Luke 12:49-56

For these words of faith
and for Jesus the Word
Thanks be to God.

Reflecting

Rev. Heather den Houting

The exasperated prophet

Do you get the feeling from this week's readings that you are being berated by an impatient parent? Over the last few weeks in the lectionary, we have been hearing dire and tragic warnings by a series of exasperated prophets, using strong language around the futility of living in the world without constant reference to God's expectations.

Today, we are even getting this exasperated teaching from Jesus. This can be a bit shocking to us, as Jesus is the one we usually rely on to temper the strident words of the prophets, by bringing us messages of the gracious love of God. Today, however, we should be squirming in our seats as we read the words of an impatient and strident Jesus who is teaching that following him will not be all sweetness and light. Indeed, the very foundations of our security may be overturned.

In the reading from Isaiah, we hear a song about a vineyard. The metaphor is used to express the impatience and dismay of the owner, the one who is responsible for the cultivation and care of the fruit. The owner in frustration asks "Why am I even bothering? Nothing I do seems to alter the quality of the harvest from these vines." The song continues with a challenge and threat: injustice prevails because you are contemptuous of my teaching and as a result, I am going to tear out the foundations of this community and start again.

This theme of retributive justice (you will be punished because you do not follow my commandments) is something I imagine all of us have experienced (whether we like it or not) and can move us quickly back into the scolding parent, fearful child dynamic. The prophet is unapologetic in his tone and uses language and imagery that is designed to elicit this type of shameful response from us. There are no words of consolation or escape routes in this one, it is pretty savage. Phew.

Reflecting continues

Reflecting continues

Normally, this type of language is tempered by a lifeline thrown out in the Gospel reading. Something about getting back to those God basics (love God, love your neighbour, love yourself) means that everything will be OK. But not this week.

In Luke 12 we have Jesus becoming more and more intensely serious in his teaching. He knows he is on his way to Jerusalem and he is using every trick in the book to try to get the message through. By the time we get to this passage his language is strident, shocking, designed to pull us out of our normal pattern of operating. There is no respite for us here. No chance for us to catch our breath.

There is no escaping the understanding that Jesus is berating his disciples. And this means that we have to be prepared to hear the tone and not explain it away. You know what is required of you, says this exasperated prophet, what more do I have to say to get this through to you? If you follow me, nothing will be the same. Everything that you hold dear is at risk. All those religious, social and cultural expectations about how to follow God are meaningless. Instead, be prepared to sacrifice all of this for what is to come. Again, phew.

So, let's take some time now and pause to reflect on how being berated by an exasperated prophet makes us feel today? Is it shame? Is it sullen resistance? Is it a feeling of inadequacy and confusion? Is it righteous indignation - umbrage? Is it disbelief and avoidance – surely this person is not talking about us?

We know that these times of relentless castigation are not the whole story of being a disciple of Christ, but there are times when we are called to re-examine our lives as a community of Christ. And we may need strong language and imagery to overcome our natural resistance. Sullen resistance to these times is not going to cut it. Ignoring it and blaming other people is also futile. Instead, when we are challenged by the exasperated prophet, we are being asked to trust the journey. We should not be surprised by the things that are asked of us and to know that we are part of the millennia of people who have been called to repentance and turn back to God's plan for creation.

The formula is there for the taking: Love God, others and yourself. Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly. Apply this formula to your own context so you can read the signs of the times. Know that you are not alone and that God is faithful to us. As the community of Christ, we know the best is yet to come.

Singing: Inspired by love and anger **TiS 674**

OR: Beauty for brokenness TiS 690

Offering

Source of all that is good, we bring before you our lives and these gifts for your kin-dom. Transform them and us, through your grace and love, made known in Christ Jesus, for the sake of the world. And all the people say: **Amen.**

Notices

August 19	World Humanitarian Day
August 22	International Day commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence based on Religion or Belief.
August 23	International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.

Prayers for World & Community

You might want to play this YouTube clip as a powerful and prayerful meditation on the reading from Isaiah. Have a sand bowl and candles for people to respond in prayer.

Sinead O'Connor - If You Had A Vineyard
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kf24-rgyOeI

*Abba, Father, parent God,
source of all life,
answer our call as a mother responds
to the cry of a child in the night.*

We pray for the church:

Help us to find ways to harness the rage
and the hope
that dwells in our hearts
and transform it into a loving community
that cries loudly for justice
and speaks truth to power.

Bless our leaders
and those who are called to serve
in all sorts of ways.
Give them courage and coping
and the tenacity to open doors
of hospitality and inclusion.

God of love
hear our prayer

We pray for the people of the world:

Companion the lonely and bring back the lost. Feed
the starving and make an end to war.
Bring down the powerful who rule with division.
Give strength and voice to the marginalised.
Let the groanings of creation be heard
and joyful harmony restored.

God of love
hear our prayer

We pray for our community:

Let all who search find shelter and sanctuary,
and let no one be forgotten.
Shield the ones in danger
and provide safe spaces of refuge and support.

Make us great neighbours for each other;
giving without need for return,
taking time to listen and to listen more.
Doing what we can to heal the earth,
living lightly and respectfully,
loving abundantly.

God of love
hear our prayer

We pray for those in need:
Prayers may be offered silently,
with names where appropriate,
and/or with candles.

God of love
hear our prayer

We pray together then as Jesus taught 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 forever. Amen**

Singing: May the mind of Christ… TiS 609

OR: God of freedom, God of Justice TiS 657
OR: Send me Jesus TiS 749

Blessing

God of all,
send your Spirit
to be with us as we go.
Open our ears to your word,
our eyes to your presence,
our hearts to your love,
and our lives to your will.

From the reflection:

The formula is there for the taking:
Love God, others and yourself.
Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly.
Apply this formula to your own context
so you can read the signs of the times.
Know that you are not alone
and that God is faithful to us.

For now and for always,
And all the people say: **Amen.**

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