



Pentecost Week 7

Worship@Home July 19, 2020

Welcome

Welcome to Worship@Home this week. As you come before God, bring your life as your worship. Whoever you are, wherever you are from, there is a place here for you.

For the Prayers of the People, bring a handful of grain or legumes to your worship space in a small bowl; rice, wheat, peas, beans, lentils...

Light Your Candle



Call to Worship

People of God, together we are the body of Christ. Called to be faithful and live in hope, we seek God's purpose. In confidence of God's presence with us throughout all of our days, we are reminded of God's promises. Come and worship, together or apart we are loved beyond measure. In our diversity we are held and nourished and even celebrated.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Spirit of God is present with us through all of history. We acknowledge the First Peoples of this beautiful land and especially the Bunurong people. We pay our respects to them and to their elders past, present and emerging. We commit ourselves to truth-telling and the seeking of reconciliation.



Prayer from Psalm 139

O LORD,
you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue,
O LORD, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.

See if there is any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.





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Hymn: Where the Spirit is TIS 421

Where the Spirit is there's freedom.
Where the Spirit is, there is life!
Not by the world can
our freedom be nourished,
not by our things, only by Spirit.
Practise, my children,
to live by the Spirit,
drop all your masks,
take freedom's clothing!

Where the Spirit is there's freedom.
Where the Spirit, there is life!
Heaven on earth, here we live,
free to love and to share,
carried by joy
Practise, my children,
to live by the Spirit,
daring today,
to taste God's future.

Where the Spirit is there's freedom.
Where the Spirit is, there is life!
Wounds will be healed,
eyes will be opened,
imaging God, reflecting Jesus.
Practise, my children,
to live by the Spirit,
heaven is here,
time made eternal.

Where the Spirit is
there's freedom.
Where the Spirit is,
there is life!

¹Jonas Jonson

Thankyou prayer

When I think of you loving me before I was even born, I am amazed and assured. Before I was even aware, you were bringing my potential into being. Even though you know me better than I know myself, you still love me and have my days in your hands. Looking over my life, I can see your presence in my going out and my coming in. What can I say? Thanks.

Prayer of confession

Sometimes I get to thinking that I am in control. Then I am reminded that you have known me and held me always.

In compassion and love you forgive me for my arrogance and my sense that I belong to myself.

Sometimes I forget that I have an obligation to live life with others in mind. I get to thinking that I can hide from your Spirit. I am your child and can be more than I am.

In compassion and love you forgive me for settling for less than I am.

I forget that I need to seek freedom, for myself, for my neighbours and for your creation. Instead I suffer under inaction and lack of empathy.

In compassion and love you forgive me for my lack of insight and thinking everything is here for my pleasure and convenience.

Sometimes I take on the idea that I have the right to judge the actions and motivations of others, forgetting how much you have forgiven me.

In compassion and love you forgive me and offer me healing and freedom. You offer me life, and ever more life. You remind me that together we are all your beloved children.





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The Readings

Genesis 28: 10-19a

Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43

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

Reflection

Rev. Ian Turnnidge

*When this old world starts getting me down
And people are just too much for me to take.
I climb way up to the top of the stairs
And all my cares drift right into space
On a roof it's peaceful as can be
And there the world below can't bother me*

For those of you who know me, I'm a James Taylor fan: and 'Up on a Roof' is one of my favourites. It speaks of a place of retreat after the rush of the everyday. Do you have an 'Up on a Roof' place? A place where you go to look, to contemplate, to get away from things?

A place to think?

Up on a roof is a place to think.

One of the anecdotal findings from this time of Covid-19, is that people have reported more dreaming. The change in rhythm of the week, the change from long distance commute to work or school shuttle, people have been dreaming because they have been able to experience deep REM sleep. Put simply, people have not been awakened by the alarm clock, so the REM sleep is longer, and we wake up retaining the memory of the dream.

Have you been dreaming?

Even dreaming when you wake in the night. Those hours, when you're lying in bed, awake in the middle of the night: well, that is a form of dreaming: like day dreaming but with the lights off!!

This rich story of what is known as "Jacob's Ladder" from the Hebrew Scriptures, has been a favourite of Sunday School colouring pictures. And, perhaps, like most dreams, when concretised in those ways, the dream hasn't really helped us to encounter the story. Because we get caught in the image.

When I was 20, I was living in North Carlton, in a pretty run-down, ground floor terrace, with no heating. And no lockable back door!

As a child from the middle east (Blackburn North!) I had grown up in an environment of front gardens and backyards: I'd never lived so close to people as I did in North Carlton. After a time, I was beginning to feel a little hemmed in. I discovered that I could find space walking to work through the Melbourne General Cemetery and in the gardens around the Exhibition building.

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Reflection continues

But the true 'Bethel' place for me was over in the Edinburgh gardens. The disused, dilapidated and roped off "danger- no entry" was the historic Fitzroy grandstand. There, up the top, on the back bench, my friend and I would sit in the darkest of winter and summer nights, looking out over the city's skyline: watching the lights in the office towers slowly turn off, or on. And as we watched, we would share the day and the life questions we were pondering. I remember those night conversations as helpful conversations, meaning-making conversations: not with many satisfying solutions: but they were, if you like, a dream time sharing.

Dreams in the ancient world, as we know, were revered as places where God may reveal a message. There are many stories in the Bible of people waking from a dream, clear that God had 'told' them the next step in their journey. We think of the famous Biblical dreamer Joseph as an example: whose vivid dreams had 'prophetic' qualities.

Now, I can't say my dreams are like that: I imagine very few of us have dreams in that regard. 'New Scientist' magazine suggests that our dreaming is a way the brain synthesises aspects of our day, processing the worries we have, and preparing ourselves for the things that worry us. The magazine goes on to say that it's a good thing to talk about the dreams we are having: talking about dreams alleviates distress, and strengthens our social bonding and empathy. Russell Foster, a circadian neuroscientist at the University of Oxford says the evidence suggests that it is good to talk about your dreams. "Don't worry about your dreams. Take comfort in the fact that your brain is doing what it should be doing."

So, if I were to ask you 'What was Jacob's Dream', you'd be able to tell me what he saw. 'He saw a ladder reaching set up on earth,

reaching towards the heavens: with angels going up and down.' Right? But what did God say in the dream?

The assurance to Jacob was in line with the promise to Abraham and Isaac; that the land on which you lie is the source of God given life: and that through them blessing will flow to the earth. That part of the dream was known.

The new part of the revelation was this: that God would be with Jacob, always: that God would not leave him. God would be with him until what was promised was achieved through him. And this promise would remain important later in the history of Israel when they would be forcibly taken into exile in far off Babylon.

But what did Jacob remember of his dream? He recalls the land upon which he was lying. He recalls the 'thin' place of being with God. He is filled with awe, and names the place Bethel = House of God.

That memory of the dream bears little resemblance to the images of the dream. It also seems to me that his feeling, his encounter, rooted him to a place on earth. And it was 'a certain', nameless place: a place previously without a name maybe, and certainly a place that Jacob felt was a gate of heaven: not a gate to heaven (which of course is what the image of the dream may suggest).

And the symbol Jacob chooses of the place?

His rock pillow!!!

Earlier, I suggested that dreaming doesn't always happen at night when our eyes are closed. Lying awake at night and day dreaming are also places of dreaming.

When we contemplate the parables today from the Gospels, I wonder if the reflection on

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Reflection continues

Jacob's dream might be a helpful way to hold the images of the parables? The parable of 'Wheat and the Weeds' (one of my favourite parables, because it reminds us that it's none of our business in the here and now, how God sorts out the harvest), is like a dream in and of itself.

And much like a dream, Jesus' private explanation to the disciples only offers some explanation of some images in the story, and raises some uncomfortable questions (like: "is there skulduggery in the kingdom of God? – for what do we make of the one who sows weeds in the kingdom?"), but if we are able to hold 'lightly' the images of these parables...then perhaps we can enable them to continue to do their work of shaping our character and ministry.

So I pray that this week your dreams are rich and life giving: that you will talk to those around you about what you dreamed: and that you might recall the promise in Jacob's dream: that God is with us. Always.

Dream note from New Scientist magazine: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2242379-how-coronavirus-is-affecting-your-dreams-and-what-to-do-about-it/>



Prayers of the people

As you pray, place some seed or grain from the bowl on to your worship cloth, or near your candle, for each part of the prayer.

God of generous and scattered abundance,
we pray for the earth;
bless the ground beneath us;
spirit, kin and life for our First Peoples,
the fertile soils and arid plains
the ocean floor and desert sands.

God of generous and scattered abundance,
we pray for all that grows;
bless the bush and coastal scrub,
the flowering wattles and towering gums
the cultivated crops and reedy waterways
the urban gardens and flower farms.

God of generous and scattered abundance,
we pray for all creatures.
bless the life around us,
seen and unseen, wild and tame,
the busy insects and soaring birds
the bush creatures
and our furry and feathered friends.

God of generous and scattered abundance,
we pray for humankind.
bless the people of every place and race, the
hungry and the haughty,
the sick and the scared,
the lost and the longing,
the strong and the shy,
the birthing and the dying.

God of generous and scattered abundance,
we pray for the cosmos,
knowing that you dwell in the stardust within us
and above us.
Bless the universe.
Lift our eyes to the beauty
and wonder of your presence.
Bless our living, that in our living,
we might sow your seeds of love
generously and abundantly,
wherever we are.

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We bring all prayer, together in
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

How about you ring somebody you haven't
spoken to for a while this week?

Offering

In gratitude we share with others. Take our gifts
and our offerings, our time and our money, and
help us to bring your Kingdom values to the
here and now of our world.

Notices

If you'd like to join worship "On-Line" you can
access worship from St John's Cowes here:

<https://www.facebook.com/St-Johns-Uniting-Church-828979940479969/>

The Gippsland Presbytery have resources here
<https://gippsland.unitingchurch.org.au>

Hymn: Let all creation dance TiS 187

Let all creation dance
in energies sublime,
as order turns with chance,
unfolding space and time,
for nature's art
in glory grows,
and newly shows
God's mind and heart.

God's breath each force unfurls,
igniting from a spark
expanding starry swirls,
with whirlpools dense and dark.
Though moon and sun
seem mindless things,
each orbit sings:
"Your will be done."

Our own amazing earth,
with sunlight, cloud and storms
and life's abundant growth
in lovely shapes and forms,
is made for praise,
a fragile whole,
and from its soul
heaven's music plays.

Lift heart and soul and voice:
in Christ all praises meet
and nature shall rejoice
as all is made complete.
In hope be strong,
all life befriend
and kindly tend
creation's song.

²Brian Wren





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Blessing

Your days are in God's hands. The Spirit of God dwells in you. Rest in the knowledge and confidence that God cares for you more than you can even imagine. Abide in hope.

Then go into life to share that knowledge and confidence with all you meet.

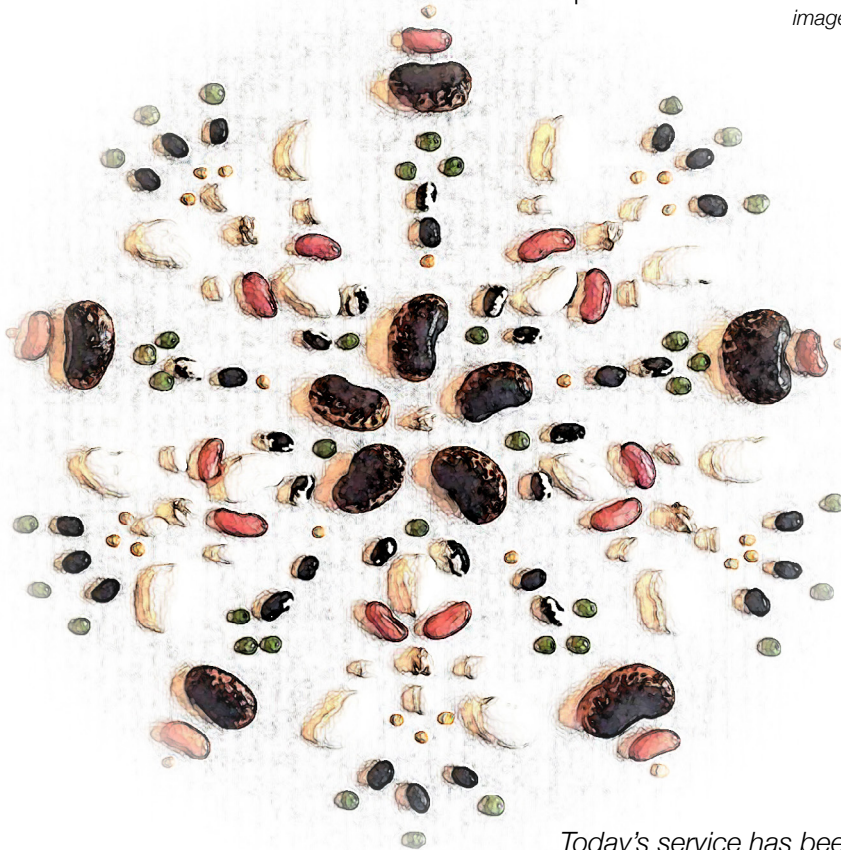
Go in peace, to love and to serve.

Seed shapes

You might like to take some time to make your seeds or pulses into a mandala, enjoying the size and uniqueness of each piece, before you put them into your soup or stew.

A mandala is a geometric arrangement of symbols. In many spiritual traditions, mandalas are used to focus attention. They are used as a spiritual guidance tool, for establishing a sacred space and as an aid to meditation.

image: Instagram post by flora.forager



Today's service has been prepared by Rev. Jennie Gordon, Rev. Ian Turnnidge (Reflection), Rev. Dcn. Wendy Elson.

Shearwater Congregations: Toora: Fish Creek: Foster: Tarwin Lower: Inverloch: Wonthaggi: Phillip Island: Uniting Church in Australia

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