



Gathering & Lighting the Candle

Let where you are be a quiet space; a pew, a couch, a kitchen chair... cherish this time of stillness and offer it to God in gratitude and hope. Bring a bowl of water with you to your worship space.

We light the candle. Christ is with us, the light of the world shines in the darkness.

Call to worship

Come, children of God,
to the riverbank
of wonder,
bring nothing
but your whole self
and wade deeply
into the water.

Come, Spirit of life,
break through
the thin walls
between
heaven and earth
and descend on us
with blessing,
now, and at all times. Amen.

Acknowledging



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress*

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we gather, in Gippsland this is the Bunurong, the Boon Wurrung and the Gunnai Kurnai people. We pay respects to elders past, present and emerging and commit ourselves to truth-telling, justice and walking together as First and Second Peoples.

Singing - Morning has broken TIS 156

Morning has broken
Like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken
Like the first bird.
Praise for the singing!
Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing
Fresh from the Word!

Sweet the rain's new fall
Sunlit from heaven,
Like the first dewfall
On the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness
Of the wet garden,
Sprung in completeness
Where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight!
Mine is the morning
Born of the one light
Eden saw play!
Praise with elation,
Praise ev'ry morning,
God's recreation
Of the new day!

*Words: Eleanor Farjeon, Music: Gaelic melody
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Prayer

based on Psalm 29.
Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name;
worship the LORD in holy splendour.

**God of the heavens and the earth,
we lift our humble lives in praise to you.
Your glory is beyond our knowing,
your power surpasses our understanding.**
You are the ultimate magnificence.

The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders, the LORD,
over mighty waters.

... Prayer continues

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Prayer continued...

The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

**Above the bellowing of the oceans,
your voice rings out,
speaking life amidst the chaos,
singing love into the abyss,
whispering the living Word into the world.**

May the LORD give strength to his people!
May the LORD bless his people with peace!

**Give us the strength to dare to dwell
in the rushing river of life
knowing that you hold us steady
even when we are wonky or afraid.**

(time for quiet reflection on those things that keep
us from trusting in the steadfastness of God)

God of beginnings,
help us, where we need it, to begin again.

**Make us new,
wash away what has come between us,
restore us to the rhythm of your heartbeat,
to the tune of your universal song,
so our lives might sing with peace,
for all the earth,
May it be so, Amen.**

Listening

Read: Genesis 1:1-5
Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

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

Reflecting - Rev. Arnie Wierenga

Most summer mornings as the sunrise offers
warmth to our skin, Jennie and I walk the beach
with the dogs and take a dip in the ocean. Every
day it is magnificent. Every day the light, sand,
water, and many other things vary. Every day
inspires delight, awe and gratitude.

There is comfort in the rhythm of days as echoed
in the first verses of Genesis. From a sense of
nothing or void comes the magnificence of light –
and it was good! Day and night begin a timeless
pattern, a reminder every day of the presence of
God.

These past few weeks I have been thinking about
the year that was, 2020. A year ago, there were
bushfires across vast areas of Gippsland and
beyond. And we had no idea what was to follow!

Our Scripture readings this week are split
between the awe and power of the natural world
and a more personal readying for the awe and
power of God in the shape of the Holy Spirit. Both
seem important as we farewell 2020 and hope for
something to sustain us. Those early morning
walks have been life amidst chaos, balm for the
soul amidst the storm. At times we have walked in
both physical and emotional storms, yet
marvelling with delight, awe and gratitude with a
sense of God with us through it all.

2020 may be described as a year of absence –
absence of clean air to breathe (bushfire smoke
and pandemic), absence of family (meals
together, celebrating weddings, grieving losses,
conversations, hugs), absence of freedoms we
took for granted... I wonder if there are learnings
from these.

I feel the readings offer food as we emerge from
the void, or strength within the storms of life. The
Psalmist (29) records the voice of God in the
great storm. Despite the powers raging, God
remains near and speaks seven times. If I were to
write a psalm like it, it would speak of God's
presence in the raging southerly winds that cut
deep with winter chill on the beach at home, yet
still inspires delight, awe and gratitude as each
day dawns. John O'Donohue offers: 'may you
know that absence is alive with hidden presence,
that nothing is ever lost or forgotten.' (Benedictus:
a book of Blessings, Bantam Press, 2007).

... Reflection Continues

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Reflection continued ...

I wonder if absence can be a friend, something important to our faith? John the baptiser emerges from the void to call folk to repentance (metanoia in Greek). While that might have elements of sorrow and regret, it fundamentally means reorienting ourselves to God. To repent we need to be absent from whatever gets in the way of giving ourselves fully to God. In John we are offered a path, to give ourselves fully to love, forgiveness, healing, life and God's presence.

Jesus is baptised by John in the waters of the Jordan and as he emerges the Spirit falls upon him. In a moment that echoes the storm, the heavens are torn open and the voice of God is heard once more. "You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased." If we have seen a hint of God in creation, if we have encountered God in the storm, then this offers deeper fulfilment. John has prepared and pointed the way as have others before him. God is with us. God is with us in Jesus, who we will call the Christ. And in him we find the Spirit of God and are offered that same Spirit.

And so begins Jesus' ministry, and we accompany him in the coming weeks of worship to explore life, faith and mission as his disciples. And so begins a new year for us, where we are not immune from storms or absence, but instead find reminders that the Spirit of God is with us in orienting ourselves fully to Jesus.

Responding:

Prayers for World and Community

Use the water bowl for this prayer

Spirit of God who rested on Jesus,
rest now on those who are hurting:
people burdened with memories on the
anniversary of last year's bushfire, struggling to
rebuild lives and homes and communities,
(dip your fingers in the water as blessing)

anyone who has begun this year in the dark
depths of depression or loneliness,
(dip your fingers in the water as blessing)

people who have lost family and friends and are
finding it hard to hold their absence,
(dip your fingers in the water as blessing)

those in prison, incarcerated by the law, locked in
the destructive confines of their situation or held
hostage by fear,
(dip your fingers in the water as blessing)

people waiting for a diagnosis, or a treatment, or
for death, and those who live alongside them,
(dip your fingers in the water as blessing)

God who spoke the word and birthed all that is
good, let your song fall gently on those we hold in
our hearts, inviting them to find their place in your
holy, healing, creative dance of the Trinity,
(time of quiet)

as we pray this prayer together:

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.

... prayer continues

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Prayer continued ...

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 offer what we have, so that the work of the
Living Word, through the church, might be made
fruitful in our world. Bless these gifts that they
may be a blessing. Amen.

Notices

The Presbytery of Gippsland is bursting with
holidaymakers at this time of year. What does
your church offer? Do you have a welcoming and
safe space?

Singing- On Jordan's bank TIS 270

On Jordan's bank, the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh;
come then, and harken for he brings
glad tidings from the King of kings.

Then cleansed be every heart from sin;
make straight the way for God within;
prepare we in our hearts a home
where such a mighty guest may come.

For you are our salvation, Lord;
our refuge and our great reward;
without your grace we waste away
like flowers that wither and decay.

To heal the sick, stretch out your hand,
and bid the fallen sinner stand;
shine forth, and let your light restore
earth's own true loveliness once more.

To him who left the throne of heaven
to free us all, let praise be given;
and praise be to the Father done,
and Holy Spirit, Three in One.

words: Charles Coffin 1676-1749
melody: from a 1690 German chorale
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Blessing - sung TIS 253

**O Lord Jesus Marrkapmirr,
All the power belongs to you.
Hold me by this power, O Lord,
You alone are king.**

**Now we praise you for your Word,
Living, true, and full of light.
Yours the hands that rest on me:
Hold me for all time.**

Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land
versified by D'Arcy Wood
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