

Welcome

Welcome, welcome... it's great that you are here, whoever you are and wherever you are. Here we pause from what we've been doing day to day. Here we still our minds and calm our thoughts. Here we come to listen, to pray and to spend time dwelling with the Spirit who joins us as one. Come, let's worship God together.

Light Your Candle



watch the wick catch
and dance with life

feel that life within you

Call to Worship

God of outrageous abundance,
you delight when we sit still
and open ourselves to your presence.
May the words that we read,
the thoughts of our hearts
and the stirring of our souls
plant seeds of your life in our lives.
Help us to grow towards the light
with prolific and generous fruitfulness
to bless the world
and to bring us life in Jesus' name, Amen.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the First Peoples of this land, and in particular the Bunurong and Boon Wurrung peoples. We pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging. We commit ourselves to truth-telling and to the seeking of reconciliation, justice and peace for all people.



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

Hymn: God sends us the spirit TIS 412

God sends us his Spirit to befriend and help us,
recreate and guide us, Spirit friend:
Spirit who enlivens, sanctifies, enlightens,
sets us free, is now our Spirit friend.
Spirit of our Father, Spirit friend,
Spirit of our Jesus, Spirit friend,
Spirit of God's people, Spirit friend.

Darkened roads are clearer, heavy burdens lighter
when we're walking with our Spirit friend:
now we need not fear the powers of the darkness:
none can overcome our Spirit friend.
Spirit of our Father, Spirit friend,
Spirit of our Jesus, Spirit friend,
Spirit of God's people, Spirit friend.

Now we are God's people, bonded by his presence,
agents of his purpose, Spirit friend:
lead us forward ever, slipping backward never,
to your remade world, our Spirit friend.
Spirit of our Father, Spirit friend,
Spirit of our Jesus, Spirit friend,
Spirit of God's people, Spirit friend.

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Opening prayer and prayer of confession

God of sowing and harvesting,
we remember with thankfulness
your steadfast people who have planted
seeds of love, faith and action in our souls.

We remember the teachers, leaders,
writers, artists, poets, preachers,
activists, family, friends
and accidental companions
who have offered seeds of wisdom
and nurtured our growth with
compassion, stern words and tender care.

Thank you for loving us into life,

for teaching us with strange tales of hope,
and for expecting no less from us
as we scatter your seeds
of justice and peace.

But for all your abundance
we often still choose to operate
out of our own meagre means.
Instead of randomly sowing seeds of
forgiveness, hope and healing,
we find ourselves
propagating rumours of love's scarcity,
holding fearfully tight to what is 'ours'
and putting limits on our will
to work kindly, for you.

Forgive us such foolishness.
Open us again, like a flower to the sun
ready to receive, to grow and to give
that all might have life, full and abundant.
May it be so. Amen.

Words of affirmation

Friends in Christ, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. Nothing we do, or say, or don't do, or don't say, will stop God from casting seeds of love our way. Know this: you are loved, blessed and forgiven, now and always. Thanks be to God, Amen.

The Readings

Your word is a lamp
to our feet
And a light to our path

Romans 8:1-11
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

For these words of Faith and
Jesus the Word

**Thanks
be to God.**



Reflection Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

When I grow up I want to beI want to be kind! I read this sentiment in a beautiful new book called "The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse" (Charlie Mackesy), my new favourite book. "Nothing beats kindness," said the horse. "It sits quietly beyond all things."

I think we can say that mission is all about kindness. Nations have been evangelised using this principle alone (such as St Aidan and Hilda practiced)! "Hospitality is a way of life that is due for a comeback. It is the smile that greets friend and stranger. It is the warm embrace, and the welcome of each person as a gift from God".[i]

What does it mean to sow God's Word, to be at mission? I think that this parable is not about some narrow view that only says, Be Good Soil or even that what we do will have mixed results. While it does say this, restricting the message in the text to this, neglects whole other aspects of it. The sower threw the seed far and wide. This doesn't appear to be good farming practice. Why throw it on rocky or unfertile ground? It seems to me to suggest abundance and generosity, even risk and vulnerability. Gardening and farming are such risky practices. So why sow near thorny weeds or where the heat of the day may burn the seed? Even if we take great care where we sow there is no assurance that it will grow, let alone provide an abundant crop. If the seed in the parable is the Word of God, the Romans passage shows us what the seed we cast looks like. At its heart, the Lectionary offers an invitation to us to open ourselves to God's Spirit, to receive God's Word and to embrace the abundant and generous life that God offers in a spirit of welcome and kindness. The Romans passage says we live our lives in

love, which is the Law of God, not in selfishness.

Recently I read a quote from Mother Theresa who believed that many of our world's problems are attributable to us forgetting that "we belong to each other" [ii]. Our pandemic times of socially isolating have taught us some valuable lessons and this is perhaps the most vital.....we are all connected! In a magazine article Hugh Mackay says that the bushfires and the pandemic are "graphic reminders of the urgent need to maintain social harmony", but that this needs to be more than uniting against catastrophic events.[iii] Without an appreciation of the connectedness we share, there will be no peace and no justice. Some lives will matter more than others and equality will be a distant longing. I have heard the definition of sin as the view that we are in some way separate from each other. This perceived separation comes at great cost. God longs for us to be so close to one another that "there exists no daylight between us", we are not just serving one another but we are ONE with each other (and in fact one with all of creation).[iv]



But what do we mean when we say kindness? It is not just some whimsical being nice to everyone. That sort of kindness is a great start. But we can be kind and blind at the same time...and remember we are talking about living unselfishly. We are called first to follow Jesus. There is cost in this. A recent article tells us in no uncertain terms that narrow, privileged theology creates an unjust

society and makes some lives matter more than others, when "being nice is the worst kind of violence".[v] Being nice and following Jesus are not always the same thing. We must be prepared to go the next step and be the advocate, the voice, for those who are not as privileged. We are called to inclusiveness, justice and equality because this is what Jesus stood for and we are called to follow this pattern.

You are set free by the Spirit. Free to live life unchained to selfishness and self-oriented choices, free to live according to the law of Love. Where the Spirit is, there is Freedom. One answer is to create a community of kinship and to stand in a circle of compassion and allow ourselves to imagine no one standing outside it, "moving ourselves closer to the margins so that the margins themselves will be erased".[vi] What might it mean for us to see our churches as a community of kinship, with not one person or created thing outside of it? We stand then for the dignity and value of all, putting ourselves alongside the 'disposable', the demonized, the voiceless and the powerless.

If we are to "give the book a rest" and preach the gospel through living it out, then we need to "live lives of enticing humble beauty"[vii].

Welcoming, Relational God, let our hearts be good soil. Let us take the seed of your love and throw it far and wide. Let us throw open our hearts and live our lives as one with you, with each other and with all of creation. Let us live outrageously and kindly and freely in your Spirit. Let us live kindness which stands quietly beyond all things. Let us throw true and inclusive kindness out to the four winds and allow

your Spirit to do the cultivating. AMEN

- [i] Celtic Spirituality in the Australian Landscape. Ray Simpson and Brent Lyons-Lee page 104
 [ii] See iv
 [iii] Hugh McKay in "What it means to be a neighbour" which is an article in magazine "Dumbo Feather" page 11 in May 2020 edition.
 [iv] Richard Rohr Thursday June 24, 2020 Daily meditations (Centre for Action and Contemplation)
 [v] An article by William H. Lamar called "It's not just the coronavirus..bad theology is killing us". In an online journal "Faith and Leadership" (Duke Divinity).
 [vi] See iv
 [vii] Jarrod McKenna in Julie Perrins book "Tender: Stories that lean into Kindness page 37.

Prayers of the people



***The sower went out to sow.
 May we offer our prayer, generously,
 abundantly, wastefully.***

The prayer of the path, the shallow soil, the rocky ground

Generous God
 We pray for those matters for which we have little hope.
 Forgive us when we have criticised our leaders rather than encouraged them to be better representatives.
 We pray for the opportunities we hoped for, that have been dashed by life.
 Forgive us when we hold to that which never was or could be.
 May our prayers of disappointment and loss take our roots deeper into your abundant love and healing:

lead us to new life and hope.

The prayer of the thorny ground

Generous God
 We pray for those who have given up, or feel that the road to health, or mere endurance in sickness is too much to handle.
 We pray for those for whom life is rough, tough and unrelenting.
 Families or relationships in crisis.
 We pray for our communities in frustration with restrictions and limitations.

May our prayers in the thorny places save us from the lures of easy solution, but rather take us more deeply into your abundant love and healing:
lead us to new life and hope.

The prayer of the good soil

Generous God
 The abundance of the lands and seas have been raped by our greed for comfort and pleasure.
 The plentiful soils have been dissolved in floods, or whipped into winds as dust through land clearing, drought and extreme weather.

May our stewardship with food, water and resources, reflect our commitment to the creation we have been entrusted with. May our care of the Earth lead us more deeply to your love and healing:
lead us to new life and hope.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray:

Life-Giver, Pain-Bearer, Love-Maker.
 Source of all that is and that shall be.
 Father and Mother of us all,
 Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo

through the universe!
 The way of your justice be followed
 by all peoples of the world!
 Your heavenly will be done
 by all created beings!
 Your commonwealth
 of peace and freedom
 sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today,
 feed us.
 In the hurts we absorb from one another,
 forgive us.
 In times of temptation and test,
 strengthen us.
 From trials too great to endure, spare us.
 From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power
 that is love,
 now and forever. Amen.

An Alternative Lord's Prayer from Uniting in Worship II

Offering

May our deeds reflect your Wisdom,
 Oh God.
 May these gifts we bring to share,
 lift the heavy burdens of others.
 May our lives be gifts of Hope and Life in
 the communities we serve.
 What we give, may we also show the
 humility to receive from you.
 In Christ we pray: Amen.

Notices

What have you noticed stirring within you,
 like a seed deep in the soil, as you worship
 God in this time and place? Does someone
 come to mind that you could call, an email
 or a letter to write? Is there a story you
 need to share, a seed to plant, or a
 gesture of kindness you can show without
 knowing what might be growing?

Hymn: We plough the fields TIS 130

We plough the fields and scatter
 the good seed on the land
 but it is fed and watered
 by God's almighty hand;
 he sends the cold in winter
 the warmth to swell the grain
 the breezes and the sunshine
 and soft refreshing rain.

*All good gifts around us
 are sent from heaven above;
 then thank the Lord
 O thank the Lord
 for such abounding love.*

We glorify the maker
 of everything that is
 who gives to us to care for
 the earth the air the seas
 who wills that all the peoples
 might have their daily bread
 that we might share our plenty
 as channels of God's love.
*All good gifts around us
 are sent from heaven above;
 then thank the Lord
 O thank the Lord
 for such abounding love.*

We thank you gracious giver
 of all things bright and good
 the seed-time and the harvest
 our life, our health, our food.
 Help us in our thanksgiving
 to use your gifts with care
 to serve as friends and neighbours
 your children everywhere.
*All good gifts around us
 are sent from heaven above;
 then thank the Lord
 O thank the Lord
 for such abounding love.*

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 version based on Matthias Claudius 1740-1815



Blessing

We have prayed
We have sung praises
We have dwelt in Scripture
We have held others in prayer

Go from here
Having received the blessing of worship
Empowered to hear the Gospel in all you
serve
Brave to invite others into the mystery of
God's life in which we all live
Humble, to come again in prayer through
the week, to rest with the God of Love.

Walk in Love: Rest in Love:
be sustained in Love: God is Your rest.
Thanks be to God; Amen.

