

### Welcome

This is your place of belonging.  
No matter who you are  
or where you are from, come on in.  
Are you fearful... or doubtful? Come on in.  
Shearwater congregations? Come on in.  
Those from far and wide? Come on in.  
Border crossers? Come on in!!!!  
Come in and make yourself at home.....  
We have put the kettle on.

**Light Your Candle...take a second to  
watch as the flame takes life and grows.**



### Call to Worship

We come to remember, to remind ourselves  
of God's promises to us. We come to  
remember God's faithfulness. We come to  
remember what God has done, who God is.  
We come because we are connected and we  
have deep need; to gather and share, even  
from that place we call 'apart'.  
We 'sing' praises to God, for the works of God  
are amazing!  
Come on in.

### Acknowledgement of Country

We give acknowledgement this day to the  
First Peoples of our 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 the seeking of reconciliation.



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander  
Christian Congress*

### Opening Reading Psalm 105

**O give thanks to the Lord, call on His name.  
Make known his deeds among the peoples!**  
Here we are God. We come to share your  
deeds together with one another and to give  
you thanks.

**Sing to him, sing praises to him.  
Tell of his wonderful works.**  
God with us....our hearts sing "Allelujah!"

**Glory in his holy name, let the hearts of  
those who seek the Lord rejoice.**  
Is your heart alive to the deeds of God? Listen  
to the Spirit who longs to show you God alive  
in our world, God calling you, Come!

**Seek the Lord and his strength,  
seek his presence continually.**  
Let go the distractions that cause us to forget  
the things that matter. And just come!

**Remember the wonderful works he has  
done, his miracles,  
and the judgements he has uttered.**  
**PRAISE THE LORD!**

### Opening Hymn TiS 598 Jesus Calls Us!

Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult  
of our life's wild restless sea  
day by day his voice is sounding  
saying, "Christian, follow me":

as, of old, Saint Andrew heard it  
by the Galilean lake,  
turned from home and toil and kindred,  
leaving all for his dear sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship  
of the vain world's golden store,  
from each idol that would keep us  
saying, "Christian, love me more."

In our joys and in our sorrows,  
days of toil and hours of ease,  
still he calls, in cares and pleasures,  
"Christian, love me more than these."

Jesus calls us! By your mercies,  
Saviour, may we hear your call,  
give our hearts to your obedience,  
serve and love you best of all.

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Alexander 1818-95 alt.

### Opening prayer

May your Word be near us O God.  
 May your Word be in our hearts  
 and on our lips.  
 Take us aside and teach us anew.  
 Then send us to share your Good News,  
 to remember your amazing deeds and declare  
 them in our words and in our living.

### Prayer of confession

Do not be afraid. Take heart.  
 We hear your words of assurance.  
 But we are fearful and anxious. We  
 wrestle with old theologies and doctrines  
 that don't work for us anymore. And we  
 wrestle with multiple expectations, our  
 own and other peoples.  
 We relive over and again, all that causes  
 us to sink in the mire of our own  
 insecurity, our own unwillingness to let  
 go  
 and to relinquish.  
 Help us to rest in your promises and rise  
 to new life as we recall your repeated  
 faithfulness to us. Give us the blessing of  
 newness and regeneration we pray.

### Words of affirmation



God calls to you:  
 "Take heart, it is I;  
 be unafraid."  
 God's hand  
 reaches out  
 to you.  
 "Come".

### The Readings

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet  
**And a light unto my path.**

- Romans 10: 5-15
- Matthew 14: 22-33

For these words of faith & Jesus the Word  
**Thanks be to God**

### Reflection - Rev. Ian Turnnidge

There is a fascination with water, the ocean,  
 the place where the water meets the sky.  
 Here at Phillip island we are blessed to see the

water every day: and living along the Bass  
 Coast, none of us are too far from the water's  
 edge. I wonder what the image of *'the water,  
 the ocean, the place where the water meets  
 the sky'* means for you?

So many of my holiday photos are of times at  
 the beach or by the water. A few summers  
 ago, my old flat mate was here with her family  
 for the month of January. Every afternoon at  
 4pm, we met on the beach at Silverleave and  
 watched the water, the wading, and the  
 activities of the holiday makers. An hour or so  
 of looking out to the water. A cool drink,  
 some salty snacks. Endless wonderings of just  
 how far out the tide could possibly go: and  
 why the tide was different today from the tide  
 yesterday. The memories of that Summer still  
 nourish me today: even in this mid-winter:  
 even in these days of social restriction.

One of the patterns the New Testament gives  
 us of Jesus' rhythm was that he was one who  
 would often go to the water side or up a  
 lonely mountain to pray. Jesus was one who  
 valued and made time to go away and pray. I  
 imagine that he was one who prayed with his  
 eyes open, looking out to the horizon from  
 the mountain, or out towards across the  
 waters. Jesus was one who watched, became  
 still and allowed the natural environment to  
 help.

In today's Gospel story Jesus has just  
 encountered some pretty draining  
 experiences. Earlier in the chapter, Jesus has  
 learned of the death of his cousin, John the  
 Baptist in perhaps one of the most horrific  
 and brutal moments in the New Testament.  
 And although he tried to take himself away in  
 a boat, out on the water, to a lonely place:  
 that place between the earth and the sky: he  
 was followed at the shore line, by people who  
 wanted more of him: so we encountered the  
 story of the feeding of the crowd which  
 immediately precedes today's gospel. Clearly  
 Jesus is needing time out and so he makes the  
 disciples get in a boat and go away to the  
 other side so that he may return to the  
 mountain to pray.

In the original Greek that this story is written in, there is some fun here: because the Greek says Jesus **makes** the disciple go: literally 'to throw the disciples in the boat' or 'he made them jump in the boat': this is a forceful action. I wonder if he was at the end of his tether? I wonder if he was exhausted to the point that many parents know all too well... 'LEAVE ME ALONE!'

During this period of time we know as COVID-19, you may have been forced to experience time alone like never before. I think that's a very different kind of 'alone time' than what we might see in this story. However, being alone can be quite challenging, as many of us have experienced. Being alone confronts us with ourselves, and even our construct of who God is, and how comfortable we feel being with God, alone.



Jesus described God as a loving parent: a relationship of unrestricted love: a relationship of life giving restoration. The way Jesus taught his disciples was to relate with God in a relationship of love and trust. God is love: dwell there.

If you have grown up thinking that God is the image of a Judge: or if you think that your salvation is dependent on whether your score card is in the positive, then the invitation to dwell with God might feel terrifying. To dwell in love, fearful of God is not the kind of relationship with God that Jesus imagined. Jesus' image of the loving and forgiving parent God, is the one who runs to greet us and redeem us into full and celebratory relationship again. Think of the Prodigal returning home.

So, where were we in the story? Was that a digression? Perhaps. Or, perhaps it is important to be reminded of the patterns in Jesus' life so that we can better understand

the stories that are told of him. Christian Spirituality always leads us back into life. And life can be like a storm. And that's exactly where the narrative takes us.

So Jesus, nourished by this time of prayer, away up on the mountain, where the land meets the heavens, finds the disciples battling the elements in the waters: a mighty storm: battling against the winds.

This story is full of religious symbolism. There are many echoes in the Old Testament of Yahweh walking over the seas in Psalm 77:19 or in Job 9:8. There are parallels in the history of other religions of walking on water: in the Buddhist text *Jataka* 190, there is a tale of a Buddhist disciple walking on water as he meditates on the Buddha: and who sinks when his mind strays from his meditation.<sup>[1]</sup>

To think in terms of Judeo-Christian symbolism, the sea is a symbol of chaos. The sea, with its terrible dragons and fathomless darkness, is a source of threatening power. And the disciples are in the middle of it. To try to bring the boat ashore would mean risk losing life tossed upon rocks: to remain afloat amidst the tumult is to possibly save their lives: but they are in a battle of life and death. And it is a long night of battling.

Perhaps the writer of the gospel wants us, to see the storm as a reflection of the emotional chaos of John the Baptist's murder?

So here's the thing, Jesus comes to the disciples in their moment of need. In the watches of the night Jesus comes to those he loves, in their moment of distress. And notice that the storm does not quell in this story. Jesus comes in the tumult of the night, at the height of their distress in the continuing storm. Let's cherish that thought for a moment.

And here's another fun thing about the Greek version of the story. The disciples are in a terrible way. The English text says that they are terrified, and seeing Jesus on the water

they say 'it is a ghost!', and they cry out in fear. The Greek is far more revealing: it literally says they 'krazo' - they 'cry the cry of a raven'. Can you hear that cry? It is a cry of fear and terror. A cry of human desperation. This is a moment of ultimate terror upon terror.



And Jesus assures them of his presence in the chaos they are in the midst of. "Take heart", Jesus assures. "It is I: do not be afraid".

Now, you know what happens...

Peter commands Jesus to call him out of the boat to walk with him, in the middle of the terror, on the waters of chaos. What a remarkable turn of events. In our shearwater team discussions, Jennie Gordon noted that it's like Peter sees the calm and control of Jesus and says to himself "I want some of that!" So he steps out of the boat and onto the chaos of the sea and walks towards Jesus. Peter walks on the waters of chaos. And unlike the Buddhist version, Peter begins to lose his footing when he becomes afraid again of the weather around him. And it is then that Jesus saves him. "Everyone who calls upon the name of the lord will be saved." (Rom 10: 13)

Much has been made of this story as a story proving Jesus' divinity. When the writer of Mark's gospel tells this story, the disciples certainly do not conclude that Jesus is God's Son. They remain frightened and confused and their hearts are hardened. The writer of Matthew's gospel tells the story as a focus after the death of John the Baptist.

Jesus goes to the deserted place because John has been killed; John's death is why the crowd goes also; John's death is perhaps why Jesus is gut-wrenched when he sees the crowd; John's death is why Jesus forcefully makes the disciples leave.

John's traumatic killing – a meaningless, purposeless execution by Herod – is one of those events, like BLM (Black Lives Matter), that could trigger the suppressed anger of a crowd and cause an eruption. Jesus instead, withdraws from ministry in this moment to take stock: to allow the horror to find a place of grief. To open trauma to healing. Jesus does not rally the crowd or entice them to gather their pitchforks and torches, or publicly denounce Herod. He invites the disciples to participate in the feeding of a dispirited and hungry crowd, and when they are all fed and satisfied, Jesus forces the disciples to go away.

And then he comes to them across the chaos, with words of peace and assurance: he saves them. One of them makes a leap of faith, falls, but they are all safe and saved. The story reveals Jesus in the midst of the trauma of real life: and finding a place of assurance, regardless of any 'amount' of faith we have. This surely is Good News in this storm of pandemic. In the life-threatening storm in which we find ourselves, Jesus Saves. May it be so. Amen

[1]W.D Davies & Dale C. Allison, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*, T & T Clark, 2004, p. 240.

### Prayers of the people



You may like to pray with one hand outstretched, reaching out like Jesus did to help Peter, when fear overcame him.  
(refrain - Taize chant)

**Don't be afraid, my love is stronger,  
my love is stronger than your fear.  
don't be afraid, my love is stronger,  
and I have promised,  
promised to be always near**

Oh God, there is so much hurt and fear in our world at this time.  
So we take these moments,  
sitting quietly in your presence

and we bring these things before you  
reaching out our hand,  
as Jesus did for Peter, as we ask for your  
rescue and blessing.

We reach out our hand to the dying  
to those suffering from COVID-19,  
and other illnesses and trauma  
of the mind and the body,  
in places where healthcare is good  
and in places where it is poor.  
Rescue them from fear,  
bless them with love and peace  
as we sing your words for them:  
*(refrain)*

We reach out our hand to the grieving;  
lost lives, lost loved ones,  
lost jobs, lost dreams.  
Rescue them from despair,  
bless them with comfort in the pain  
and hope for the days ahead  
as we sing your words for them:  
*(refrain)*

We reach out our hand to the leaders  
of communities, nations and the world,  
making hard decisions,  
affecting many lives.  
Rescue them from self interest,  
bless them with courage and compassion  
and a sense of our shared humanity,  
as we sing your words for them:  
*(refrain)*

We reach out our hand to the healers  
working with and without  
adequate protective equipment,  
and safe and secure workplaces.  
Rescue them from fatigue and disease,  
bless them with confidence in their care,  
kindness in their touch  
and rest when the work is done,  
as we sing your words for them:  
*(refrain)*

We reach out our hand to each other,  
to strangers, to our friends and family,  
those we can sit with in our homes  
and those whose faces

appear only on our screens, or in our minds.  
Rescue them from unnecessary anxiety  
and the struggle of separation  
and loneliness in the ache for an embrace,  
as we sing your words for them:  
*(refrain)*

We reach out our hand  
and wrap it around ourselves.  
Rescue us from whatever billowing wave  
threatens to overcome us,  
and stops us from walking towards you.  
Bless us with the power to overcome fear  
and the audacity to step out of the boat  
whenever you call  
as we sing your  
words for us:  
*(refrain)*



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.

**Offering**

What do you have to offer? Might it be  
calmness in the midst of someone else's  
storm? Might it be words of encouragement  
to step out in faith? Might it be offering space  
and time for someone to find solace in their  
suffering? Whatever comes to mind, make it  
your offering, and give it with a glad and open  
heart, in Jesus' name.

**Hymn TiS 674 Inspired by love and anger**

Inspired by love and anger,  
disturbed by need and pain,  
informed of God's own bias,  
we ask him once again:  
'How long must some folk suffer?  
How long can few folk mind?  
How long dare vain self-interest  
turn prayer and pity blind?'

From those for ever victims  
of heartless human greed  
their cruel plight composes  
a litany of need:  
'Where are the fruits of justice?  
Where are the signs of peace?  
When is the day when prisoners  
and dreams find their release?'

From those for ever shackled  
to what their wealth can buy  
the fear of lost advantage  
provokes the bitter cry:  
'Don't query our position!  
Don't criticise our wealth!  
Don't mention those exploited  
by politics and stealth!'

To God, who through the prophets  
proclaimed a different age,  
we offer earth's indifference,  
its agony and rage:  
'When will the wronged be righted?  
When will the kingdom come?  
When will the world be generous  
to all instead of some?'

God asks, 'Who will go for me?  
Who will extend my reach?  
And who, when few will listen  
will prophesy and preach?  
And who, when few bid welcome,  
will offer all they know?  
And who, when few dare follow,  
will walk the road I show?'

Amused in someone's kitchen,

asleep in someone's boat,  
attuned to what the ancients  
exposed, proclaimed and wrote  
a saviour without safety,  
a tradesman without tools,  
has come to tip the balance  
with fishermen and fools.

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John L. Bell 1949- and Graham Maule 1958-



**Blessing**

Remember God's blessings in your life!  
All manner of things shall be well.  
Loved and blessed and reassured.  
Be not afraid. Jesus calls you.  
Come. Just come.

