

**Welcome**

As we come to worship at home this week, it might be refreshing to choose a new place in your home to worship.

- It could be as simple as choosing to sit on the other side of the table,
- or to move your chair to a different window to look out from.

Make your new place an opportunity to keep our perspective fresh: and to do little things like this, that can help to keep us awake, alert to God, and refreshed in our very being.

**Light Your Candle**



**Call to Worship**

We gather in the safety of our homes

**For salvation is nearer to us now,  
than when we first became believers.**

We gather apart, together,  
for the safety of all people

**For salvation is nearer to us now,  
than when we first became believers.**

When two or three gather,  
even apart or online, in Jesus name

**Our salvation is nearer  
than when we first believed.**

**Acknowledgement of Country**

On this land since time immemorial the First Peoples have cared for the land. We pay our respects to them: their Elders past & present, and those emerging, as we seek to learn, and grow together and First and Second peoples.



**Hymn** Jesus calls us here to meet him  
Together in Song 477

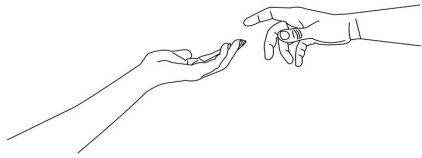
Jesus calls us here to meet him  
as, through word and song and prayer,  
we affirm God's promised presence  
where his people live and care.  
Praise the God who keeps his promise;  
praise the Son who calls us friends;  
praise the Spirit who among us,  
to our hopes and fears attends.

Jesus calls us to confess him  
Word of Life and Lord of All,  
sharer of our flesh and frailness  
saving all who fail or fall.  
Tell his holy human story;  
tell his tales that all may hear;  
tell the world that Christ in glory  
came to earth to meet us here.

Jesus calls us to each other:  
found in him are no divides.  
Race and class and sex and language  
such are barriers he derides.  
Join the hand of friend and stranger;  
join the hands of age and youth;  
join the faithful and the doubter  
in their common search for truth.

Jesus calls us to his table  
rooted firm in time and space,  
where the church in earth and heaven  
finds a common meeting place.  
Share the bread and wine, his body;  
share the love of which we sing;  
share the feast for saints and sinners  
hosted by our Lord and King.

*John L. Bell 1949- & Graham Maule 1958- by  
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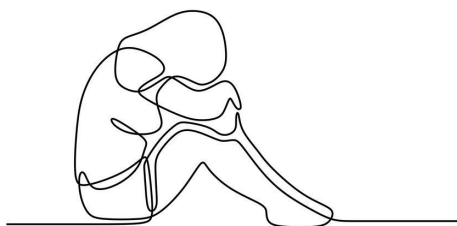
### Opening Prayer

We are learning to love  
We are learning to love and practicing forgiveness  
We are learning to love, exercise forgiveness, and living in Grace  
May our time in prayer, The Word, in song and reflection,  
Deepen our relationship with You,  
Our Redeemer  
Awaken our relating with You,  
Our Sustainer,  
Refresh our devotion with You,  
Source of our very Being

### Prayer of confession

And so, confident of God's love for us all in Jesus Christ,  
We make our confession, and say to God the things that need saying:

*<a pause for reflection and prayer>*



The Night is gone, the Day is near.  
Love does no wrong to a neighbour;  
Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the Law.

Sin is forgiven: **Thanks be to God.**

### Share a Psalm: from Psalm 149

Alleluia. O sing to the Lord a new song;  
**sing his praise in the congregation  
of the faithful.**

Let Israel rejoice in their maker;  
**let the children of Zion be joyful  
in their king.**

Let them praise his name in the dance;  
**let them sing praise to him  
with timbrel and lyre.**

For the Lord has pleasure in his people  
**and adorns the poor with salvation.**

Let the faithful be joyful in glory;  
**let them rejoice in their ranks,**



### The Readings

- Romans 13: 8-13
- Matthew 18: 15-20

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

### Reflection: Rev. Jennie Gordon

These are not easy times, and it would be great to have a guidebook, a manual about how to navigate them. Unfortunately, we don't have a specific handbook on how to cope with a global pandemic on top of a summer of horrendous fires (and the rest). Instead we look to scripture, to prayer, to the wisdom and comfort of others and to inspiration from the Holy Spirit to guide us in the right path. The reading from Matthew's gospel today gives us direction

about using good processes and relying on the collective wisdom of the community to resolve disputes when more private consultation has been unsuccessful. There's a sting in the tail of that advice and we'll come to that in a minute.

There was a fair bit of argy-bargy going on in the early Christian and wider Jewish community when the gospel of Matthew was written. The gospel was probably written somewhere around 80-90 CE, after the gospel of Mark, as it draws on some of Mark's writings. It was fifty or more years after Jesus' death and resurrection and was written for a community of Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, a second generation from the earliest gatherings of Christian community. They were not easy times. The siege of Jerusalem in 70CE when the Roman general Titus breached the walls and destroyed the Second Temple happened in the midst of the first Jewish-Roman war. This community was still part of the larger Jewish community, and there was conflict around the Jewish-Christian belief that Jesus was the awaited Messiah with divine authority to interpret the law.

When we read the passage and stay with it, we can hear an echo of the Jewish culture of the time. Here's the sting in the tail: if the person will not hear, expel them as if they are a Gentile or a Tax Collector. If we don't read this text in the context of that community it can be mightily confusing, after all, these were the very people that Jesus chose to hang around with. Mike Mineter, from the Iona Community writes; "We see in Acts and the Epistles how the early Church had difficulties reconciling their Judaism with the experience that the Spirit was also given to all people."<sup>[1]</sup>

Understanding this Jewish-Christian context allows us to hear and heed the advice in the reading this week about navigating disputes in a way that speaks to us of justice and compassion, without getting lost in the final part of it, the expelling of the unrepentant.

When we have an issue with someone because they have hurt us, usually the best and sometimes the hardest thing to do is to tell them. Sometimes it's not safe to do that, for us or for others, and that's when we need support, but it's still important that the story is told, and that people hear about the consequences of their actions. Flipping that around, if we have hurt someone, directly or indirectly, we need to be able to hear how that impacts on others. The text says nothing about compensation or punishment, it simply talks about the sharing of the story face to face, about listening, and the restoration that can come as a result.



In the text from Roman's this week we hear another clear directive about our relationships and responsibilities towards each other. Verse 8 says: "*Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.*" If we hold those two texts together, we might hear that in order to love each other we need to be honest with each other and share our stories of hurt and pain as well as stories of connection and delight. There are echoes of Jewish law and

custom in the Romans reading too. What an amazing thought it is, that we should not owe anything to anyone, except love.

Think about that for a moment.

Love is the only debt we owe to anyone.

Love fulfils the law.

Love one another.

There it is. That's our guide, our handbook, our manual for these strange and troubled times. It's as simple and as difficult as that. Love one another, even when we've hurt each other, even when the stories are hard to tell and hard to hear, even when we don't know what's ahead, or around the corner or when we can physically gather in communities once more. Love one another.

*"In his commentary on Galatians 6:10, the church father Jerome describes how John the evangelist, author of the gospel and book of Revelation, preached at Ephesus into his nineties. Christian tradition holds that he died in about the year 100 CE.*

*At that age, John was so feeble that he had to be carried into the church at Ephesus on a stretcher. Then, when he could no longer preach a normal sermon, he would lean up on one elbow. The only thing he said was, "Little children, love one another." People would then carry him back out of the church.*

*This continued for weeks, says Jerome. And every week he repeated his one-sentence sermon: "Little children, love one another."*

*Weary of the repetition, the congregation finally asked, "Master, why do you always say this?"*

*"Because," John replied, "it is the Lord's command, and if this only is done, it is enough."<sup>[2]</sup>*

May it be so, Amen.

<sup>[1]</sup> Mike Mineter, [https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/68742/6-September-Creation-Time-14-Sunday-After-Pentecost.pdf](https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/68742/6-September-Creation-Time-14-Sunday-After-Pentecost.pdf)

<sup>[2]</sup> Our Unpaid Debt By Dan Clendenin. 03 September 2017. <https://www.journeywithjesus.net/essays/1491-our-unpaid-debt>



### Prayers of the people

(using Exodus 12 v 1-14)

The church is not an institution so much as it is a gathering, a movement, of those who love God and one another. We are connected and interdependent, we are community. Despite divisions and disagreements, even conflict, we are committed to healing and the reconciliation of all of creation. We move together and hold one another in profound commitment to one another. Take a moment to just hold those you know who need our prayers.

**"This month shall mark for you the beginning of months" ...The first day of the rest of your lives.**

Just like Esther in the Bible, perhaps we were born for such a time as this, called to be your people right here and now. Show us what is ours to do. And give us the

strength and the courage to move toward an unknown future.

**Hurry, hurry we have work to do!**

Apathy is our enemy. There are people around us who feel unheeded and unnoticed. People here who are lonely and afraid. Time matters. Make us responsive and ready. Help us to listen and heed your call.

**Who is our closest neighbours to join with so we can all have full provisions?**

Our only debt is love. Love unbounded and unhindered. Love that puts others first. These neighbours, they are ours to love, ours to cherish. This love builds our communities and makes life different. Give us love, abundant love which shares itself into all the cracks and crevices.

**Don't keep your leftovers!**

There is enough for everyone, your earth provides for all our needs. Yet there are some who are hungry, some are homeless, and people are hurting. Let us share our bounty, radically, hospitably, in outrageous welcome.

**Eat up quick, no time to spare.**

We wonder sometimes what we are waiting for. A better time perhaps? More energy? More goodwill? Wake us up from our sleep! Every tiny gift we offer adds value. You have given us all we need for the journey and our hearts are thankful.

**Let's sing a new song.**

Some are sick, some are sorrowing. We have a new song, there is hope. Hope lights

the way through the wilderness, the wilderness of struggle and of fear. The Lord is with us, walks beside us, leads us, goes before us and behind us.

**Praise the Lord all creation. Every being praise the Lord.**

We look around and know your love and faithfulness to us and to all generations. Creation declares your presence with us. History shows us your trustworthiness.

**All things praise you, thanks and praise be to God.**

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**

Passing the Peace is a daily thing  
So, text somebody now if you have a mobile phone: and ring somebody later today to share the Peace of Christ.



**Offering**

We bring to the table our offering.  
These resources we share:  
So that all may share the  
Good News of Jesus Christ

*(Be in touch with your church treasurer this week to find out how gift may be received)*

**Notices**

As we have moved into the season of Spring!

Let's make sure we are spending a little time watching the blooming and New Life! And then, ring somebody in your congregation to tell them what you saw.



If you'd like to join worship "On-Line" you can access Shearwater worship Live from St John's Uniting Church, Cowes here: <http://cowes.unitingchurch.org.au/index.php>

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



**Hymn TIS 650 Brother Sister *SERVANT SONG***

Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey  
and companions on the road;  
we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you  
in the night-time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you  
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;  
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow  
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven  
we shall find such harmony,  
born of all we've known together  
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

*Used with Permission CCLI 241 739 Richard Gillard 1953- by permission Integrity Music (Aust) SERVANT SONG*

**Blessing**

For salvation is nearer  
than when we first believed:  
God is with us  
Jesus Christ leads us  
The Holy Spirit of Life sustains us all.  
Live the Grace you have received  
Share the love you have in Christ  
To everyone you meet and know  
This day and every day. Amen.