

Welcome

The Word goes out!
Welcome one, welcome all.
Come in....take your shoes off
and settle in.
But be prepared. This is Holy Ground.

Light Your Candle



Do you have a pair of socks (clean ones)?
Put them on your worship table.
They remind us that we gather
from near and far.
But in our togetherness,
we acknowledge that this is holy ground.
Holy
Ground.

Acknowledgement of Country

We give acknowledgement this day to the First Peoples of this land, this holy ground, 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.



Call to Worship

Who is this God we come here to meet?
Who is it that calls us to worship?
God invites us into this mystery of love.

Here is Holy Ground where God is made known, God is revealed. Come and listen. Come and taste. Come and be known. Come and be sent.

Opening Reading or Collect

God calls us as God called Moses. We are just as imperfect as he was but God has a call for us. This is a place to listen, to be surprised by God, to hear God, to know God.

Read Exodus 3 v 1-15

As you read, hold the socks.
Hold the space. You are on holy ground.

Opening Hymn TIS 143 Immortal Invisible

Immortal invisible God only wise,
in light inaccessible
hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious,
the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious,
your great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting,
but ruling in might;
your justice like mountains
high soaring above
your clouds which are fountains
of goodness and love.

You give life to all, Lord,
to both great and small,
in all life now living,
the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish
as leaves on a tree,
then wither: but ever
unchanged you will be.

Great Father of glory,
pure Father of light,
your angels adore you,
all veiling their sight;
of all your rich graces this grace,
Lord impart -
take the veil from our faces,
the veil from our heart.

All praise we would render:
reveal to our sight
what hides you is only
the splendour of light;
and so let your glory,
Almighty, impart,
through Christ in the story,
your Christ to the heart.

*TIS 143 Used with Permission CCLI 241 739 Walter
Chalmers Smith 1824-1908 alt.*

Opening prayer

You entrust us with your message and we are overwhelmed by your trust in us, scary though the responsibility is. Help us to have the courage and trust in you to learn your ways and your Word of love for a hurting world. As we gather we ask for your nurture and your strength. Our cross can sometimes be heavy and all consuming. We seek nourishment for the journey. Renew us O God we pray. Help us to let go of our busyness and the things in which we get caught up. Let us deeply meditate on you and on your call on our lives. Uncover in us, the gifts you would have us use to discover life, and to share life and freedom with others.

May it be so.

Prayer of confession

We admit to being overwhelmed by the task you give us. We find so many excuses and ask you to send someone else.

Sometimes we don't hold tight to the pattern to which you call us. Our hearts harden and we forget compassion and hospitality in favour of everyone for themselves!

Soften us, warm our hearts, remind us of your grace.

Breathe your warmth into our hearts and whisper your love in our ear.

Remember.....

God never lets us go. God's grace calls us back over and again. You are beloved.

The Readings

- Romans 12: 9-21
- Matthew 16: 21-28

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

Reflection

Rev. Ian Turnidge

- How do you save your life?
- How do you find life?
- Where is life to be found?

I watch *Escape to the Country*. OK, it's my Friday night TV indulgence, where I watch wealthy people who want to 'downsize' from a city life to rural living in picturesque places in the English countryside. I realise that I'm watching rich people make decisions about where they want to live! I realise that the kinds of properties they are considering are never going to be (nor do I want them to be) options for my own life. And I realise there is an aspect to this which is really quite obscene. Some nights I do shout at the entitlement of people: who 'downsize' into a 6 bedroom (all with ensuite) 3 entertainment zones loft conversion with room for a pony! And I yell at those who reject a perfectly amazing house, because the kitchen needs different door knobs.



- How do you save your life?
- How do you find life?
- Where is life to be found?

These days of social restriction have been quite difficult for people who love to travel: and have the resources to travel. There is frustration about not being able to go where you want to, when you want to. For many, their world has become very small, especially in their imaginations. Part of keeping ourselves mentally well during these days is to become aware of what frustrations are brewing within us. For example, I am aware of this frustration within myself: and yet I'm not one to travel very much and had no plans at all to go anywhere this year, even locally. Yet, I feel curtailed at what is possible in our world. I want to visit some people in Sale and over at Korumburra, and I know that it's possible: but I also know it's not in the spirit of what our current social health plans are just now. As I write this metropolitan Melbourne is in stage 4 lockdown with a curfew, the rest of the state is in stage 3 and the Covid-19 numbers are alarming.

“For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

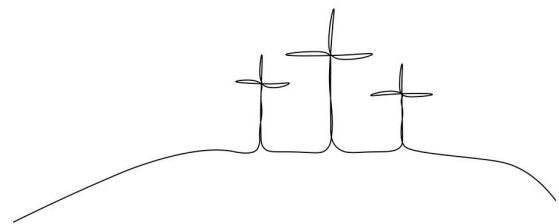
For anything that is difficult in life, we all seem to choose the path of least resistance. We all tend to try to avoid the difficult things. Who wouldn't? We all do. It's probably the only rational, healthy thing that we can do. Our newspapers and news feeds are full of stories of terrible things that happen to people like you and me. Leigh Sales outstanding book *“Any Ordinary Day”* follows the stories of everyday people, whose lives became the spotlight of national media attention because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Think of Stuart Diver at

Thredbo, or the people caught in the cafe in Sydney's Lindt Café siege. Leigh shares stories of the lives of people like you and me who lose the life that they had and are somehow, as we all are, asked to live a 'new normal.'

- How do you save your life?
- How do you find life?
- Where is life to be found?

“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

We all want to avoid adversity: and even the disciples want to save Jesus from this kind of talk that suggests that even Jesus might find himself facing great suffering and even his own death. I'm with Peter: “God forbid it, LORD! This must never happen to you.” I'd pray that for everyone I know, for the church I love, the country I owe my wellbeing to.



And yet, we face life as we face death. To celebrate life is to live it in the face of the redeeming Grace of God in Christ. To live is to live through Good Friday: to live is to live with Easter Sunday. To live is to carry both truths: God is as present in our living as God is in our dying.

Perhaps that's why, for so many of us who follow Jesus, the pattern of our lives

doesn't include lifestyles like that on "Escape to the Country". The decisions we make about where we want to live include considerations for the community we will enter and the implications on connections to family and friends. The choices we make about how we live, reflect that we are aware of our 1st world life and the need for all people in the world to have a fair share. After all, just how many toilets does a house need to be functional?

"For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life."

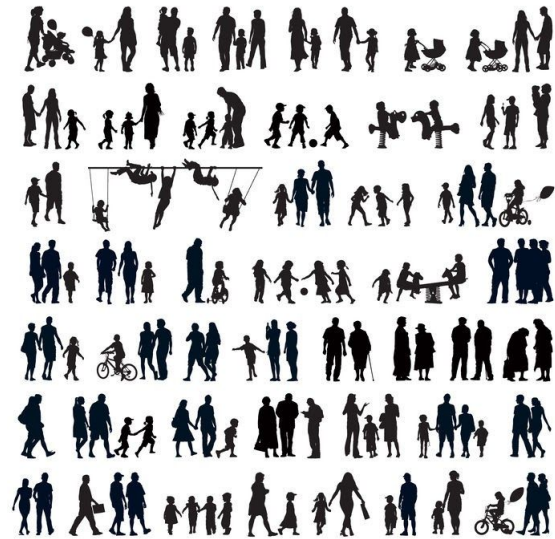
The Christian faith encourages us to find life in seeking what's good in life: love. And encourages us to practice that, even in the circumstances where it's difficult. We can't avoid the difficult stuff in life. Our discipleship reminds us that we can work on how we respond to matters: it encourages us to focus on the good rather than the bad. To keep trying to love, seeking peaceful relationships, caring for one another, even the stranger in our midst. Feed your enemies: give them water. Build responses of love to challenge. Resist evil. NO, overcome evil with good.

And somehow in these actions, in these ways of learning to think and behave, we find life.

And perhaps that life of learning to love is what we're here for?

I want to add one more thing to this reflection: and it's really just to make sure that any of you who may be listening to or reading this message, but your life finds you frightened, scared and fearing your own safety. In hearing this message, I am not encouraging you to remain where your life is under threat or you are in danger. The Good News of Jesus Christ

does not ask us to remain where you are at risk. And I encourage you to reach out to your friends, church and welfare agencies for help and support.



The Christian story tells us God is with us even in our darkest days, and the community of the faithful are here to help, support and walk with you. We will weep with you, walk with you and find life again with you. So that love may be genuine.

Prayers of the people

God who knows and loves us all,
who hears us when we call,
We pray for people everywhere:

**For those who have been infected
by COVID-19**

bles them
with healing, strength and comfort.

**For friends and family who love them
and are fearful for them**

bles them
with strength and peace.

**For those who grieve
the loss of loved ones**

help them to hold memories,

bring them companionship and support.
For healthcare workers and those at risk
protect them
and give them resources and resilience.

**For those who wait
for news about test results,**
give them calm hearts and patience.

**For people who have lost jobs
and businesses,**
bless them
with hope and provision.

**For leaders who make decisions
that affect lives,**
grant them wisdom
and concern for the greater good.

For parents, caregivers and families,
bless them with coping,
patience and delight.

For children and all vulnerable people,
give them calmness instead of fear.

**For people
in places or situations of danger,**
bless them with sanctuary and safety.

**For people who are lonely,
isolated or afraid,**
send your Spirit to rest on them
and bring them peace.

We bring our prayers before you,
knowing that our words
cannot contain all we need them to,
but confident that you hear
the longings of our hearts
and that the Spirit sighs for us and with us
with deep prayers,
deeper than any of our thoughts.

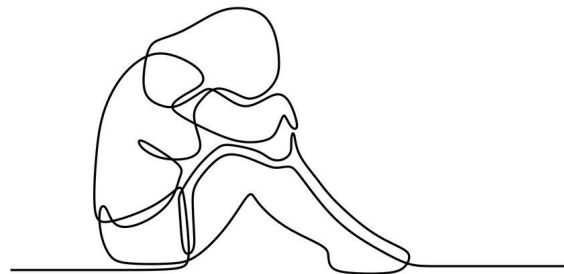
and we bring all prayer, together in the
prayer Jesus taught his disciples...

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

Who is on your heart today? Who might
fall in between the cracks? Share some of
your life with them in some way this
week.



Offering

Think of one gift (non-monetary) that you
can share this week. Pray about how best
to use it. What is yours to do. Thank God
for this gift.

Notices

This week held
World Migrant and Refugee day.
Think about what taking up our cross
means and how this might be experienced
for someone new to our country.
Or someone longing to find a place of
belonging here.

Hymn: TiS 607 Channel of Peace

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred
let me bring your love;
where there is injury, your pardon Lord;
and where there's doubt,
true faith in you.
*O Master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

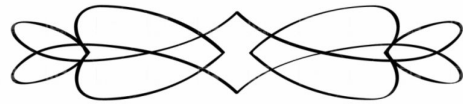
Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life,
let me bring hope;
where there is darkness,
let me bring your light;
and where there's sadness, ever joy.
*O Master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving of ourselves that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to eternal
life.

*TIS 607 Used with Permission CCLI 241 739 Based
on an anonymous prayer: This version by Johann
Sebastian Templehoff 1928- CHANNEL OF PEACE*

Blessing

Go, God will be with your mouth and
teach you what to speak. Only be willing.
Take the message of Good News and go
into a world that longs for it. God calls you
and goes with you. Do not be afraid.



A poem written by Rev. Jennie Godon
from *Dad and Daughter,*
Prayers and Poems on the Gospel, Years A, B & C.

Fight or flight - Matthew 16:21-28

in the face of intolerable injustice
when everything inside is screaming 'run'
and the pounding of this hollow heart
makes panic pistons out of muscles
and the reactive response is flight
you say
'get behind me and fight'

when carrying the cause becomes
unbearable
and I lay down in the supermarket of life
and toss a tantrum
at the way things are taking shape
you step over me and do not stumble
and invite me to follow
when I'm quite finished howling

when there seems no relief
from the waves of suffering and grief
washing over the world
and we respond by hanging on
to whatever comes into our greedy grasp
you say
'let go and you will live'

and you will live
not ruled by fear
or bound by death
or nervously glancing at the nearest exit

you will live.