



Third Sunday in Lent - March 12th, 2023

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

You might want to use this just before worship, or maybe after the reading. It's Nick Cave's version of the folk/gospel song 'Jesus met the woman at the well': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3f4pHE4YVfw>

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Compassionate God
Providing water in the desert
Refresh us and open us to your love

Compassionate God
Teaching at the well
Open us to hear your truth

Compassionate God
Reconciling us through your grace
Bring us to new life

Acknowledging



As we gather, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and these waters. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.

Singing - TiS 693 Come as you are

OR TiS 703 As the deer pants
- All Together Everybody 206 has additional verses
OR TiS 119 I sing the almighty power of God

Prayer



Jesus, generous giver of Living Water,
We come seeking
your guidance and refreshment.

We know that you are the one
who has the words of life,

So, help us be open to
learning from you and
being renewed by you,

That we may go from here
ready to share your love and life. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

God, you brought forth water
from the rock in the wilderness,
To ease the thirst of your frightened and
panicking people.
When we, too, are frightened and
struggling to trust you,
Forgive us, and give us your Living Water.

Jesus spent time with the Samaritan woman,
treated her respectfully, heard her story,
offered her new life.
When our actions and decisions
are coloured by prejudice,
when we fail to treat others with respect,
Forgive us, help us model our actions on yours.

When the disciples returned from the village
they were astonished that he was
talking to a woman,
and they struggled to understand his teachings.
When we fail to comprehend your teachings and
fail to be open to new directions,
**Forgive us, and open us up to new
understandings.**

Send your Holy Spirit upon us today,
that we may comprehend your truth,
and follow you as true disciples,
willing to learn and to change.
**Thanks be to God who forgives,
renews and reconciles.**

Passing the peace

May the Peace of God dwell with you:
and also with you.



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Listening

Read: Exodus 17:1-7 &

John 4:5-42

For the John reading you could use three readers - a narrator, one reading Jesus' words, the other the Samaritan woman's words.

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

Reflecting - Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

If I get very frustrated when I read this Exodus passage, imagine how Moses (and God!) felt. The people had received exactly what they desperately needed, Freedom from their captors, deliverance from their oppression at the hands of the Egyptians! Hallelujah, they were free. But now they were sopping or sulking about some inconveniences along the way. (I will admit that being thirsty makes you cranky). But don't they sound like needy children?!

And then I think on the times I have done exactly that. When I have been given huge grace in the really tough stuff, the things I have sorely needed, only to be caught up in the minor problems. As churches sometimes we are also given exactly what we need and what will bring us growth and flourishing. Bring us revival but only if it looks like we want it to! Only to then 'long for Egypt' and the nostalgia of what was, at least, familiar to us. "Take us back to what we knew before, even if it will mean our downfall!" We ask, as they did, "Is the Lord really with us or not?". I wonder how you might answer this.

I remember a moment while hiking in the centre of Tassie where the freshest spring water I have ever tasted was pouring out through some gentle green lichen. I was hot and thirsty and this was so much nicer than the stale stuff in the drink bottle with the purifying tablet (which was at least keeping me hydrated of course). This Water that the people longed for is a strong image throughout the lectionary, as is the Rock which Moses strikes to provide water. The Psalm

provides a bit of a parody although it relies on hindsight. It speaks of the experience of joy in the solid rock of this God who is in control, and then reminds the people of the perversity of not trusting in God who really can be relied upon. The contrast between hard hearts and joyful worship is clear.

Romans reminds us that the Holy Spirit is our assurance that God can indeed be relied upon and that even our weakness and our fickle moments are a means of grace. That it is while we were living selfishly that Christ's reconciling love was poured out for us.

And this profound Gospel story of living water given to this 'dubious' woman who was multiply marginalised, outcast by the community and lost in her loneliness. Daily life was a constant struggle to access the basics of life. This is the case for many of the poor and marginalised in our own time. This woman knows what it is to 'thirst' after a life of love and fullness, a place of healing and of restoration and welcome. And Jesus simply offers it to her. Radically, without her even asking, this woman who is not 'of the flock' is welcomed and offered true belonging. I find this shocking! Beautifully, lovingly, radically shocking. And I am so grateful for a God who reaches out in love and provides us with all of that grace when we are still unaware of our own need. A place of belonging and welcome, of freedom and joy is offered us. Let our hearts be soft and generous in response, and let us worship in joy. This fresh, fresh water is freely poured onto us to share in abundance and to provide growth and flourishing.

And, here we are in the Figtree Worship project at a wonderful point of celebration. It has been a full three year cycle. Remember that terrible moment when you heard the Synod and the Presbytery were asking us to close our churches? It seemed unfathomable and impossible. But out of that tough time sprang many a new shoot. And this worship resource is one of them. We provided everyone in our Shearwater churches (where it all began) with a worship placemat all



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cut from the same cloth. And we invited you to send us some pics of your worship space. There were flowers, and other nature symbols and Bibles and candles and prayer resources all there on the rainbow worship cloth. Was the Lord really with us, I wonder? Sometimes it was tempting to give into some despair about what the future held. Joyfully we can say we have been given refreshment through such Living Water and retained our sense of belonging to the fabric of the whole. We worship joyfully in connection and community. God is good.

Singing - Tis 129 Amazing Grace

OR All Together Whatever 435 Wellsprings
OR TIS 683 God when human bonds are broken
OR TIS 164 The great love of God
OR TIS 661 Woman in the night

Offering

Let us pray:

Your love comes to us as a never-ending flow of Living Water,
refreshing our bodies and our souls
May we also give with generosity and love.
Bless these gifts, we pray. Amen.

Notices - It's our 3rd anniversary!!!

Next week is the 3rd anniversary of this weekly resource that began as The Shearwater Worship Resource For Sunday March 20th, 2020, the first Sunday of lockdown. That means, this week, we've completed a full cycle of the Revised Common Lectionary. WOW!!!

Please, please , please drop us an email to pastoral.ucagipps@gmail.com, letting us know how you use this resource and what it has meant to you and your church community. You might also like to tell us if there's something we could do to make it more useful for you.

Prayers for World & Community

As we come before you with our prayers, O God, we pray for people whose lands are devastated by famine and drought.

Like the people of Israel languishing in the desert, they, too, long for water to heal them and heal their land.

Be especially with the people of the Horn of Africa, and with all who trying to help them survive this difficult time. We pray that their land might be restored, and that the world will not forget their plight.

Pour down your Living Water,
and heal your people.

We pray also for people who have been devastated by too much water.

We pray for the flood damaged communities across Australia, that they may get the help that they need, and that you will strengthen them on the long road to healing.

Be especially with those who will have to make hard decisions about where they will live in the future.

Pour down your Living Water,
and heal your people.

God, we pray for leaders.

We pray for our Prime Minister, Premier, Opposition leaders, parliamentarians, local councillors, church leaders, and all who serve our communities in leadership roles.

May they have the courage of Moses as they undertake difficult decisions and sometimes face abuse and vitriol. May they listen well, think deeply, and seek to act with integrity, compassion, peace and justice.

Pour down your Living Water,
and heal your people.

We pray for all who work for justice, Seeking to ensure that all voices are heard, and working to counter prejudice, discrimination, poverty and violence.



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We pray for all working for social justice, for domestic violence campaigners, and all for seeking to care for and protect our precious earth.

Pour down your Living Water,
and heal your people.

We pray for those in places of war, violence, devastation, and discrimination.
We pray that peace may come.
We pray for refugees and asylum seekers.
We pray for a generosity of heart that they may find a welcoming new home.

Pour down your Living Water,
and heal your people.

God, open our hearts to all in need.
We pray for those who are particularly on our hearts this day.....

Time of silent prayer

Give us courage to reach out in love,
trusting in the abundant life You promise to each one of us.

Pour down your Living Water,
and heal your people.
In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. **Amen.**

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 forever. Amen.

Singing - Tis 624 Christ be my leader

OR TIS 569 - Guide me, O thou great Redeemer

Blessing

Go out in faith, hope and love:
Trusting in God's never-ending love and provision,
both in the good places and
in the times of hardship and trial.

For God is always there, waiting
to give you all that you need.

May the peace and blessing of God be yours,
now and always. Amen.

Liturgy: Rev. Sandra Houghton
Reflection: Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson
Presbytery of Gippsland
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Wild Fig Tree Lenten Resource - March 13-18, 2023

Invitation

Throughout this Lenten time, you are invited to find wilderness spaces where you can go each day and 'shut the door'. It might be outside, or it might be inside. Most likely it will not be silent, but it will be a place where you can be still, and dwell in your relationship with God, the sacred source of all that is. You may choose to have a journal ready, maybe with coloured pencils and paper.

Monday March 13th

Exodus 17:6 & 7 - I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarrelled and tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

What wilderness place holds a particular memory for you, in a time of trial, or a time of blessing? If it's not close by, go there in your imagination and write, draw or simply dwell in the space, noticing the manifestations of the presence of God.

Tuesday March 14th

You're invited to pray with this song:

Save Us In The Time Of Trial

1. You are the source of creation,
yet you were born as a child.
And in your flesh felt the longings we feel.

Save us in the time of trial.

Save us in the time of trial, in the time of trial.

2. For forty days in the desert,
no food or water the while,
you met the tempter and showed us the way.

Chorus

3. When we are caught in our cravings,
when we are trapped in desire,
you show us how to hold onto what's real.

Chorus

4. When we are sated with plenty,
and when we live in denial.
When we forget to return to your word,

Chorus

written by Shawn Whelan

Listen here:

<https://soundcloud.com/bucpost/save-us-in-the-time-of-trial?in=bucpost/sets/tune-in>

Words here:

<https://brunswick.unitingchurch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Tune-In-Words.pdf>

Wednesday March 15th

John 4:7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

Fill a glass of water and sit it on the table. This simple, radical request from Jesus is an opening to a deeper conversation where his physical thirst draws out the woman's spiritual thirst. Sip the water, source of life, and open your heart to allow the Spirit to encounter your thirst. What does 'Living Water' mean to you?

Thursday March 16th

woman at the well - based on John 4: 5-42

*she sits on the edge of the world
in the eye of the day / thirsty*

*he speaks from the heart of the heavens
at her kairos time / flowing*

*she hears words beyond words
bursting barriers of decency / reaching for her*

*he knows
all that she is / and all that she can be*

*she speaks –
this water she can't hold; / it must be told*

Written by Jennie Gordon

Is there someone you might tell about your experience of Living Water? Write it in an email, a letter, or phone a trusted friend. Living Water flows, around, within and through us to others.

Friday March 17th

Based on Psalm 95: 4-6 - Our Creator's upturned hand holds the depths of the earth and the heights of the mountains too. The sea washes through and the dry land is marked with the maker's holy fingerprints. Touch the earth my friends, with your head and knees, your body and your heart. Touch the earth in celebration of all that exists, seen and unseen.

Touch the earth, with your feet, your hands or your whole body. Feel the life around you and within you and give thanks.

Saturday March 18th

Listen

Presbytery of Gippsland

Rev. Jennie Gordon

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