



Worship at St. Stephens Williamstown

August 30 2020 – Pentecost 13

Bible readings for this week: Exodus 3:1-15; Psalm 105:1-6,23-26,45b;

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

Leaders Service prepared by Elaine Peck

Call to Worship (Psalm 105:1-6)

¹O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples.

²Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works.

³Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

⁴Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually.

⁵Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,

⁶O offspring of his servant Abraham, children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

Opening Song TIS 156 Morning has broken

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5D3LEjGF8A&list=RDh5D3LEjGF8A&start_radio=1&t=69

Opening Prayer

God of Justice and mercy,

Bring light to our journey

that we may follow in the footsteps of Jesus our Lord.

Shine in us and through us,

That we may be lights of compassion and justice

for all the world to see. Amen

Bible Reading: Matthew 16:21-28

²¹From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” ²³But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? ²⁷“For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. ²⁸Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

Reflection

REV DENISE LIERSCH, MODERATOR, SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA
(Written prior to Stage 4 lock-down in Metropolitan Melbourne and Stage 3 restrictions in country areas)

The experience of living with COVID19 is incredibly mixed across VicTas. While large areas are gathering together with much greater freedom, others are once again

isolated and disconnected. What are we learning as a Church? We are learning that technological skill is not necessarily required to keep us connected as communities. While some are discovering they are far more adaptable and able to learn more new skills in high-tech forms of communication than they ever thought possible, others have found the same thing through phone, printed prayer and worship sheets and letter box drops. Where deeper and more significant connections are being formed, it seems to be through ministers, leaders and community members working together and caring for each other, moved by a heightened awareness that human connection with God and each other lies at the heart of faith. The ministry of eldership is seeing a deep renewal in many communities.

Changed ways of gathering and caring for each other has opened up new relationships, including with people who had never before connected to the church. United Church Leaders Reflections – What we are learning in response to COVID19 8 || July 2020 There is a discovery of the generosity of wider community members. Where older congregational volunteers have needed to step back, people with no previous connection to the Church have been stepping in to assist in mission. Congregations are learning they don't have to do it all alone: they can work in partnership with the wider community, serving together where there is a shared sense of need. Many communities are finding they are not as dependent on their buildings or traditional programs as they thought, and are reconsidering the focus and shape of their ministry and mission. With increased sharing and collaboration, some congregations are seeing the possibilities of joining with other congregations, rather than seeking to return to their previous independent existence.

Awareness of our deep spiritual need for connection and community, has heightened our awareness of the disproportionate effect on those whose connection to the wider community is already tenuous through experiences of racism, disregard, prejudice or stigma. We see how our humanity and the integrity of our whole Church is diminished wherever we are willing to live with marginalisation of others. The Spirit is moving us toward a deeper commitment to change how we live as a multicultural Church, and especially as a Church committed to justice as First and Second Peoples truly walking together.

And there is tiredness, sometimes exhaustion, and uncertainty about how long we can hold out and hold through these times. We live in the tension of knowing we are sustained by grace and not by works, yet tempted to think that, if the Church is to survive, it's up to us to make that happen. The constant surprise is finding it is God who is at work making that happen – often in the most unexpected ways.

As we learn how fragile we are as humans, how tenuous our hold on our mental and spiritual wellbeing, and how easily our plans and sense of security can be turned upside down, the Spirit is moving us to know how much we are upheld and sustained by each other in faith, how much prayer is the core of our life together as individuals and as communities of faith, and how little it sometimes takes to bring sustaining life to others. The Spirit is moving us to know we are a family in faith, holding together and upholding each other in love, leaving no one behind. In our ministry, mission and learning, the Spirit is drawing us into more collaboration and sharing as leaders, ministers, worshipping communities, and councils of the Church, upholding each other, praying with and for each other. United Church Leaders Reflections – What we are learning in response to COVID19 July 2020 || 9 I pray that the Spirit of grace and graciousness with each other in these times of challenge and stress, may continue to grow. Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. Now remain in my love." John 15: 5,9b

Song: TIS 561 Who would true valour see

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JiSAjwtpFUc>

Prayer

Jesus, the Light of life, has taught us the importance of serving others. O God create in us hearts that are eager to serve and witness to your love. Open our lives this day and pour your healing mercies into them that we may be messengers of hope to all whom we meet. In Jesus' name, we pray. **Amen**

The Lords 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.

For the young and young at heart:

More about Moses : Moses and the burning bush exodus 3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8kNTUX0mWP8>

Moses activity page attached

PRAYER FOR OTHERS

“PRAYER FOR MELBOURNE” a Prayer video from 20 Church Leaders
[available here](#) (click on the link to enjoy this prayer)

Closing Song: TIS 28 God is our strength and our refuge

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VpfhZzqIXw>

Blessing*

Be of a loving spirit, and a humble mind.

Do not return evil for evil, or harm for harm,
but pursue peace.

Have no fear of those who trouble you, defend yourself with gentleness and respect.

Have the mind in you that was in Jesus Christ,
and he shall go with you.

*Sister Evelyn Woodward