



St Stephens Williamstown UCA - Service of the Word at Home - during Coronavirus Lockdown
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost 18th July 2021 (Proper 11B / Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time)
Prepared by Rev S. Juliette Maua'i

No Holy Communion. Place a cross and Bible on a table. GREEN is today's Liturgical Colour.
Suggested reflective music, hymns, songs to play on YouTube. Copy & Paste Links to listen.

Readings: 2 Samuel 7:1-14a; Psalm 89:20-37; Ephesians 2:11-22 & Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Song: TIS 445 vv.1, 2, 3. Jesus where e'r your people meet... https://youtu.be/AK1sN_v_jbw

Gathering of the People

Call to Worship

In our travels this week many plans are made then abandoned.

We come to you Jesus; lead us to a quiet place of rest.

When we gather as leaders to discern our mission.

We come to you Jesus; lead us to a place of holy communion.

As the world around us seems deaf to your saving grace.

We come to you Jesus; teach us to read the signs.

Though we feel the heaviness of the world and the loneliness lingers.

We come to you Jesus; lighten our load and restore us in company.

For our neighbours and strangers, churched and non-churched, often colliding.

We come to you Jesus; transform us to be more than words of inclusiveness

And mobile us into forging meaningful relationships.

For all that we hope for in our gathering this day.

We gather around you this morning, O Christ.

Lead us to rest, lead us to a place of holy communion, to read the signs and lighten our load.

O God full of grace, transform us deeply, that we may rest in each other and in Christ. Amen.



Opening Prayer

God full of Grace,

Open our hearts to all your people not just those in our inner circle.

As we find ourselves in lockdown once more

Guide us into what is most important as disciples of Christ.

That we may be enabled by your transforming Spirit. Amen!

Song: TIS 162 Thank you for giving me the morning... <https://youtu.be/Yiu-1YX1WvE>

Greetings/Welcome: The Lord be with you. **And, also with you.**

Acknowledgement to Country

Let us acknowledge that we gather on the land and waterways of the Traditional Custodians, the Yalukit-willam and Bunurong Peoples of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Prayer of Confession

God of grace,

We come to You in the hopelessness of the world. Too often we live in the past of what was.

We miss your signs to nurture the seeds You provide in the present that will sustain Your mission into the future.

We know that You have all things in creation under your control. Help us to trust you fully as Jesus lived-out!

Become known to us, O God. Guide us to trust the advocacy of Your Holy Spirit.

Help us to pray for one another, for others in our community, and for our enemies.

In the name of Christ, who makes us one, we pray all things in Your Presence. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

God's grace is a gift to us. In Christ our sins are forgiven. **Thanks be to God! Amen!**

Read/Listen for God's Word

Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet, a light to our path.

Old Testament – 2 Samuel 7:1-14a - *God's covenant with David*

Gospel: Mark 6:30-34, 53-56 - *Jesus and his disciples retreat but has compassion for the crowds / Healing the Sick in Gennesaret*

Lord may your Word live in us; and bear much fruit to your glory.

Reflection: “The Economy that keeps on giving is, GOD, and God alone!” - Rev S. Juliette Maua'i

Sometimes it takes a rude awakening in our lives and for us to witness with our own eyes the real needs of another human being in order for us to be shaken out of our insulated bubble, complacency, and complaining state.

Growing up in a household of eight it was challenging for our parents to make ends meet. The mortgage monthly payment was a priority and our parents worked long laborious hours, lots of overtime, with minimal wages. But we had a warm place to sleep and our parents provided what we really needed, and we were fed and schooled. To their great credit they were also able to remit funds overseas to family in the islands, regularly.

We were grateful but we (my siblings and I) often complained! You see we often had to do without. For example, excursions were few and far between with six children at school at the one time. I suppose it was more our pride and embarrassment that we remained at school on those days.

We often had extended family arrive from overseas to live with us. Our parents financed, one by one, to have my first cousins from the islands come and live with us so they could work and earn money to help their own parents and family, back in the homeland. The trouble was, we would often resent that our house was full. There was often little privacy to retreat in one's own bedroom; we shared rooms – sometimes two or three to a room if need be. And yes, we would complain under our breath when we had to go without so that extended family were able to have the chance to live with us and help their nuclear families back home. But God opened my eyes!

The many years travelling to and from Samoa (formerly, Western Samoa from 1962 until 1997) and American Samoa/Tutuila, pronounced *too-too-ee-la*, (Eastern Samoa) changed my whole understanding of truly “loving your neighbour”, so to speak! It was not just words! To come to learn when I began visiting the islands and seeing my family in Samoa treat us so so well, as if they were well off, was very humbling.

After being so warmly welcomed by my maternal family/ *aiga*, pronounced *ab-ee-nga*, in my first visit to Samoa (1982) by the high chief and talking chiefs in our communal family fale fono, pronounced *fa-lay for-no(r)* / meeting house, the ceremonial customary Samoan way was an experience in itself, and an eye-opener.

An abundant feast after the ceremonial welcome and words, then gifting of money and gifts to the family and village chiefs, got my back up when I noticed that all my cousins who had been cooking all the fresh produce from our plantation and fresh fish (caught that morning) then cooked in what is called and, *umu/hangi*, pronounced ‘oo-moo’ Samoan, and ‘*hab-ngee*’ Maori (underground cooking method of food), they ate the leftovers (if there was any).

From that day, until I left to return to NZ, I ate very little on my large pandanus woven plate presented to me at each meal-time, with an abundance of food. This was because I learned that anything leftover would be what my cousins would have as their dinner. To see one cousin scraping the little bits of corn beef from the tin of corn beef that stuck to the sides of the 6lb (six pound) corn beef tin, was my undoing! One could not help but have compassion for them. Yet at the same time, to hear them speak with such conviction and trust that each day they fish only for what they require, they take produce from the plantation only for the day's meals, “for why worry about tomorrow? God always provides!”.

In the Gospel of Mark reading today (6:30-34, 53-56) these verses serve as ‘bookends’ around the story of the ‘Feeding of the Five Thousand’ and ‘Jesus Walking on Water’. Jesus, after being rejected at home, sent the disciples out two by two. Today, the disciples have returned in vv. 30-34, and Jesus has told the disciples to come and rest. This was because so many people were now following them. Jesus knew that the disciples and himself needed to take care of themselves from their ministry tasks, and to rest!

Yet, Jesus had *compassion for the people!* The crowds were gathering together fervently. They were searching for something – they saw in Jesus what they were searching for - hope! They recognised something in Jesus! And they came from near and far. The people had a hunger they believed that Jesus could satisfy. And the people were like sheep without a shepherd. In my cultural terms, it's like an orphaned child who no longer has parents and deserves compassion!

Folks sought from this Jesus, a hope, to satisfy their expectations, to heal their illnesses, to help carry their burden and a hope in Christ that grants, forgiveness!

The “walls” that we build up that excludes any group of people or individual, or that which affects God's creation, means we fail to be disciples of Christ, and therefore we fall short of God's power to create community worthy to be called a community of Christ!

With the climate of covid19 and its impact on people, over our communities, and affecting the economy, who will you turn to? Christ is the cornerstone of all that we should desire to nourish us. God's provision is surely all that we need. Right?

At a time where the church is continually talking about “mission”, I wonder if we must continually ask ourselves, “do we truly trust in God to provide for us?”. Are we trying to put new wine in old wineskins in our attempts as Church to revive our congregations?

Might we start with establishing a *relationship* with *all* people, not just *church* people? Is this not Jesus' ‘compassion’ we are taught to embrace God's people? God works through those whom we often dismiss because they are different.

But we can be encouraged for in the Uniting Church, the growing congregations are the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Other churches outside of the Uniting Church are growing with the young and young adults leading hundreds of Christians. What are we not doing that Jesus would have us do? What are we doing that Jesus would have us not do?

Song: TIS 473 Community of Christ... <https://youtu.be/U1I4i3IOPBU>

We Respond to God's Word

Affirmation of Faith *adapted from the Poem ~ "We Believe in one God" ~ Chris Juby*

We believe in one God, the Father, the maker of the world.

We believe in one Lord, the Saviour, Jesus Christ the Son:

God from god and Light from light, through whom all things were made.

He came down from heaven to save us and died upon the cross.

Risen on the third day, ascended to the throne above.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

This is our God, this is our hope, our faith, our creed.

It's unshakable, this is the truth that we believe.

We believe the Spirit, who gives life, is worshipped as the Lord.

We believe in one Church, united, sent into the world.

We await our resurrection and the world to come.

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Offertory - *Your offering may be made through direct debit or send your cheque to the Treasurer.*

Offertory Prayer - Holy God, You sent your son Jesus into the world that we may not distance ourselves from You nor others in need. We offer our gifts to you, knowing that by your power and blessing, provision and abundance can only come from You, O God. You don't require our strategies but only that we find the peace you desire for us in Christ alone. This we pray in Jesus' name. **Amen.** ([Ephesians 2:11-22](#))

Song: TIS 672 (i) Lord of earth and all creation... <https://youtu.be/SvnDPNjkn-U>

Benediction

May God, the heart of life, reside deep within you always.

May God, the Christ be your inspiration to show compassion.

May God, the Spirit, empower you to live life in new ways.

And the blessing of God: Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you always. **Amen!**

May the Peace of the Lord be always with you! Go well with God into another week!

Acknowledgements:

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Free Prayer & adapted Prayers from UiW2 | New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) | New International Version (NIV) Bible translation.