**15th September 2019 Pentecost 16 (Proper 19)**

**A short but structured service**

*(other suggestions and alternatives are below)*

**Gathering**

**Call to worship**

When the living God restores the fortunes of the people,

we shall rejoice and the church shall celebrate.

***The grace of God overflows for us***

***with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.***

To the King of all ages, immortal, invisible,

the only God,

***be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen!***

**Prayer of Approach**

Holy God, holy Friend, teach us to adore you without constraint, to serve you without complaint, to be in awe of you without fear, and to love you beyond all that is dear.

Through Christ Jesus our Lord.

***Amen****!*

**Hymn**

**Prayer of confession**

“The living God looks upon the children of earth, to see if there are any who live wisely and with all their mind and heart, seek their God. There are none who are really good, not even one of us. All have gone astray, and each person has been corrupted.” Let us pray.

We thank you, God of love, for the good things we have managed to accomplish, the temptations we recognised and overcome, and for the wrongs, small or large, for which we have been able to make restitution. It is good to know we have not always been foolish nor rebellious sinners.

Yet we have not lived, most holy Friend, with the glory you intended for us. We have not even lived up to our own meagre expectations. We fail you, we fail those around us, and we disappoint ourselves.

As you have graciously done in the past, look now upon our patchy lives and work that miracle of grace which is beyond human endeavour. Pity our folly and failure, forgive our sins; both the sins we see and the ones to which we are blind. Save us from the chronic perversity in our nature and bring us to your peace.

Thank you, loving God. We are grateful that humanity continues to be your project. Our brokenness is brought together by your almighty tenderness, our wounds are dressed by your steady fingers, our foolish moves are countered by your long sighted strategies, and our small stock of faith is tended by your patience.

Wonderful is your saving love! Through Christ Jesus our Saviour.

***Amen!***

**Word of Assurance**

My sisters and brothers, it is written: “This saying is a certainty and worth our full acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

God forgives all those who turn back and seek grace. Because we are God’s project, those who trust the grace of Christ shall never be defeated. God is ever faithful, ever sure.

*Thanks be to God!*

*(often the Psalm may be used for the prayer and/or the word of grace)*

**Service of the Word**

**Psalm for the day – Psalm 14** *(See “More Australian Psalms” p 112* *B. D. Prewer* & *Open Book Publishers:– Rev Peter has a copy. Alternatively, see Geoff Shrowder’s website below for his version.)* ***OR***

The fool who imagines himself sophisticated,

keeps telling himself: “There is no God.”

Such people are more corrupt than they realise,

they end up being good for nothing.

The Holy One who made the stars

looks into the lives of all earthlings,

seeing if there are any who are wise enough

to seek by themselves the truth of God.

But all people have lost their way,

each has become corrupted.

No human being can be called good,

not even one person on this earth.

They are not as smart as they think they are,

evil infects every thought and deed.

Many overeat while others starve,

not taking the Holy One into account.

Such foolishness is in for a terrible result,

but good fortune is on the side of believers.

Fools throw the poor into consternation

but God remains the champion of the weak.

O that more liberation would come soon,

salvation among the people of Zion!

When the Holy One restores our fortunes,

God’s children shall be glad and celebrate!

**Epistle or Old Testament/alternate reading: 1 Timothy 1: 12-17 OR Jeremiah 4: 11-12 & 22-28**

**Gospel reading: Luke 15:1 - 10**

**Short reflection and discussion** *(see links below)*

(Hymn)

**Prayers for others**

**Sharing of concerns**

**Sharing of notices**

**Prayers**

We are about to pray for others. This is both a responsibility and a priviledge. For in such prayers, we stand in the shoes of Christ Jesus. Let us pray.

Home-loving God, you are like a woman who treasures all things in her household, grieving over even the smallest thing that becomes lost. Please enlarge the scope of our compassion until our prayers align with your wide love for all people on earth.

We pray for the millions in populous regions like Asia. We confess that we tend to regard the suffering or death of a few thousand as of no consequence. Yet by your will every heart beats and in your love each life is precious. Please bless them with the same favour we ask you to bestow on our dearest friends.

We pray for those citizens of our own country whom we do not know. Many are to us only statistics; a certain number with aids, a number with heart disease, a number mentally ill, and a certain number of road accidents. Please be with each individual in their trauma and grief, and bless every compassionate voice and hand that reaches out to them.

We pray for all other congregations and denominations. Some we know a little, some we pray for occasionally, and many we don’t want to have anything to do with. On this day, please grace every congregation and denomination with those rich blessings we seek for our own.

Home-loving God, we pray now for our nearest and dearest, especially for any who are bewildered, rebellious, lost, hurting, or sorrowing. Like a mother who treasures each individual and seeks the good of all, so please be with these who are precious to us.

Through Jesus Christ our Good Shepherd.

***Amen!***

**Lord’s Prayer**

**Sending forth the people of God**

**Offering** (a sharing of our gifts and the call to bless others as we have been blessed)

**Hymn**

**Blessing and commissioning**

Christ calls us to share his love by offering our own, especially to with those who have scant love in their lives.

That task is not easy. It is not easy for us to know the best way, and some of those who need loving are prickly and ready to rebuff us.

May the Christ who calls you, give you the grace to make wise choices in the use of your limited time and energy, and grant you the good humour to receive rejection without impatience or anger.

***Amen!***

God’s blessing be yours

and well may it keep you.

Christ’s blessing be yours

and well may it heal you.

Spirit’s blessing be yours

and well may it warm you.

Now and ever more.

***Amen!***

*(Adapted from a Celtic blessing)*

\*Note: all prayers and litanies above, are courtesy ©B D Prewer. It was Bruce’s intention that the prayers and litanies be adapted by each user to their own situation. This material can only be used for worship with acknowledgement and not otherwise reproduced without permission. Thank you to the estate of Bruce Prewer for allow us to publish his material here. Contact <http://www.bruceprewer.com> for details.

**A shorter prayer service**

*(may include some of the above material in the following format. Hymns may be included if desired and music is available)*

Greet each other

Prayer (may include invocation, adoration, confession and recognition of grace)

Reading: Psalm 14

Gospel reading: Luke 15:1 – 10

Sharing and discussion of the readings

Sharing of concerns

Prayers for others (see above, may involve one or several people praying; may involve the use of symbolic actions as part of the prayers)

(Conclude with the Lord’s Prayer)

Blessing

***Howard Wallace suggests*** *(see****:*** [*http://hwallace.unitingchurch.org.au/*](http://hwallace.unitingchurch.org.au/)*)*

Verses 1-2 can be used as a **CALL TO WORSHIP**:

Fools say in their hearts, ‘There is no God’   
***The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind***   
***to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God.***

Several of the lines of the psalm can also be used in the **PRAYER OF CONFESSION** if combined with the regular refrain:

Fools say in their hearts, ‘There is no God.’ There is no one who does good.   
***Lord have mercy.***   
The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God.   
***Christ have mercy.***   
They have all gone astray, they are all alike perverse.   
***Lord have mercy.***

Howard often uses the NRSV but other versions can be used such as Nathan Nettleton’s paraphrase (found at <http://www.laughingbird.net/LaughingBird/Welcome.html>), The Message, Bruce Prewer’s adaptations (both paraphrases) or the New Living Translation. The Message and New Living Translation are accessible via [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com).

**Songs which may bring deeper reflection are** – lots to consider:

TIS 129 Amazing grace

TIS 685 The power of your love (Geoff Bullock rewrote this song with new/updated words emphasising God’s grace and love in a deeper way. Contact Rev Peter for a copy of these lyrics.)

TIS 717 Give thanks

TIS 143/AHB 80 Immortal, invisible, God only wise  
TIS 145/AHB 81 The king of love my shepherd is

TIS 467 I am the church, you are the church

TIS 233/ AHB 173 I will sing the wondrous story

TIS 205/AHB 135 Join all the glorious names (verses 1,2,5,6,12)

TIS 602/AHB 525 O love that wilt not let me go

TIS 158/AHB 92 God has spoken by his prophets

TIS 136/AHB 72 There's a wideness in God's mercy

TIS 209/AHB 138 And can it be, that I should gain?

TIS 473 Community of Christ who make the cross your own

David MacGregor has a range of contemporary songs that go really well with the celebratory tone. You may like to select one to learn. He often provides a downloadable mp3 file, music and lyrics for songs that are his own. His site is at: <https://togethertocelebrate.com.au/>

**Other Creative suggestions:**

* Visuals are very appropriate for most services. Art works can be used to draw people into the stories. <http://www.textweek.com/yearc/properc19.htm> has links to artworks and movie suggestions related to the themes arising from the Bible readings. Some of these are by some of the greats and others by world class contemporary artists.
* Ann suggests a film clip and listening songs. The film clip is from **The Holy Man.** Show the clip where G tells everybody that even making a difference in one person's life is a big deal. This is that old well known starfish story presented in a slightly different way.  Start at around 1hr 1 -2 minutes with the words "ok, ok, here's the teleprompter....when the red light goes on..." (The clip is available via YouTube). The listening song is *Your Love O Lord*, by Third Day on their album, Time. Ann has several discussion questions for the film clip. Give Rev Peter a call if you would like suggestions as to how to use the listening song.
* Ann suggests the following adult response:

Give everyone a coin (Ann used chocolate ones) and ask:   
Do you believe that there are parties thrown in heaven just for you?

* Geoff Shrowder suggests when the **Luke reading is the focus**: *Rather than dealing with a lost sheep(!), younger members of the congregation could be invited to search the worship area for a ‘lost’ coin to add to a prominently placed stack of nine coins. After the lost is found, have a conversation about what it feels like to lose something cherished/significant, the effort in searching and the joy in recovering the lost item. Maybe even celebrate after worship!* (or during! – Rev Peter’s suggestion)
* Seasons of the Spirit is a resource package available through Media Com. They have weekly resources available that can be purchased. They have great resources for all ages, creative ideas and thoughtful suggestions for reflection and sermon development. If you want to check it out, speak to Rev Peter or contact our Romsey congregation who use the material often.

**Other resources**

* See the Resources page of our web site for an extensive list of links and other resources.
* Our Romsey congregation has access to Seasons of the Spirit materials. Contact Jay for details as to what is available.
* Bruce Prewer’s web site has sermons and prayers. Go to <http://www.bruceprewer.com/>.
* Nathan Nettleton’s site has paraphrase versions of the readings, sermons and prayers. Go to <http://www.laughingbird.net/LaughingBird/Welcome.html>.
* Ann Scull has some great suggestions for creative worship. Go to <http://seedstuff.blogspot.com.au/>.
* Sacredise is a great web site that has a huge range of resources. Go to <http://sacredise.com/>.
* David McGregor has some great suggestions for contemporary music and songs. Go to <http://togethertocelebrate.com.au/>
* Geoff Shrowder has suggestions for the use of the Psalm, often a thoughtful piece and suggestions for hymns. Go to <http://thebillabong.info/>.
* Many other resources are available on the web site