**9th February 2020 5th Sunday after Epiphany**

**A short but structured service**

*(other suggestions and alternatives are below)*

**Gathering**

**Call to worship**

Who of us can comprehend the mind of God?

Only God’s own Spirit knows every thought.

***Yet in Christ Jesus, the mind of God,***

***like a pure light, has illumined our dark world.***

Light rises in the darkness for those who are true,

The Lord is gracious, merciful and righteous.

***What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,***

***nor the mind of man conceived,***

***God has prepared for those who love him***

**Prayer of Approach**

Holy God, dearest Friend,

            you are the light of our seeing,

            the wisdom of our understanding,

            the delight of our loving.

Assist your people

            so to trust you that we may begin to understand you,

            so to understand you that we may better love you,

            and so to love you that we may more eagerly worship and serve you,

Through Jesus Christ, your very Mind incarnate;

***Amen!***.

**Hymn**

**Prayer of confession**

Introduction.

God, through the prophet Isaiah, has required believers to practice what they preach. It is written:

This is the religion I choose:

            To cut the bonds of wickedness,

            to untie the ropes of the yoke,

            to set the oppressed free,

            to break every yoke,

            to share you bread with the hungry,

            and your house with the homeless.

My friends, if this is right religion, then we need constant repentance and renewal.

**Let us pray together:**

***God of truth, do not spare us your painful light, lest we perish in the darkness.***

***God of hope, do not spare us your rebuke, les we perish in our complacency.***

***God of mercy, do not spare us your forgiveness, lest we perish in our despair.***

***God of abounding grace, do not spare us your healing, lest we perish in our ineptitude.***

God of the saints and prophets, God our God, grant to each of us a genuine repentance, hearts open to your radical forgiveness, and faith restored to full strength, Through Christ Jesus our Saviour.

***Amen!***

**Word of assurance**

Fellow students in the school of Jesus, know this for certain: Christ is not only our tutor but our loving redeemer. Those who come to him in sincerity and truth shall never be cast away.

In his name I declare to you: Your sins are forgiven!

***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 112:1 – 10** *© B D Prewer 2006 (Bruce admits to struggling with the theology of the Psalm and so he says he has tried to “baptise it in the Spirit of Christ”. As such, you may like to compare his paraphrase to a translation such as the NRSV.)*

Praise the Eternal God!

Happy are those who are caught up in your awesome love,

who get a mighty kick out of doing your commandments.

These folk will be a blessing to the community,

a generation who put in far more than they take out.

Love and compassion will be in their houses,

and their legacy will endure forever.

They will find light in the darkness,

trusting the grace, mercy and truth of their God.

All is well when we live with open handed generosity,

and conduct our affairs with the justice of true love.

Our lives will then prove to be unshakeable,

and our influence will go on, long after we are gone.

By faith we will not be afraid of bad news,

there will be calm, deep down in our hearts;

peace in our hearts, casting out fear;

knowing that in the end evil will be vanquished.

The wicked shall angrily fight back in vain,

their boasting will come to nothing,

though they gnash their teeth they shall be no more.

Happy are those who share what they have with the poor,

such right-living will endure forever and ever,

and the trumpets of God will sound on the other side!

**Epistle or Old Testament/alternate reading:** **Isaiah 58:1 – 12 or 1 Corinthians 2:1 – 12** *(& 13 – 16 if desired)*

**Gospel reading: Matthew 5:13 – 20**

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

(Hymn)

**Prayers for others**

**Sharing of concerns**

**Sharing of notices**

**Prayers**

For The Disadvantaged

*(This prayer may be used either with or without the response.)*

God of love, have mercy on the world of human affairs where the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged seems to be ever widening.

We pray for all victims of this injustice:

For the sick and the maimed who cannot afford the latest in medical technology.

     Lord of love, hear our prayer,

***Lord of love, enlarge our love of truth, justice and peace.***

For the hungry millions who have been denied the benefits of genetically improved grains, fruits and meats.

     Lord of love, hear our prayer,

***Lord of love, enlarge our love of truth, justice and peace.***

For indigenous minorities whose health and education prospects lag far behind the general population.

     Lord of love, hear our prayer,

***Lord of love, enlarge our love of truth, justice and peace.***

For the unemployed who have been cast aside by the electronic revolution in industry and commerce.

     Lord of love, hear our prayer,

***Lord of love, enlarge our love of truth, justice and peace.***

For the second and third generation of refugees who are still living in camps that were set up in the previous century.

     Lord of love, hear our prayer,

***Lord of love, enlarge our love of truth, justice and peace.***

For small nations who are being exploited or shut out of markets by the strong and aggressive.

     Lord of love, hear our prayer,

***Lord of love, enlarge our love of truth, justice and peace.***

For the poor who cannot afford to pay the cost of obtaining justice in courts of law, or are unable bear the cost of life-saving surgery.

     Lord of love, hear our prayer,

***Lord of love, enlarge our love of truth, justice and peace.***

For the lonely souls, who live, work, suffer or sorrow in solitude, without family to surround them our friends to support them.

     Lord of love, hear our prayer,

***Lord of love, enlarge our love of truth, justice and peace.***

God of justice and mercy, keep your church faithful and compassionate. Do not permit us to become so concerned with keeping our ecclesiastical wheels turning that we neglect to love our neighbour even as Christ Jesus has loved us.

In his name we pray. 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**

All your ways and all your hours are in the hand of God.

Therefore, go out with confidence.

***May Christ’s light so shine,***

***that all may see our loving deeds***

***and glorify our God whose love is everlasting.***

The One who has begun good things in you,

does not accept the word ‘defeat.’

***Thanks be to God!***

The Love of God will underpin you,

the fire of the Spirit will indwell you,

and the saving grace of Christ will always redeem you,

this day and always.

***AMEN!***

\*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 112:1 - 12

Gospel reading: Matthew 5:13 – 20

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 for using the Psalm in worship*** *(see****:*** [*http://hwallace.unitingchurch.org.au/*](http://hwallace.unitingchurch.org.au/)*):*

The opening verse of the psalm can be used as a **call to worship**:

Praise the LORD!   
Happy are those who fear the LORD,   
who greatly delight in his commandments.   
Praise the LORD!

Several lines can also be collected and used for the final **blessing**:

Happy are those who fear the LORD,   
who greatly delight in God’s commandments.   
The generation of the upright will be blessed;   
they rise in the darkness as a light for the upright.   
It is well with those who deal generously,   
who conduct their affairs with justice.   
They will never be moved;   
they will be remembered forever.   
And the blessing of God,   
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,   
be with you,   
now and forever.   
***Amen***

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).

**For sermon and/or reflection preparation**

Pilgrim Theological College has launched a new web site with podcasts starting with reflections on Advent and preaching in the Year of Matthew. The podcasts continue for Epiphany and are planned to be published into the coming year. Go to <http://bythewell.com.au/>. There is a new one each week and are produced about 2 weeks before the particular Sunday being addressed. These are a great resources, are easy to understand and access. You could easily play them in your service and then invite discussion afterwards. Be aware though that each one goes for over 20 minutes and are geared for those preparing to preach or lead a reflection. Each discussion (podcast) explores many ideas and issues in the passage examined so you may want to pick one of these to develop.

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

TIS 246/AHB 191 Christ is the world’s light

TIS 342/AHB 258 When I survey the wondrous cross

TIS 657/SA 42 God of freedom, God of justice

TIS 582/AHB 494 Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling

TIS 151 The love of God is greater far

TIS 474 Here in this place new light is streaming

AOV[2] 3/ATO 313 Christ be our light

trad. **kid-friendly!** This little light of mine *(an oldie but goldie)*

TIS 717 Give thanks

David MacGregor has a range of contemporary songs. 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/yeara/epipha5.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. This web site is highly recommended for wider worship resources but is going through a time of transition at the moment.
* Ann suggests a Listening song: Shine, by the Newsboys on their album, Shine: The Hits. This song uses words from the gospel reading.
* Ann suggests the discussion questions:  
  1. Salt and light have lost their preciousness in many ways to the Western world. What might Jesus say to us today if he was talking to us? You are like...  
  2. How do we shine God's light onto those around us?
* Ann also suggests brainstorming definitions of the word “disciple”. This will give lots of food for discussion and reflection.
* The Matthew reading uses images of salt and light to describe what followers of Jesus are meant to be like. What other symbols could be used to describe discipleship?
* Jeff Shrowder suggests where you are using Matthew 5:13 – 20: *Suggested symbols for the worship centre:   
  a bowl of salty water:  
  a loaf of bread;  
  a small jug of oil; a small olive branch.  
  Any other symbols appropriate to your context.   
  Place these symbols on a hessian cloth draped from the worship centre table onto the floor.*
* 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, <https://www.macedonrangesunitingchurch.org.au/resources-and-event-diary> 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/>.