**15th March 2020 3rd Sunday of Lent Year A**

**A short but structured service**

*(other suggestions and alternatives are below)*

**Gathering**

**Call to worship**

If you are thirsty, you are in the right place.

***Here for us is personal refreshment from the depths***

***of that most profound well-spring that we call God.***

The God of Christ Jesus, the God of the church,

will quench the thirst of those who come in trust.

***Therefore, blessed are those who thirst, for they shall be satisfied.***

In the name of Christ Jesus I welcome you all.

**Prayer**

Holy Friend, you are the Hope of the universe! As we gather at this holy watering place, each person prays for the blessing of others gathered around us. Come to us with enough living water to quench our thirst. Rejuvenate our spirits for the joy of worship and the privilege of service. In Christ’s name and to and his glory.

*Amen!*

**Hymn**

**Prayer of confession**

Let us together admit our participation in this world’s evil, and seek the saving mercy of God. let us pray.

Lord Jesus, when our prayers are like a stony desert

and our feelings seem as dry as a sandhill,

 drench me with a downpour of mercy.

Whenever we take good gifts for granted,

and grumble about every small obstacle,

 please put a new song on our tongues

 until we praise as naturally as bell birds.

When life’s abrasive pressures fray us,

loosing our hold on the Still Centre,

 tell us again about sparrows and magpies,

 about wild irises and pink heath,

 and the Parent who knows our every need.

When our miserly souls begrudge compassion,

complaining about needy people,

or hiding smugly in the folds of apathy,

 put in our hands a crown of thorns

 and show us again what love can make

 with two pieces of wood and a few nails.

 *[Adapted from “Australian Psalms”*

© *Open Book Publishers.]*

Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

Lord have mercy.

God of the crucified Jesus, and our God, your love is greater than all our clumsiness, fecklessness and wrongdoing. We thank you that your forgiveness cleanses us, your mercy heals us, and your bountiful grace restores us to a place in your one family that spans both earth and heaven. Wonderful are you, God our Saviour, Provider and Counsellor.

*Amen!*

**Word of assurance**

Our Saviour Christ, came with peace. Peace for those who were near, and peace for those who were far off.

The peace and joy of Christ Jesus be always with you.

 ***And also with you!***

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

**Service of the Word**

**Psalm for the day –Psalm 95** *© B.D. Prewer 2001*

Come on everyone, lift up your songs to God!

Celebrate the eternal rock on which our hope rests.

With exuberant thanks we enter God’s presence,

 thrilled by the praise of massed voices.

For our loving God is truly the greatest;

 far beyond all secular fads and idols.

In God’s hands are the deepest valleys and ravines

 and the highest mountains on earth.

The seas and oceans belong to their Maker,

 the continents and islands are God’s handiwork.

Come on, let us open our lives to experience awe,

 let us bow down before God, our Maker.

For God is our God, and we are like sheep

 led to pasture by the hand of grace.

**Epistle or Old Testament/alternate reading: Exodus 17:1 – 17 or Romans 5:1 – 11**

**Gospel reading: John 4:5 – 42**

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

(Hymn)

**Prayers for others**

**Sharing of concerns**

**Sharing of notices**

**Prayers**

Let us pray for all God’s children.

Within this house of prayer, loving God, where we are refreshed by living water of your Spirit, we turn our prayers towards the hungers and thirsts of the wider world.

Leader: With the fullness of Christ’s grace,

***People: flow waters, flow with healing grace.***

Enter the experience of all who this day are looking for a faith which will enable them to turn around the defeat and shame of their present story.

Leader: With the fullness of Christ’s grace,

***People: flow waters, flow with healing grace.***

Enter the grief and misery of folk who have found that no human friend or loved one is able to reach the lonely depths of their sorrow.

Leader: With the fullness of Christ’s grace,

***People: flow waters, flow with healing grace.***

Enter the insecurity of those desperate seekers who rush from one religion to another, and from one counsellor to another.

Leader: With the fullness of Christ’s grace,

***People: flow waters, flow with healing grace.***

Enter the strength of self-made people who privately are driven by an unnameable discontent which makes them irritable and hard to live or work with.

Leader: With the fullness of Christ’s grace,

***People: flow waters, flow with healing grace.***

Enter the bitterness of citizens whose lives have been devastated by the bad decisions of leaders in business, parliament or court.

Leader: With the fullness of Christ’s grace,

***People: flow waters, flow with healing grace.***

Enter the despair of all whose land or jobs, homes or health, freedom or reputation, have been taken from them.

Leader: With the fullness of Christ’s grace,

***People: flow waters, flow with healing grace.***

**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**

Closed to you be every pitfall,

Smooth to you be every steep hill,

Warm to you be every bare place,

Sweet to you be every stream of God.

 (*Old Celtic blessing)*

***For pilgrims on the way to the Promised Land,***

***God’s mercies never end.***

The blessing of God almighty, the Father…

\*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 allowing 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 95

Gospel reading: John 4:5 – 42

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/)*):*

Parts or all of the first 7 verses of the psalm can be used for a **call to worship**. They could be used responsively or spoken by the worship leader.

Verses 4-5 could also be used as a refrain during the **prayers of the people** following each of the main petitions.

*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*](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.

Other good sermon resources and even full sermons are found at <http://benedictus.com.au> and <http://www.laughingbird.net/LaughingBird/Welcome.html>. The Benedictus site is from the Benedictus Church in Canberra, an ecumenical community that uses meditative and contemplative practices as part of their worship and life. Their “reflections” page has sermons in text format and more recent sermons in downloadable mp3 format. The latter could be listened to by the congregation and then discussed or just use it as a full sermon. The *Laughingbird* site is administered by Nathan Nettleton, from the South Yarra Baptist Church and has sermons in text form collected over many years. Most are by Nathan but many are also by many excellent Biblical scholars.

**Songs which may bring deeper reflection are**

TIS 52/AHB 115 Let us sing to the God of salvation

ALL TOGETHER OK 390 Put on love every day

TIS 585/AHB 500 I heard the voice of Jesus say
TIS 461/AHB 395 God, your glory we have seen in your Son

TIS 687 God gives us a future
TIS 609/AHB 537 May the mind of Christ my Saviour
TIS 588/AHB 504 In heavenly love abiding
TIS 446/AHB 374 Glorious things of you are spoken

TIS 655 O let the Son of God enfold you

TIS 744 Refresh my heart, Lord

TIS 145/AHB 81 The king of love my shepherd is

TIS 675 Shine Jesus Shine

ATW 435/NCYC 1999 Wellsprings *(a beautiful song. See Rev Peter for the music or do a YouTube search. Can be used as a congregational song or a listening song.)*

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/lenta3.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 4 listening songs you could use. They are **You move me** by Susan Ashton on her album *A Distant Call,* **The valley song** by Jars of Clay on their album *Furthermore*, **Lifesongs** by Casting Crowns on the album *Lifesong* and **Psalm 95** by Sons of Korah on their album *Resurrection*.
* Ann suggests lots of other great stuff this week. She has 2 film clips you can use from **Walk the line** and **Patch Adams** with discussion questions. She has a drama, a response activity and a story you can use. Check out her web site (see below) for these and many other suggestions.
* Jeff Shrowder suggests re John 4:5-42reading: *Continue using the purple cloth from last week. It could be hung as a large plain banner or draped in a manner appropriate for your worship space. Display posters or project images of wells and water-drawing equipment, also images of a geyser or artesian bore flowing. Place a glass jug of water on the worship/communion table.*
* Water, particularly “living” water (traditionally moving or flowing water) is a theme across several of the readings this week. Maybe you have an indoor water feature you can have going during the service – maybe even set up beside the baptismal font. Jugs and bowls of water around the worship space, some maybe scented with rosemary or rose petals.
* 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/>.