

## Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2021

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us,  
though separate let us worship together in God.

**Suggested Hymn**            Glory to God above

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### Prayer

Creator God we glimpse your glory all around us. From a single atom to the highest mountain with billions of atoms held in relationship; from a single cell to the complexity of an elephant with millions of cells with different functions; from the smallest seed to the tallest tree, creation surrounds us and in awe and wonder we praise you.

Creation is a living expression of love, the love which encircles and holds us through joys and sorrows. Our life is an expression of love as we share with one another and build relationships, and as we love creation and seek to care for the environment which feeds us.

As we worship together, we offer you our praise and thanksgiving for life and for love, for the world around us and the variety and diversity which enriches our lives and offers us opportunities and challenges. As we worship, we remember the life and ministry of Jesus and his teaching, which guides our lives, and for the hope we receive through his resurrection that life is eternal. In oneness with all Christians, we share the words Jesus taught the disciples praying,

### Lord's Prayer

How do you imagine God? For some people God is a feeling, for others a colour. Many of us were introduced to God as an old man sitting on the clouds but that image does not sit comfortably with our other understandings of God and the world. It can be really difficult to put into words how you see God. The writer of Isaiah 6 had a very clear vision of God, perhaps it was a dream, or it may have been wishful thinking but for the writer it was obviously real.

**Reading**                            Isaiah 6:1-8

**Suggested Song**                Father we love you, we worship and adore you

Listen [here](#)

**Readings**                         John 3:1-17  
Romans 8:12-17

**Story**                                God knows all about me

Listen [here](#)

**Suggested hymn**                 Our God is a great big God

Listen [here](#)

### Reflection

At funerals I often refer to us being children of God, and to the promises made in scripture to the children of God. There are occasions when it seems only some people are deemed to be children of God but for me that is to misunderstand the teaching of Jesus. We are all born of human parents and are their children, there is nothing we can do to change that, even if we wished to, it was not a choice we made, it is simply a fact. Every human being is a child of creation, and for me creation is God, and I believe God's love encircles all life so we are all children of God, and there is nothing we can do to change that either, it is simply a fact. Paul, in Romans, reminds us that as children we are also heirs of creation, or participators in creation, we all have the Spirit within us even if we choose not to acknowledge it. Jesus showed how acknowledging the Spirit within us could change our understanding of everything and encouraged his listeners to explore this wonderful connection with all that is, and to use the power within them to build a more just world, the Kingdom. The challenge is in believing in the connection.

Perhaps some of you grew up with an image of God that has influenced your understanding of the connection. Stories of being told God sees and judges when we make bad choices in life can make us

fearful of connecting in a positive sense, and the term 'the fear of God' has painted unhelpful images in the minds of many children. There is often a real sense of being unworthy of God's love which can inhibit our journey to know God more fully. It was this sense of unworthiness which worried Isaiah, but he was reassured by God's touch, although the imagery of that touch needs to be handled with care. God's gracious forgiveness, as I understand and experience it, does not involve hot coals on lips, this is biblical imagery that needs contextual understanding. Rather, the knowledge of God's love and God's grace should be an encouragement to accept a challenge no matter how inadequate we feel. Isaiah believed in the power of the Spirit enough to answer Here I am, I'll do it, do we have that confidence?

In the encounter with Nicodemus, Jesus says 'no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born from above'. Nicodemus chooses to take this literally and questions Jesus but Jesus answers with a question reminding Nicodemus that he, as a pharisee, should know about these things. Nicodemus was curious enough to come to Jesus in the night, that is undercover of darkness, but he was not yet ready to let go of his background and embrace a new reality. The Judaic law was extensive, it may have started out as 10 rules, but it had grown to cover every possible eventuality, this is what Jesus was challenging. Every 'rule' placed God further away, Jesus was inviting a knowledge of God that was relational and intimate. God knows all about me. It can be scary to think that God knows all about us if we hold on to the God out there judging us image, but being born from above, being a part of creation brings us an awareness of God within us.

Yes, we sometimes make less than perfect choices, we are still learning, still journeying, but if we learn from the consequences of those choices then we are absorbing the presence of God within us. We are all a part of creation, we are all a part of that which we call God, as Jesus put it 'the father is in me and I am in the father'. We are all valued for our humanity, we simply need to recognise we are all one in creation and that we all have the power to change reality, and that all of our actions have consequences for others, positive or negative. God is energy, energy is positive, but we can misuse energy and this can be interpreted as negative energy, it is not negative although the consequences of the choice make be negative. In John 3:17 we read 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.' Jesus urges us not to judge each other but to love each other. The message of Jesus sets us free from the fear of God, the message is not about God changing his mind about us but about us changing our mindset about God. Jesus calls us to see God differently and to be open to the power of the Spirit in a new and fully integrated way.

Theologian Adrian B Smith, sums this up in a reinterpretation of Ephesians 3:16-19, his words are in brackets: 'Out of his infinite glory, may God give you the power (the energy) through his Spirit for your hidden (inner) self to grow strong, so that the Christ may live in your hearts (that you may be known as Christ) through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love (the highest form of energy) you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and the length and the depth (the totality of the Cosmos), until, knowing the love of the Christ, which is beyond all (intellectual) knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God (which is your final destiny). This is a message for everyone, and it has the power to change the world.

Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God as being here, but not everyone sees it, not everyone recognises the glory of the creator in the world around. You cannot enter something you cannot see. When we recognise the conscious connection that we have with creation and each other we see the Kingdom in the world around us and we are compelled to be participators in extending the Kingdom. We do this in two ways. Firstly, we seek to replace injustice and inequality with justice and equal opportunities and in doing this we are making the Kingdom more visible. Secondly, we are called to share the message of Jesus, to share a new way of seeing God which will allow others to glimpse the Kingdom, they also become a part of the process of change. Sometimes the smallest change can start a chain reaction. It is estimated that if 1% of the population changed their ways such a chain reaction would occur in terms of many aspects of life, including sustainable living. Whilst that is still a huge number, it is within our grasp if all faiths work together.

Jesus demonstrated through his actions that every person mattered, every person was loved and had something to offer. When we hide behind our failings, we are being Nicodemus and using them to

avoid accepting the challenge. When we acknowledge our oneness and accept the gracious and unconditional love of God we can be like Isaiah, like Jesus, and say, here I am, I am ready, send me.

**Song** Be the change  
Watch [here](#)

**Suggested Hymn** Here I am Lord  
Listen [here](#)

### **Prayers**

Eternal God, present within all being and the wind of change within life we come together within your love and pray for the world. We watch the news and experience a rainbow of emotions, fear, anger, pain, sorrow, wonder, joy and passion. Every day we hear of terrible things happening, the outpouring of choices that were less than perfect, choices driven by selfishness instead of oneness, and in our hearts we pray for change. We are grateful that such things are still reported for it shows that we still know these things are wrong but we long for the day when the world is one in justice and love.

**Creator God may we know the power of your Spirit within us and live to be the change.**

As we worship together we lift to you all whose lives are caught up in the many facets of injustice and inequality, people who are trapped in poverty and homelessness, people who live in situations without adequate medical care or the infrastructure to provide safe water, people who feel the weight of discrimination which inhibits their opportunities, people who feel their only escape is to flee their homeland and become refugees, people who live with the fear and threat of war and violence. We pray for the courage to be a voice for change, and the inspiration to make a difference through our own decisions.

**Creator God may we know the power of your Spirit within us and live to be the change.**

Loving God, we offer you our prayers for our communities, and for the decision makers who influence those communities. As we give thanks for the success of the Covid vaccines we pause to remember all those who have died during this pandemic and the loved ones who are left facing a very different future. We recognise the need to continue to care for one another through our decisions and the need to continue to keep one another safe as new variants emerge, and we pray for clear and wise decision making on the part of government and councils.

**Creator God may we know the power of your Spirit within us and live to be the change.**

As Christians we pray for unity and harmony within the many branches of the Christian Church and a renewed commitment to work together wherever possible. Recognising the enormous challenge we face to preserve our planet and bring justice and peace to the world we pray for wisdom in our own decision making and the courage to set aside differences and seek oneness with all people, learning from and sharing with all our brothers and sisters.

**Creator God may we know the power of your Spirit within us and live to be the change.**

May the light of your love guide us and shine from us as we journey onwards and deeper into the fullness of our humanity, a fullness glimpsed in the life of Jesus whose way we seek to follow. May our lives bear witness to a different way of being and our love embrace everyone we meet without judgment as we strive to be the kingdom come within our communities and the world.

These prayers we offer as followers of Jesus. Amen.

### **Offertory**

As we continue to worship apart but together, we pledge our commitment to sharing in the work of our church through our continued offering and by exploring new ways of living generously, and may we know your blessing on all we do. Amen

**Suggested song** This little light of mine  
Listen [here](#)

### **Blessing**

May the blessing that is the knowledge of God, source of all being, the love of God discovered through Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit which binds us together be with us on our journey this day and every day. Amen.