

## Sunday 9<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.

God the creator, source and guide,  
within the earth and all besides,  
your strength to fill us, your wisdom to lead,  
in the beauty around us your love we perceive.

**Suggested Hymn** For the beauty of the earth

Listen [here](#)

### Prayer

Creator God, you call and we come, we come together in the name of Jesus, as your people gathered as church, and together we offer praise and thanksgiving.

We praise you for your presence, your creativity and your power.

We thank you for your presence with us in each moment of our days, holding us when we are overcome by sorrow and sadness, encouraging us when we doubt and forget you, and laughing with us as we rejoice in life.

We thank you for the wonder of creation, how from the smallest atom life in all its forms is built, held together in the web that is your love, and blossoming as the flowers on the trees as we learn to live in the knowledge of your eternal presence.

We thank you for the power of creation, the wind and rain harnessed through technology to sustain life without harm, the tides and the seasons which in harmony sing of your love for all life, and the call which we hear to harness life in your oneness and share together as participators in creation.

We thank you for this new day with all its potential and opportunity to learn more of what it means to be human, and to grow more in the fullness of our humanity as we walk together on the way of Jesus.

As we walk, we talk and share, and we together we say the words of the Lord's prayer

### Lord's Prayer

### Psalm reflection

Let us sing a song of love to the God of creation,  
the source of all life and the creator of invention and discovery.

God is ever present, within every moment of creation,

God is all knowledge, God knows our thoughts, our wishes and dreams.

God is, and we are held in the love of God, safe and secure for eternity.

So, let us sing our praises, let us lift our voices and open our hearts,

let us join together with instruments and harmony in a song to God,

let us sing with all creation a song of joy and wonder,

in the presence of God, whose spirit guides our path and leads us in love.

(based on Psalm 98)

**Suggested hymn** Give me joy in my heart keep me praising

Listen [here](#)

**Reading** Acts 10:44-48

**Suggested Song** Room at the table by Carrie Newcomer

Listen [here](#)

**Reading** John 15:9-17

### Story **The child who loved (based on a Comanche legend)**

Once upon a time in the land of the Comanche there was a great drought which lasted for so long that the people began to die, as the land itself died. Without water nothing could grow, and the Chief became desperate. He gathered those who were strong enough to pray to the Great Spirit for an end to the drought, asking forgiveness for whatever they had done to cause the Spirit to be so angry.

They prayed and they danced as was their custom, then they waited, and they waited but nothing changed and still the old and the young died.

One child, who had not died of hunger, was She-who-sits-alone. Sitting all alone, with her doll in her arms, she watched the elders pray. Her doll was precious, a gift from her parents before they died it was her most treasured possession; it was dressed in warrior clothing and has a headdress made of Blue Jay feathers. She watched the elders as they left to climb the mountain and speak with the Great Spirit and she sat and listened when they returned to share the message.

The Chief stood amongst those who still survived and told them the Great Spirit has reminded them that they had lived well for many years, and they had taken what they needed from the land, but they had never offered back to the land. Their actions had brought distress to the land and now the people must offer a sacrifice. Their sacrifice must be burned, and the ashes scattered to the four winds, then the rain would come, and the land would be replenished.

Everyone knew a sacrifice must be a treasured possession and the Chief asked them to each consider what they could offer. They all retreated to their teepees. One by one they identified their most treasured possession, and one by one they each decided that theirs could not possibly be the sacrifice the Great Spirit needed, not the archer's finest bow, not the medicine man's finest herbs, not the mother's treasured bowl. No-one brought forward a sacrifice and night fell.

She-who-sits-alone, looked at her doll and clasping it tightly she whispered her love and knew what she must do. She climbed to the top of the mountain, her doll in one hand and a firestick in the other. There, she spoke to the Great Spirit, offering her most treasure possession, then she built a fire and placed her doll in the flames. As she watched it burn, she thought of her family all of whom had died of hunger, her parents, her grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and she cried for her loss, and she wept for her doll.

When the fire had burnt out, she gathered the ashes and remembering the words of the Chief she scattered them to the four winds, then she lay and slept. When the sun rose in the morning sky, its light awakened her, like a kiss. Opening her eyes, she was amazed to see a Blue Jay feather lying where the fire had been. As she picked it up in wonder, she felt a drop of rain on her face, then another and another as the land was caressed with the water of creation.

When she returned from the mountain the people asked where she had been, and she told them what she had done. The people were amazed and ashamed and they renamed her One-who-loved-her-people, and her story became a legend for all time.

### **Reflection**

In our reading from Acts, the Jewish followers with Peter were amazed when the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues, was poured onto the gentiles present at the meeting. Peter, commenting on their amazement says, 'if the Spirit baptizes, who are we to withhold the water of baptism.'

At times the Christian church, or at least some Christian churches, give the impression that the only way to be saved is to become a Christian, and that it does not matter how good you are, or how loving your actions, if you have not 'joined the club' then you are lost. This appears to have been the view taken by Peter's followers, predominately Jews who had 'converted' to Christianity, with maybe a few who had become Christians through the Jewish rite of circumcision. Peter challenges their attitude. I am deeply unsettled when I hear talk of converting those on a different path to God, especially in our pluralistic society. There was no 'church' in Jesus' time, and we have no evidence that it was the intention of Jesus to start a new 'faith'. He challenged the Jewish leaders over their interpretation of the law and suggested that they were making it too difficult for people to relate to God. Although a Jew, his understanding of God, and his message of God's love for all was not meant as an alternative so much as a rethink.

I, like many Christians today, believe there is one God but many paths to know God. The way of Jesus is one path, which for me feels the right path, but it is not the only path. Over the years I have had many conversations with people about the interpretation of John 14:6 'I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' My thoughts are that, as with all the gospels, this is an interpretation of the words of Jesus written down long after they were spoken and probably at least third or fourth hand. Significantly for me they do not say that the only way to God is through Jesus, the notion of the Father is a Christian notion, a part of the trinitarian motif for God, but only a



When we reach out to the stranger,  
offering welcome and embrace;  
then the Christ of cross and manger  
shines in every human face.  
In our hands outstretched in greeting,  
all the strength of love is shown;  
in the openness of meeting,  
Christ's compassion is made known.

In our search for fairer giving,  
we discern the Spirit's call;  
in the struggle for Just living,  
God demands no less than all.  
In our speaking, in our doing,  
all the hope of love is known;  
in our dream of earth's renewing  
Holy Wisdom shall be known.

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Tune Hyfrydol Listen [here](#)

### **Prayers**

Loving God as we worship together we bring to you our prayers of concern and commitment. We are concerned for the world in which we live and the injustice we witness daily in the news, prejudice, discrimination and inequality feed unrest and violence and shows our lack of love for one another. We feel overwhelmed and yet in you is all power and the path to justice and joy. As we walk the way of Jesus may we seek your wisdom and share your love; as we live our lives may we make loving and wise decisions that will change the world one act at a time.

**Eternal God, may we walk the way of love,  
building gentle, generous and gifting relationships within creation.**

Creator God we bring our concerns for the planet and its life. Recognising the part we have played through following the patterns of previous generations without question, and denying the need to change our ways we pray for the courage to challenge the decisions that harm the planet and the people who live on it, our brothers and sisters in creation. May we support those who seek to find sustainable ways of living in harmony with creation, and may we be prepared to let go of the treasured possessions on to which we hold without thinking, so that all may live safely within the glory that is your creation.

**Eternal God, may we walk the way of love,  
building gentle, generous and gifting relationships within creation.**

Source of all being we bring our concerns for the church. We have struggled with isolation and separation; we have missed one another and the things which have been so important in our expression of following Jesus but you have been with us in our struggles and you have offered new ways of expressing what makes us church. As we prepare to return to our buildings may we hold on to the new ideas and the new ways whilst celebrating being together once more. May we continue to reach out in new and creative ways to those still seeking a path into the knowledge of your oneness, creating spaces and opportunities to share, support and encourage one another.

**Eternal God, may we walk the way of love,  
building gentle, generous and gifting relationships within creation.**

Loving God, our source our guide and our goal, we bring to you our concerns for family and friends, and for ourselves.

Silence

Your love surrounds us, may those in distress sense your presence with them and know your love holding them, may those who are challenged feel your Spirit guiding them, and those who are experiencing doubts and questions find a safe place in which to explore them. As we reflect on the love we share may we recognise where your Spirit is leading us to deeper and more generous loving, challenging us to give of ourselves to build your kingdom, and may we be compassionate in everything we do.

**Eternal God, may we walk the way of love,  
building gentle, generous and gifting relationships within creation.**

In Jesus name we pray. 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 hymn**

For everyone born a place at the table

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.