



Seacliff Uniting Church
Online Worship & Electronic Resources
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Trinity Sunday

CALL TO WORSHIP

We light a light in the name of the Maker
*who lit the world and
breathed the breath of life for us..*

We light a light in the name of the Son,
*who saved the world and
stretched out his hands to us..*

We light a light in the name of the Spirit
*who encompasses the world
and blesses our souls with yearning..*

***We light three lights for the Trinity of love
God beyond us, God beside us, God within us.***

God is always far higher than our loftiest thoughts,
much closer than our most intimate experiences,
far more complex and awesome than our best creeds,
and more grace-full than our most sacred hopes.
Let us worship God!

HYMN: HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty,
early in the morning to you our praise shall be;
holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore you,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before you,
God everlasting through eternity.

Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide you,
though the sinful human eye your glory may not see,
you alone are holy, there is none beside you
perfect in power, in love and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty,
all your works shall praise your name in earth and sky and sea;
holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Awesome and majestic God,
your creative power, your glory and holiness
are beyond our imagining,
yet you chose to pour your love into our hearts
in a most personal way –
by sharing our humanity in Jesus Christ.
He revealed the human face of your love,
and through his sacrificial love demonstrated
the depth of divine love for us.
You equip us for our journey through life and beyond,
by breathing new and everlasting life into our very beings,
through the gift of the Holy Spirit.
God - Creator, Redeemer, and renewing Power of our lives - we worship and adore you.

God, creator of all the wonders which make up this world...
When we treat our part of the world as a commodity
to be used rather than a gift to be cherished;
When we fail to care for earth and all that you have created: compassionate God,
Forgive us.

God, bearer of our humanity in Jesus Christ...
When we fail to live out the commandment to love one another as Jesus loves us;
preferring to judge and criticise others
rather than accepting them as persons loved and accepted by you; compassionate God,
Forgive us.

God, giver of the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us into all truth...
When we betray the truth of the gospel through our lack of integrity
or our abuse of ethical and moral principles; compassionate God,
Forgive us.

God - Creator, Redeemer, Life-giving Spirit –
fill us anew with your creative power
that we may be reborn in your image,
glorifying you in and through who we are,
and what we say and do and pray in Jesus' name.
Amen

God delights to forgive our sin and restore
us to newness of life, healed and whole
through Jesus Christ, our Lord
Our sins are forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

BIBLE READINGS

2 Corinthians 13:11-13 & Psalm 8

PRAYER

Ever-loving God,
you have disclosed yourself to us as a loving creator,
redeemer and inspirer.

We have named you Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
and worship you as One God,
the source and goal of all things seen and unseen.

Please continue to give us your light,
that we may walk in it without stumbling,
to the praise and glory of your holy name.
Amen!

MESSAGE: FOUNDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LIVING

Every now and then, usually after school Naplan test results are released, someone will lament what they perceive to be the decline in educational standards and will issue a call for a return to the three “Rs”; reading, ‘riting and ‘rithmetic. Which is a curious call really, given that only one of those words actually begins with the letter “R”.

Did you ever wonder where the term three “Rs” came from? There are several theories as to the origin of the expression, one common one being that in 1795 Sir William Curtis, who became Lord Mayor of London despite being illiterate, proposed a toast to reading, ‘riting and ‘rithmetic.

Whatever the origin, the argument about a return to these disciplines is centred on the belief of its proponents that education has moved away from these foundational elements and consequently our children’s learning suffers. I make no comment on whether or not they’re right, but I think we all recognise that in education, indeed in life in general, there are foundational basics which need to be in place to enhance future learning and life. Without them individuals can be disadvantaged.

Our reading for this morning, Psalm 8, lays out three “R’s” which are foundational for building a life. Psalm 8 is, I think, one of the most uplifting Psalms and one which offers some valuable guidelines for effective living.

Reverence for God

The first “R” is reverence for God. This Psalm is well-known for its high view of the human person, but it starts and ends with God: “*O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*” Along with the rest of the Bible, the Psalm affirms the reality of God and maintains that human life centred on God will lead to a life well-lived.

In my reading of the Bible, it never sets out to try and prove the existence and the reality of God. God can be neither proved nor disproved. What our faith tradition does do, however, is to endeavour to shape our view and understanding of God. It pays a lot of attention to how we image God because the image of God that we carry will impact not only our faith but our life.

Unfortunately many people come to their adult years with an image of God which has a negative impact on them.

The well-known minister of a former generation, Harry Emerson Fosdick, told the story of a young man who came to see him in his office one day. When the young man sat down he blurted out the statement: “I don’t believe in God.” Maybe he was trying to unsettle the minister but Fosdick calmly received the words and then responded’ “Tell me about the God you don’t believe in.” The young man launched into a very

negative description of God. You know the sort of thing; he talked about God being distant, authoritarian, punitive and threatening and so forth. When he'd finished Fosdick, remaining unflustered, leant forward and said, "Son, I don't believe in that God either."

There are some images of God which, quite frankly, are not worth revering. Some images of God which when embraced do nothing to enhance our lives. In my work as a spiritual director, one of the main questions I found myself helping people work through was their image of God. From different life experiences or from encounters with various people, they had formed an image of God which was having a negative effect on them.

But that is not the God the writer of Psalm 8 is writing about. There the author looks to creation as a source of information about what God is like. In language reminiscent of the creation story in Genesis, the Psalmist goes into raptures about what this God has created. And like Genesis, the Psalm is not interested in the creation story as being primarily about the origins of existence in the past but about the universe's dependence on God. More so, the text paints an image not only of the universe's dependence on God, but also on God's utter dependability. The composer of Psalm 8, writing not out of theory but out of experience, portrays a God who is trustworthy, good, compassionate and beautiful.

That's why the Psalm starts and ends with praise of God in creation and invites us to embrace a life with God as part of the foundation of our lives. This is the essence of our faith, for faith is not the supposition that something is true; faith is the assurance that someone is there; and not only there, but there for us.

Respect for Self

If Psalm 8 begins and ends with an affirmation of the reality of God, at its centre is a strong affirmation of the dignity of the human person. In reflecting on the human person the conclusion of the Psalmist is that God, *"made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour."*

He reached that conclusion after looking at the night sky in all its splendour and majesty and sensing that the human person too is magnificent.

Perhaps there have been occasions when we have looked around at this magnificent creation and wonder if we matter at all. We look at the greatness and majesty around and feel we pale into insignificance. Have you ever felt that? You go out on a star lit night and feel very small?

But the writer of the Psalm invites us to take a different look. We wax eloquently about the beauty of creation; majesty, colour, splendour; sunrises, sunsets and star filled nights. Psalmist asks; do you know what else is really beautiful, magnificent and wonderful? You are! One of the hardest things in the world is to convince people they are what this Psalm says about them; a little lower than God, crowned with glory and honour.

Brennan Manning in his book, The Wisdom of Tenderness, tells the story of Ed Farrell. Farrell had gone to Ireland for his uncle's 80th birthday. The day dawned and Manning and his uncle Seamus rose early to walk along the shores of Lake Killarney. At one point they sat in silence 20 minutes taking in scene. Then his uncle began to do a strange thing (at least for an 80 year old). He began to skip along the shore of the lake. Farrell commented, "Uncle Seamus, you look very happy. Do you want to tell me why?" "Yes" said the old man with tears running down his face, "You see, the Father is very fond of me; so very fond of me."

What I would like you to know is that the Father is so very fond of you. So that's our second 'R'; respect for ourselves and all human life.

Responsibility for the World.

Not only has God gifted the human person with an incredible dignity, but has also bestowed on us an amazing purpose. God has called us to exercise care over and for all creation in the same way that God would care for it.

This is the notion of the word dominion. Speaking of the human person the Psalmist says: “*You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet.*” These words are, of course, reminiscent of the creation story in Genesis where God says to the first humans, “... *have dominion over... every living thing that moves upon the earth.*”

But it doesn't take too long to realise all is not as it should be with this world. Last Friday was World Environment Day a day which calls us to celebrate the created order but also to lament its degradation. One of the reasons for this situation is that we have taken that word 'dominion' to assume we can do what we like to the created order. We've seen it as granting autonomy, self-rule and the ability to treat creation as we like regardless of consequences. And we are now reaping the reward for treating creation in such a careless manner in the degradation of the environment.

However, dominion is not a license to do whatever we like with the created world. What it is really calling us to do is be good managers, good stewards of the world; to treat it as God would treat it for God has given us the privilege of being co-creators with God in the care of this as yet unfinished creation.

Most people, I think, acknowledge that we need to treat the world and all within it with greater respect. We know, too, that there are any numbers of actions we can take which will lessen our negative impact on creation. This is, I think, one of the lessons we have learnt within this COVID crisis. Detached from our normal day to day activities we have seen a decline, for example, in air pollution and carbon emissions and consequently a small but possibly temporary improvement in and for our environment.

I would like to suggest that one step toward a more permanent improvement actually connects with the previous point I was making; the need to respect ourselves. It seems to me that as a species we have lost respect for our world, disconnected from its beauty, and become immune to the consequences of our impact on the environment. I also believe there is a connection between the current environmental crisis and the way people too often disrespect themselves. That is to say, I don't believe people who do not respect themselves will ever respect the environment. If we want to make lasting changes to the environment, one action that is needed is to help people to respect themselves, and a part of that is in the way we treat one another.

For any building to stand, it needs solid foundations. For any life to stand it needs solid foundations. Life is a great gift given for us to enjoy, savour, wonder at, but we won't discover that if we don't attend to the basics. Psalm 8 has given us three of those basics: reverence for God, respect for self and responsibility for creation.

Three 'R's'; 3 foundations for effective living.

OFFERING

Creating God,
lover of all creation
we give ourselves over to gentle travel through this universe.

Redeeming Saviour
lover of all life,
we give ourselves over to care-filled loving of this all.

Guiding Spirit,
lover of all truth,
we give ourselves over to truthful living in this world.

May all our living shape a world of love;
Maker, Redeemer, Lover of us all.
Amen

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Self-giving God,
it is your nature to reach out beyond yourself,
expressing who you are
in creativity, justice and love.

Supremely in Jesus,
you show us that
to give is to receive,
to empty ourselves is to be filled,
that in giving our lives we find ourselves.

For the invitation to share in your life
by the giving of ourselves, we thank you.

We pray, our God, for the many in need
who are represented today by
our service and commitments.

For those who are economically disadvantaged,
denied the simple things of life we so easily take for granted.

For the lonely,
who except for the caring hand and heart of a volunteer
may never have contact with another person

For those who are fragile and who fear life,
who need the strength of another to perform even simple tasks in life

For those who through age and illness are in need of extra help.

For those, who for various reasons,
do not share in the opportunities to grow and develop their potential.

For young lives seeking guidance and wisdom
in a world of competing voices.

We know too our God, of many more who need help but:
do not know to whom to turn,
are fearful or embarrassed to ask for help,
cannot find the physical strength or strength of will to seek help.

We pray too, for the many thousands
who willingly, sacrificially and lovingly give themselves.:
that their enthusiasm would be maintained,
their physical stamina sustained, and
their joy in service be upheld.

We ask this in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.*

Give us today our daily bread.

*Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.*

*Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.*

*For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and forever.*

Amen

HOLY COMMUNION

Welcome

Our tradition says at the Last Supper Jesus,
sharing bread and wine, invited the disciples to share his journey.
Here today, through bread and wine,
we renew our journey with Jesus and his disciples.
Here today, through bread and wine,
we renew our unity with one another,
and with all those who have gone before us in this place.
Here today, through bread and wine,
we renew our communion with the earth
and our interwovenness with the broken ones of the world.

Peace

Christ is our peace.
He has reconciled us to God
in one body by the cross.
*We meet in his name and
share his peace.*

The peace of the Lord
be always with you.
And also with you.

Remembering

We recall the night, Jesus, when you took the loaf, made from grain harvested with sweat and oppression, beaten and sifted, ground and kneaded, baked and given with love – and declared it holy.

We recall the night, Jesus, when you took the cup, made from the careful harvest of fruit, crushed, filtered, fermented, and poured with love – and declared it holy.

As we recall again that sacred night, that sacred meal, we also lift the bread, bless it, break it and claim that this bread is broken and given with mystery and mercy.

You asked us to remember you – your body, your humanness and the love you have for us. We remember.

Likewise, we lift the cup, bless it, and share it in its mystery and mercy.

You ask us to remember your life force, your blood, your humanness and the love you have for us. And so we remember.

For these gifts of grain and fruit, we thank you.
For these mysteries of our faith, we thank you.
For your mercy, we thank you.

Prayer

The Lord is here.
God's Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to offer thanks and praise.

It is indeed right to praise you, surprising God.
From the beginning of time you have created and are creating still.
You transform us and make us new each day.
Through your love you have brought us to a new way of living.
Even when we turn from you and think we know all there is to know,
you do not give up on us.
You wait.
You try a new way to bring us back to you.
Most surprising of all,
you came to live as one of us
experiencing the highs and lows of life
the hopes and fears,
the wonderings and the questionings.
In Christ you welcomed all kinds of people
to share in the new life of your kingdom.
You call us to be welcoming and compassionate,
proclaiming the good news of your love for the world.

Gather us to your table, Lord.
Through your Holy Spirit
bless these gifts we offer here,
bless all of us who meet here;
make us one,
to love and serve you all our days.

Amen

Breaking the Bread

Christ is the bread of life,
food for healing and wholeness.

Christ is the cup of hope,
wellspring of resurrection life.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

*May we who share these gifts
be found in Christ
and Christ in us.*

The Lamb of God

Jesus, Wisdom of God,
have mercy on us.

Jesus, Compassionate Healer,
have mercy on us

Jesus, Liberator of creation,
grant us peace.

The Communion

Prayer

*God of love, God of compassion,
may the celebration of the wonder
and the mystery of your Presence
strengthen and enable us to be your body the church. AMEN*

HYMN: SENT FORTH BY GOD'S BLESSING

Sent forth by God's blessing, our true faith confessing,
the people of God from his table take leave.
The supper is ended: may now be extended
the fruits of his service in all who believe.
The seed of his teaching, our hungry souls reaching,
shall blossom in action for all humankind.
His grace shall incite us, his love shall unite us
to work for his kingdom, his purpose to find.

With praise and thanksgiving to God ever-living
the tasks of our everyday life we will face,
our faith ever sharing, in love ever caring,
embracing as neighbours all those of each race.
One feast that has fed us, one light that has led us,
unite us as one in his life that we share.
Then may all the living, with praise and thanksgiving,
give honour to Christ and his name that we bear.

Omer Westendorf
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BLESSING

Go into this week, blessed with
the creative love of God,
the grace and peace of Jesus Christ,
the truth and purpose of the Holy Spirit

Blessing Song: “Praise God the Source of life and birth.”

Praise God
the Source of life and birth.
Praise God the Word,
who came to earth.
Praise God the Spirit, holy flame.
All glory, honour to God’s name.

FOR REFLECTION

- Was there anything that stood out for you in the readings, message of service today?
- How has the directive to subdue the earth and have dominion over its creatures (Genesis 1:26-28 & Psalm 8) been understood in a way that is harmful to, rather than caring for the environment?
- Today is Trinity Sunday. What does this idea say to you? About God? About us?
- The beautiful Psalm 8 also links God's self-disclosure in creation with the human purpose and role in God's world. For the psalmist, why do human beings exist, and what is our role?
- How is Seacliff UC being faithful to our responsibilities as stewards of the earth?

SOME QUOTES

Madeleine L'Engle, A Wrinkle in Time, 20th century

"I don't understand it any more than you do, but one thing I've learned is that you don't have to understand things for them to be."

John Calvin, 16th century

"You cannot in one glance survey this most vast and beautiful system of the universe, in its wide expanse, without being completely overwhelmed by the boundless force of its brightness."

Barbara Brown Taylor, 21st century

"The only reality [of God] I can describe with any accuracy is my own limited experience of what I think may be God: the More, the Really Real, the Luminous Web That Holds Everything in Place."

Thomas Merton, 20th century

"Life is this simple. We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent, and God is shining through it all the time."

Henry David Thoreau, 19th century

"This curious world we inhabit is more wonderful than convenient; more beautiful than it is useful; it is more to be admired and enjoyed than used."