

CALL TO WORSHIP: (based on Psalm 66: 1-4)

Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of God's name;

Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power"

Let us worship God the source of life. Let us give praise for Christ's risen presence among us.

PRAYER OF PRAISE AND ADORATION

We worship you, O God, with gladness in our hearts and words of praise on our lips for you have revealed the human face of your love in Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour. Through him, you have gifted us with the Spirit of truth who enables us to be the human faces of your love wherever we worship, witness and serve you. As you have so graciously blessed us, may we bless others in Jesus' name and through the power of the Holy Spirit, your everlasting Spirit of truth. Amen

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

In today's gospel Jesus announces that we will receive another Advocate from God who will be with us forever and that this is the Spirit of truth.

There will be an opportunity during the prayer of confession to ponder four questions:

What truth does our worship reveal?

What truth do our lives reveal?

What truths do our communities reveal?

What truths does our world reveal?

What truth does our worship reveal?

time of silence

Living God, forgive us when our worship reveals other than the centrality of Jesus Christ in whom we meet you. Retrieve our wandering minds and fix them on the wonder and holiness of the divine clothed in human flesh. Holy God, inspire and renew our worship with the Spirit of truth.

What truth do our lives reveal?

time of silence

Eternal God, forgive us when we worship idols of our own making - gods fashioned for our own selfish ends. Merciful God, bless and renew our lives with the Spirit of truth.

What truths do our communities reveal?

time of silence

Loving God, forgive us when we ignore the pain and hopelessness of so many people - young and old - in our communities and so deny Christ's commandment to love one another in suffering, self-giving ways.

Compassionate God, inflame and renew our love with the Spirit of truth.

What truths does our world reveal?

time of silence

Creator God, forgive us when our desire to maintain our standard of living contributes to the poverty of life experienced by countless people and to the growing environmental problems throughout this world.

God of all righteousness, restore and renew our sense of justice with the Spirit of truth. Amen

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Christ suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring us to God. (based on 1 Peter 3: 18) So hear again this great good news, that in Jesus Christ we are forgiven, we are loved, we are made new. Thanks be to God!

READING: John 14:15-21

MESSAGE

Funerals – often speak of the legacy that a person leaves behind for those who follow. A legacy not measured in money or possessions but in the kind of life they lived. I look back on the Legacy of my own parents and Grandparents – a legacy of faith, of love in action, of serving others. It's something that inspires me in my own actions and choices but more than that it is something that is part of who I am today.

Today's passage is part of a wider conversation that Jesus had with his disciples before his death –preparing his disciples for the time when he will no longer be with them. Jesus emphasized how His followers were to continue the legacy He was leaving: through living a life that He modelled for them and obeying his commandments. Basic to all those commandments is the one to “Love one another as I have loved you” A command which Jesus issued right after washing the disciples feet. (John 13)

Throughout the New Testament, we encounter many definitions and descriptions of love. We know that God is love and that God loves us so much that Jesus, God's only son, was given to us. "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant" _ (1 Cor. 13:4-7)
Ultimately if we are really to understand what it is to love we need to look at how Jesus loved.

Throughout the Gospel stories we see Jesus advocating on behalf of, and in ministry with, the poor and the marginalized, women, persons with disabilities, lepers, strangers and the imprisoned. He fed the hungry and healed the sick. And the list goes on. These are all part of His legacy of love expressed in service of others. A legacy of love that I see lived out today in the lives of his followers, in the lives of our congregational members. Part of his legacy is also his willingness to lay his life down for them and for the sake of all. Loving is not just doing nice things for people, it can be costly, and we can get hurt in the process. Love is not just sharing our left overs – it costs something. It means going without for the sake of the other. It means sticking in there when things aren't working out and you are misunderstood and criticized and even rejected as Jesus was.

To love as Jesus loved is not easy, in fact on our own it would be impossible. But Jesus leaves with us a further Legacy, that of the gift of the Holy Spirit, that same Spirit that was with Jesus and enabled Jesus to love and minister and serve in the way he did.

Jesus is not leaving us to do it on our own. “I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever. Jesus himself is an Advocate sent by God to the world, to reconcile it, to love it, and to draw humanity closer to God through his life, death, and resurrection. Thus, after Jesus was no longer physically with His followers, the Spirit would walk with them and guide them the way Jesus walked with them and guided them. The Spirit would be with the followers as Jesus was with them. It was as if Jesus knew His followers would need assistance living a life of love as He, the ultimate embodiment of love, did. Fortunately, for them and for us, the Spirit they were given would be with them forever: it was *with* them and *within* them. The Spirit would be part of His legacy, reminding His followers of His legacy of love and guiding them as they strove to live into it.

The Greek word used here in reference to the gift of the Spirit is “Paraclete”
- variously translated Advocate – helper – Counsellor – Comforter.

As **helper**, the Spirit empowers us to serve and care for their neighbor. As **comforter** the Spirit comes alongside us, bringing hope to the hopeless and comfort to the grieving and suffering in our midst. As **advocate**, the Spirit gives witness to Jesus, putting forward his case to humanity. The image of **counsellor** speaks of one who offers guidance and direction. It is just one Greek word, and yet it offers so many possibilities for us to engage one another in Jesus' healing, life giving presence. –Perhaps you might like to think about which of these words you most need at this time.

One way of translating the word “paraclete is as “comforter” we need to understand that this role of the Holy Spirit is not simply to give us a hug or a warm fuzzy and say “there, there it will be all ok”
‘comforter’ brings to mind a snuggie, something that wraps around us when we are sick and keeps us snug and warm. The word “Comforter” can refer to a thick bed covering like a doona,

Sometimes we want to crawl under the doona and keep our selves safe for a while.” That’s ok.
But as the Pime Minister said “We can’t stay under the doona” we need to come out and face the challenges of reality

The word “comfort” comes from the Latin to “Strengthen greatly” “com” = here /with “fortes” =Strong
The gift of a comforter is the gift of one who is here with us to strengthen us so we can come out from under the doona.

Overall the Basic meaning of the Greek word “Paraclete “ is “one who comes alongside another”

That is, one who brings help, consolation, comfort, and encouragement to another.

As advocate Jesus comes alongside human beings by fully sharing in their human life and revealing the God who desires to do the same. He then promises the gift of the Holy Spirit as “another Advocate” that will continue to be with them. As followers of Jesus’, filled with the Spirit, we too are to come alongside others to comfort, encourage, and serve them. This is what it means to love Jesus and do the will of the Father.

As individuals, we are advocates within our personal relationships; making sacrifices out of love for others, forgiving, being forgiven, and working towards reconciliation in our relationships.

In addition to showing love as individuals, we are to show love as a community of faith. We are to advocate as a church. We are to preach and teach messages of love. We are to advocate through the hospitality we show to those who are most active in the church, towards those who visit once in a while, and towards those who need a warm place to sleep or to receive food. As a public witness of God's love we will strive to dismantle systems that keep people in poverty by advocating for human rights. We will listen to people in the community who are deemed voiceless as we meet them in the community or when they enter our churches. We will journey with people as they seek to grow deeper in their relationships with God and with their neighbour.

Once again not an easy task. The church is made up of diverse people with different passions, schedules and resources. Yet we strive to come together, bound by our love for God and commitment to Jesus' legacy.

I am sure the disciples were overwhelmed by the life they were summoned to live. We too can feel overwhelmed and inadequate to the task. However, like the disciples, we have the Holy Spirit as our advocate and helper “You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you.” What ever we may say about this gift of the Advocate, the Spirit of truth, it is clear that this is an offer to us, from God to enter into a deeper relationship of intimacy with God: “I will not leave you orphaned” is the enduring promise.

Through belief in Christ, and the indwelling of the HS, we know ourselves to be children of God. The crucifixion will indeed bring to an end the incarnation, and Jesus’ physical presence among us, but the resurrection is the inauguration of the new life in Christ. The ongoing presence of God in our lives through the Spirit.

“On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you” (vs. 20). The heart of God/heart of Love, is what we see in Jesus. When we centre our life on that of Jesus and the love he shows then that heart of God/heart of love/heart of Christ is in us. “Those who keep my commandments are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.” (vs. 21) Jesus wants us to follow him deep into the experience of the love of God, into the place where we will know ourselves so completely and utterly and unconditionally loved that we will be full to overflowing with love ourselves and set free to love others recklessly without even needing them to reciprocate it or validate us in any way.

This Spirit is still moving among and within us today as we continue Jesus' work of love! We have not been left alone in the task we are called to as believers. But how are we to live into Jesus' legacy? How do we reflect, live into, and embody love?

I think the answer is in the words of a Song I have sung many times

Spirit of the living, God fall afresh on me. Spirit of the living, God fall afresh on me.

Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

This is our prayer. To be God's vessels of love, not only holding it within us, but pouring it out for others to receive as we receive.

Melt me: work within me to be more loving. Remove aspects of myself that keep me from loving fully, from forgiving, and for asking for forgiveness.

Mold me: into the person you created me to be.

Fill me: with your love, compassion, indignation, courage and wisdom.

Use me: to continue your ministry of love in the world, following your example, inspiring the church and the world to create not only a present reality of love, but a future one as well.

There is a more recent verse of this hymn that continues the prayer saying:

Spirit of the living God, move among us all; make us one in heart and mind, make us one in love: humble, caring, selfless, sharing. Spirit of the living God, fill our lives with love.

As we reflect on the many ways we have shared and received love, may we remember the many ways in which we can still grow in our ability to love. This way we can leave a legacy of words and actions to equip those who are entering the world behind us.

Song: bound by love ATOK 373

1. Bound by love to love each other won by love that gave it's all
Moulded by a loving Spirit freed by love to heed loves' call.
2. Bound by love to see the needy caring where there's grief and pain
Acting as we're each enabled freed by love to help again.
3. Bound by love now to be givers forfeiting our selfish wills
Learning from our master lover freed by love to act for him.
4. Bound by love that knows no boundaries willing simply to obey
Seeing Christ in all who are hurting freed by love to love his way.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

- For those who are struggling financially because of the Corona Virus or because of bush fires and drought.
- For those in Government who have to make difficult decisions within the country and in relation to countries around us.
- For medical staff both here and overseas often working under incredible pressure
- For those who feel isolated in sickness and grief and whose emotional well-being has taken a battering.
- For the church as it seeks to embrace others in love and continues to witness to the love, peace, hope and joy that is ours in Christ.

We thank you God that we are never alone, that your Spirit is ever present to comfort and restore. Hear the prayers we have offered, and grant your strength wisdom and compassion to all. In the name of Christ Amen

OFFERING

God invites us to share in the grace of giving, for in giving from our hearts we are indeed blessed as co-workers in the ministry and work of Christ.

Prayer:

Dear God, we would like to be as generous as you are. Imbue us with the joy and pleasure of giving ourselves wholly to your good and generous purposes. Amen

BLESSING

We no longer see Jesus but we are the Body of Christ, spirited and alive, moving in our time.

God is with us always for where there is love, there is God.

Go and be the Body of Christ, fulfil love's expectation and the Spirit will be your advocate forever.