



The Uniting Church in Australia  
**SHEPPARTON UNITING CHURCH**

**Order of Service for**

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

**GATHERING AS GOD'S PEOPLE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

All around us God is looking for those  
who will join in serving others.

***It is as if God is planting seeds of compassion in us  
watching for them to bloom in our lives.***

In our midst, Jesus is walking among us,  
tending our hearts, watering us with grace.

***It is as if Jesus is trusting that our souls  
will grow big enough to welcome everyone.***

From morning to evening, the Spirit is at work,  
gently tending this garden called life.

***It is as if the Spirit has found the perfect spots  
to bring forth crops of justice and peace.*** Thom Shuman

Let us worship God.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**HYMN *Tis 168*** *For the fruits of all creation*

**PRAYERS OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION**

Creator God  
your creation sings your praise:  
seeds dropped into the earth  
silently unfolding in root and leaf,  
growing to maturity as you have planned.

Creator God  
your people sing your praise:  
knowing your ceaseless love and care,  
sharing your nurturing power,  
maturing to full personhood in your grace.

Gracious God  
you are indeed generous:  
you risk the wonder of your anointing us  
but you see our innermost being.

Caring God  
you are indeed generous:  
you risk the power of your Spirit in our lives  
but we often take it as our own.

Nurturing God  
you are indeed generous:  
you risk the sowing of your seeds in our lives  
but we often allow them to wither or die.

Forgive us for not being ready to receive your seeds, O Lord  
and help us to live as new people created in your image. **Amen**

### **DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS**

'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation'.

The promise is for each one of us

as we hear Christ's word of grace to us:

'Your sins are forgiven'.

***Thanks be to God***

**DOXOLOGY TIS 769** *Now to the king of heaven*

### **RECEIVING GOD'S WORD**

#### **AN EARLY WORD**

A recipe Ingredients: seven boys God having second thoughts? a prophet a crown Method??

#### **THE READINGS**

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet

***A light to our path.***

**First Reading** 1 Samuel 15.43 - 16.13

**Psalm Response** Psalm 20

**Psalm Response, Psalm 20**

May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble,  
the name of the God of Jacob defend you.

***May God send you help from the sanctuary  
and sustain you from Zion.***

May God remember all your offerings  
and accept your burnt sacrifices.

***May God grant you what your heart desires  
and fulfil all your plans.***

May we shout for joy over your triumph  
and in the name of God wave our banners.

***May Yahweh grant all your requests.***

Now I know God saves the anointed,  
answering from the holy place in heaven  
with saving might.

***Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses,***

***but we boast in the name of our God.***

They have bowed down and fallen,  
but we have risen and stand firm.

All **Save us O God;**  
**answer when we call.** ICEL

**The Gospel** Mark 4. 26- 34

Lord, may your Word live in us  
**and bear much fruit to your glory.**

### **REFLECTION SEEDY KINGDOM PARABLES**

This is our first Sunday in green - since February 7. Some churches call this Ordinary time. For me, the season After Pentecost is the season of growth. And it lasts for six months. So it doesn't surprise me that today's Gospel is about growing!

We reflect with Mark on the Kingdom, God's Reign. What is this mysterious Kingdom really like? In today's Gospel, Jesus tells two parables to explain what God's Reign is like; he gives four pictures of the Kingdom.

Now the way we understand parables is like this: two things are put together. The one we know well helps us to understand something much more difficult, more mysterious. But today it's not that easy. Even with the green of growth colouring these pictures of God's Reign.

Listen again: 'The kingdom of heaven is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how ... But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.'

What a strange explanation of the kingdom of heaven! A farmer, a gardener, who plants seeds and then forgets them, ignores them until there is a crop to harvest.

Now, at first look, this parable seems to be about the need to bring in the harvest, which is why the seeds are planted - but it seems that our help or work is not necessary after the seed has been scattered. It just grows without our care. In other words, God will work through the growing season and will bring a harvest, without our help. Now that's very encouraging news, isn't it? We do our bit; God does the rest - and we come in for the harvest. How does the ministry of this congregation sit with this understanding of the parable? The congregation's mission?

But there is more: if we are not required to help in Kingdom work, no matter what we actually do, we have no control over the Kingdom. Nothing we do can influence it in any way. Some of us will find this frightening or uncomfortable. Others will relax in the grace of God, because it is also wonderful! We can only receive the gift of the Kingdom.

What is the Kingdom of heaven like? Listen to the second parable: It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs...

Now this parable might be telling us that God can take tiny things and grow them into large ones. A bit like the boy David... That's pretty obvious, isn't it? We've grown up in this understanding.

But, maybe, it is saying something about how the Kingdom works in our lives - just as the mustard was not one of Israel's glorious cedars or shade trees, but just a shrub. Yet even that shrub, ever spreading, offered shelter to flocks of birds. Many of us will not think of ourselves as important disciples. But Jesus has an amazing capacity to see the kingdom seed – the divine spark – planted deep inside in all kinds of people. That's the Kingdom! And that is very encouraging, to Jesus' hearers, to Mark's community of faith, and to us!

But there is more than this for our understanding of these two seedy parables! In both of them, Jesus is having some fun, is joking. What gardener or farmer plants seeds and doesn't t turn up until the grain is ripe, the carrots are ready to pull, the flowers to pick? Jesus' hearers got the joke. And that mustard seed? An even bigger joke! No-one would plant mustard seed, because it was a weed, rioting through the garden, taking over the land. Perhaps its only grace was providing shelter for birds. Birds who swoop on the seed and eat it. Pests, undesirables, people no-one wants to have anything to do with, certainly not in our church...

Think carefully about these seedy parables and be ready to learn more about the Kingdom on Sunday.

**HYMN *TiS* 745** *Seek ye first the kingdom of God*

## **DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING**

## **NOTICES**

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Botswana, Zimbabwe; Broadford  
GSWNS

Generous God  
we thank you for sharing your life with us  
in the hidden, unseen times of growth,  
in the struggles and storms of our lives  
as you remake us into your new people.

We pray for your church, O Lord.  
Grant that she may grow and flourish as you plan  
rather than as we think she should be.  
Let your plentiful seed take root in her  
so that all people may find a home in her.  
Bless this congregation,  
in its worship and ministry.  
Bless the work of all the churches in this district.  
Be with the Broadford congregation  
as they plant Kingdom seeds.

We pray for your world, O Lord.  
As your seeds of justice and mercy are rooted  
may they grow to shelter all people  
from the evils we help to perpetuate.  
Grant your blessing on asylum seekers across the world  
and your strength to all who work to help them.

Strengthen the people of Botswana and Zimbabwe  
as they seek to build communities of grace.  
Help all nations as they seek to conquer Covid-19,  
especially India, and all less developed countries.  
Grant G7 leaders the courage to work for climate change.

*The prayer continues*

We pray for all whose needs are urgent and unanswered:  
bless the seriously ill and those who are dying;  
those who long for a new life but are imprisoned by habit;  
those who have no-one to share life with.  
We pray specially for Winter Night Shelter,  
here and in projects in Victoria and Queensland.  
May these homeless folk find shelter, welcome and acceptance.

#### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

*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 ours  
now and for ever. Amen*

#### **BEING SENT ON GOD'S MISSION**

**HYMN** *TiS 216 Rejoice, the Lord is King*

#### **WORD OF MISSION AND BLESSING**

Go now, in the goodness of God,  
to walk in God's way,  
to follow God's Truth,  
to live God's Life  
and to be embraced, now and always,  
by God's blessings.

Sung ***Amen, Amen, Amen***

*McR*