



**Order of Service**  
**14<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

**GATHERING AS GOD'S PEOPLE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

We gather together to worship  
knowing that God is already here among us;  
knowing that there is nothing that separates us  
from the presence of God.

***We come with joy,  
in confidence and hope,  
knowing that God is already with us,  
eager to bless us with love.***

Let us worship God.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

We give thanks for the Yorta Yorta Nations  
who nurtured this land and the waters,  
for their stories of the Dreaming,  
for their connection with the sacred,  
for their 'yes' to creation.

We commit ourselves to work for reconciliation. *John van de Laar, adapted*

**HYMN 474** *Here in this place new light is streaming* vv 1,2,4

**PRAYERS OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION**

Creator God,  
your love underpins our existence;  
you love all you have made.  
You are the Saviour of all your people,  
the guide and leader of your church.

***We praise and glorify you, O God.  
You are the foundation of all that is,  
the end to which all creation moves.  
Accept our praise, O Lord.***

Loving God,  
you do all your works in your good time.  
Forgive us for trying to engage you in our time,  
to fit your will to our desires.

Loving God,  
your offering for our sins was once and for all.  
Forgive us for not always taking this gift seriously  
and looking for more than we need.

Loving God,  
your vision is infinite and perfect.  
Forgive us for seeing things in our shortsighted way,  
failing to understand depths and connections.



**Forgive us, Loving God,  
for falling so far from your will for us.  
In Jesus' name. Amen**

### **DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS**

Come and see the grace of God for us:  
we are loved as we are, not as we think we should be.  
We are given forgiveness as a gift.  
Hear Christ's word of grace to us:  
'Your sins are forgiven.'  
**Thanks be to God**

### **DOXOLOGY 772 Worship, honour glory, blessing**

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

**AN EARLY WORD** 1 Samuel 1.4 - 20

### **THE READINGS**

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp for our feet:  
**a light to our path.**

**First Reading** 1 Samuel 1. 4-20

**Canticle** 1 Samuel 2. 1-10

**The Gospel** Mark 13. 1- 8

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

### **REFLECTION**

Back to church! Great joy for many! A sense of longing for some who are more cautious about mingling with others - and who are online or on the phone today.  
For many it's the sense of being together that is so important about returning to church. For others, it's about being able to worship in this beautiful worship space rather than catching glimpses online.  
We're probably weary of being reminded this year, night after night, of the ravages brought by COVID-19, of the changes to our lives and to the suffering of countless people in crisis, in desolation, suffering from COVID... But we are now able to come back to worship together. And we rejoice!  
But today we are not back to where we were in mid-March 2020, or even earlier this year. Things have changed! We worship in this sacred space, but only some of us, well-spaced and masked. Things which we would much prefer not to have happened have taken place.  
So today's Gospel reading speaks clearly - right to us.  
Jesus and the disciples are in the Temple precinct. It's a huge building, with towering walls rising from a massive platform.  
'Look, Teacher! What large stones and what large buildings!' cry the disciples. 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.' Hardly the answer those men from the north were expecting. Jesus' response takes the conversation in a different direction. He has already reminded his disciples that the Temple was built partly through the exploitation of widows and the poor. Here are those stones - very much as they have been lying since the Jewish-Roman War of 66- 70CE. I was amazed by the ruins, and especially the size of the stones. I stepped out some long ones at about 12 metres - 40 feet, the books say.  
We know Mark was writing about 66-70, but we don't know whether he was anticipating the Jewish-Roman War, or whether Jerusalem had actually been destroyed and Mark was responding to this terrible loss in this account for his community of faith.  
When four disciples ask Jesus to clarify his comments, his answer is 'Be careful; there will be false leaders who will try to lead you astray. So, read the signs of the times.' Jesus mentions wars, rumours of wars, earthquakes, famines. This list has a familiar ring - reminding us of the painful groaning of the world at present. The pandemic, the climate crisis now reaching the red zone, leaders who mislead and then reject accountability, the increasing



disparity between wealthy and poor, lack of recognition, Truth-telling and justice for the First People, lack of care for asylum seekers... Our context is different from that of Mark's day, but our realities are changing, just as was happening then.

How do we react to this? Jesus' words have inspired fear, even terror, between then and now. Through the ages, some people, even one Pope, have reacted to the 'signs of the times' as indications that the end of the world is near. They have predicted dates for the end of the world. Clearly they didn't read Mark carefully: when the disciples press Jesus to say when these things will happen, his answer is that they are the beginning of the birth pangs. Watch out! Keep awake! is his word, five times in this chapter.

What are they to watch for? Birth pangs are not signs of death, but of life! Here is Mark's word of hope to his community: the future is hopeful! God is actually, always, about the business of making new futures possible. The world may be running off the rails, but God is doing things beyond human knowledge. Stay awake! - a warning rather like a rumble strip! Because God is free and open to the future. God is making a way where there is no way. The barrenness of Hannah gave place to the birth of Samuel, the great prophet and faithful servant of God, who anointed Saul and David, Israel's first kings. But we may have times of spiritual barrenness in a world where sin and destruction are widespread. We are to remember that God is not the source of these challenges, but rather brings healing and restoration. Keep watch! Beware of fake Christs! God will be at work in the future to bring new life. Things in our world may be changing, but God is not finished yet!

Hannah's song praises God for God's care of those who are downtrodden, poor, weak and vulnerable. Here is our call: to love one another, to care for the poor and vulnerable, to befriend the outsider - in other words, to care as God calls us to. Hannah's song foreshadows how the world's expectations are upended, the world is turned upside down: the hungry are fed, the rich must work to eat, the poor are raised while the powerful are humbled. These are radical changes! God is indeed doing new things, bringing new life, so there is cause for hope - even when the signs of the times trouble or alarm us. Keep awake!

## OUR RESPONSES

**HYMN 686** *God gives us a future*

### OFFERING - DEDICATION

Gracious God, giver of all good gifts,  
may our gifts be used  
to answer the needs of those who call on you,  
to hear their cries for help,  
to offer refuge to those searching for hope  
In Jesus' name                    **Amen**

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Lord of the Church  
we thank you for the faithful witness  
of the saints who worship you in glory.

We pray for your Church.  
As we reflect on this faithful witness,  
grant that your people today  
may love you, with heart, soul, mind and strength  
and their neighbour in the same way.  
Grant them perception to discern  
the signs of the times and their inner truths.  
Bless this congregation  
and those of Yarrawonga and Bundalong;  
bless the Presbytery, its meeting and elections.



We pray for your world.  
As we reflect on the vicious power of recent storms  
and the trail of damage to property,  
help your people to understand the climate crisis  
and to support the ongoing work of COP26  
as leaders continue to grapple with zero emissions.  
Grant peace where there is no peace.

We pray for this land and nation.  
We ask that our leaders may have integrity,  
wisdom and a heart for the people  
so that the vulnerable are cared for.  
Help leaders to put aside personal agendas  
for the greater good of your people.  
Grant that your call to love neighbours as ourselves  
may permeate the hearts of all Australians.

We pray for all whose lives are touched by COVID,  
for nurses, doctors and frontline workers,  
for epidemiologists working to improve cures,  
for those who are victims of the virus,  
and those grieving the loss of loved ones.  
We pray in the name of Jesus and we pray the prayer he taught

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

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

**HYMN 161** *Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord*

**WORD OF MISSION**

As you go from here, remember  
God is always with you.  
No matter what you may face,  
God is right beside you,  
guiding and directing you.  
So do not live in fear but in joyous hope,  
singing God's praises!

**BLESSING**

**THREEFOLD AMEN**

