



**Order of Service**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> January 2022**

**INTROIT** TiS 772 Worship, honour, glory, blessing

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Our land is alive with the glory of God;  
desert sands hum and gum trees dance.  
Brown grasses sing  
and mountains breathe their stillness.  
All created things add their rhythms of delight  
and even stones rap out their praise.  
Let our voices mingle with those of the earth;  
may our hearts join the beat of her joy,  
for our triune God is with us:  
the Source of all being surrounds and upholds us.  
Christ Jesus walks beside and before us.  
The Spirit moves within and between us.  
Blessed be God, our wonder and delight.

**WELCOME**

**Acknowledgement of First Peoples**

We acknowledge the Yorta Yorta Nation the sovereign First Peoples of this place. We honour their elders past, present and emerging together with all descendants of this Nation, for their care for these lands and waters since creation.

**Opening Prayer**

Abba, Father, source of all life,  
answer our call, as a mother responds  
to the cry of a child in the night.

Jesus Christ, teacher and friend, Liberator,  
stand beside us as bearer of our humanity,  
and sharer of God's grace.

Creator Spirit, giver of new life, purposeful guest,  
prod us to praise,  
calling us to be a people of hope and faith in Christ Jesus

**HYMN** TiS 187 Let all creation dance

**LAMENT AND CONFESSION**

Merciful God,  
we, the Second Peoples of this land, lament the injustice and abuse that has so  
often marked the treatment of the First Peoples of this land.  
We lament the way in which their land was taken from them



and their language, culture, law and spirituality despised and suppressed.  
We acknowledge and lament  
the way in which the Christian church  
was so often not only complicit in this process but actively involved in it.

We lament that in our own time  
the injustice and abuse has continued. We have been indifferent.  
Gracious God, hear our confession —  
We have not loved you with our whole heart,  
nor have we loved First Peoples and other neighbours as ourselves.  
God of mercy, forgive us for our failures, past and present and  
give us the grace today to make a fresh start.  
By your Spirit transform our minds and hearts so that we may love as you  
have loved us, that we may boldly speak your truth  
and courageously do your will.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen

**FOCUS ON TONGA** – in picture and prayer

**Hymn** TiS 650 Brother, sister, let me serve you

**BIBLE READINGS:**

Luke 4:14-21

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

**REFLECTION**

Today's gospel presents us with Jesus' first act of public ministry as described in Luke's gospel. Following his river baptism and his long wilderness fast and temptation, Jesus returns to his home country, Galilee. Reports about him have been spreading through the population, probably the result of his healing miracles and his synagogue teaching. So when he comes back home, it's quite a big day in the synagogue. Everybody's there, eager to hear the local boy who's making such a name for himself.

Jesus enters the synagogue on that Sabbath morning. It seems smaller than it looked when he was a child, but otherwise nothing about this familiar place has changed.

Joseph and Mary prepared him well for life. They raised him faithfully in their ancestral religion. He regularly attended Sabbath school and youth group; they brought him to the synagogue every week – as a baby, a child, a teenager.

Now Jesus returns as an adult to the Nazareth synagogue, thankful for the upbringing he received there. He is asked to read the lesson from the prophets. A bulky scroll is brought to him and placed upon the lectern. Jesus, searching for a familiar text, unrolls it to a place near the end of the scroll. In a strong, clear voice, he reads aloud these words:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”

Finishing this brief passage, Jesus rolls up the scroll, returns it to the attendant, and takes his seat. It is the custom for teachers to sit, rather than to stand, so when Jesus sits, everyone looks at him, expecting some commentary, some explanation of this text, a text well known to many of them.

The synagogue president can invite any appropriate person to comment on the text. Often these remarks are less than inspiring. While the people are biblically literate, commentary on scripture by such speakers is often no more than rote recitation of lessons all of them learned at an early age. So the congregation



usually knows what will be said before it is said, and the only question is whether it will be said correctly or not.

Not so on this day. Jesus sits down and the people are all looking at him. He looks around at them, those familiar faces from his early years, older in appearance than before: his childhood friends, now present with their children; the parents of his friends, now senior citizens.

He begins with a sentence that remains as fresh and provocative today as when it was first uttered: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

On that memorable Sabbath morning in Nazareth. Jesus does the unexpected, the unimaginable - he claims those ancient prophetic words as his own personal mission statement. The reason God's Spirit came upon him at his baptism was to empower him to do precisely this: bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; let all the oppressed go free; announce the Jubilee Year when God's justice will reshape society.

Jesus takes all this as his mission statement, and he is not content to leave it as only a string of high-sounding words. Everything that follows in his life is the living out of the prophecy he claimed for himself on that Sabbath morning in Nazareth.

He keeps doing these things every chance he gets, until finally it leads to his death. Some people welcome what Jesus does, but others do not because it upsets their unfair advantage, questions their complacency, and pushes them to recognize their habitual unfaithfulness to God. They find their discomfort increasingly intolerable and think that his murder will bring an end to the matter. They are wrong, of course. Jesus rises alive from the dead and continues today to do what he talked about on that Sabbath morning long ago.

Today, the way Jesus works is through his body, the church. Through each of us and through all who are baptized into his body, Jesus strives still to live out his mission statement, bringing good news to those who don't have any, setting free those chained in captivity, opening blind eyes, helping the oppressed and exploited find a life, and unrolling the plan that sets out God's reign where justice and peace prevail.

The reading from First Corinthians is an important passage because it reminds us how the body of Christ is to live out the mission statement of Jesus. Three things that Paul says bear reinforcing:

All members of the church have gifts for ministry.

The members of the church have different gifts for ministry; we are not clones of each other.

Our different gifts come to life in the context of the whole people of God.

As we use our different gifts as the gathered body of Christ, we enable Jesus' mission statement to be lived out in our own time.

As we exercise our unique ministries, the poor gain hope, whether it's their souls or their bodies that are starved. The captives experience freedom, whether they are prisoners in a jail or prisoners in a mansion. The blind receive sight, whether through physical healing or the shedding of prejudice. The oppressed are set free, whether oppression is a political regime or a chemical dependence. When Jesus reads that passage in the Nazareth synagogue, he announces a mission statement for himself and for his body, the church.

Jesus read the old words from Isaiah and claimed them for his own. We can do the same.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon us.

The Spirit of the Lord has anointed us to bring good news to the poor.

The Spirit of the Lord has sent us to proclaim release to the captives.

The Spirit of the Lord has sent us to help the blind recover their sight.

The Spirit of the Lord has sent us to free the oppressed.

The Spirit of the Lord has sent us to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

This scripture continues to be fulfilled through Jesus' life in us.

Thanks be to God. Amen

**HYMN** TiS 414 There's a spirit in the air

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Dedication of offering**

## **PRAYERS FOR OTHERS**

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 yours, now and forever. Amen.

**HYMN:** TiS 440 Christ, from whom all blessings flow

### **Blessing**

Bless us as we depart this place:

give us a generous spirit, a kind heart,

and the grace to walk alongside all peoples

as brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen

Go in the power of God's good Spirit:

with the gentle fire of God's zeal, with the breath of life,

ready to work for justice and peace.

We go in Christ's name. Amen

**HYMN** TiS 781 Father, bless us as we go

