

**ST ANDREWS  
GLENBROOK UNITING CHURCH**

12th Sunday in Pentecost  
the Growing Time

**23rd September 2020  
Worship-At-Home**

**CENTERING WORDS**

Seek the living God, who rescues and saves us in times of trial.

Seek the living God, who renews, transforms, and strengthens us in our hour of need.

**OPENING PRAYER**

Maker of heaven and earth, we come from different places with our own place on the journey. Some of us are celebrating successes. Some of us feel weak and seek reassurance. Some of us feel trapped and helpless. Some of us have escaped peril and feel great relief. But no matter what our experience has been, we come here today to meet you in worship. Remind us of your power and mercy. Replenish our courage and vision. Renew our identity as your people. Reinvigorate your holy work in us and in this world, for our help is in your name alone, Holy God, maker of heaven and earth. Amen.

**WELCOME**

Whoever you are, where ever you are in life's journey, you are welcome.

As we worship God whose mystery is revealed to us in the sacredness of everyday lives, you are invited to bring your whole self into the presence of Christ.

So let us worship God.

**SONG:** 'Our God' (NCYC Retrospective)

1. Our God is a God of justice  
Our God is a God of hope  
Our God is the God of freedom  
Our God is the God of love

God is like a sweet summer shower  
Refreshing all of the earth  
God is like a tender mother  
Giving us our birth

2. Our God is God of the hungry  
 Our God is God of the poor  
 Our God is God of the hurting  
 Our God is the God of all

Help us God to see your face  
 In ev'ryone we meet  
 Teach us God to love each other  
 And to live for peace

#### PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Creator God,  
 we gather today  
 in hope and expectation,  
 we come to you just as we are,  
 we come confessing that in these Covid days, our  
 lives can feel like they are built upon shifting sands.

Yet, still, we come to give you thanks and praise  
 as we seek to build our lives upon the sure  
 foundation of Jesus.

So may your love be our corner stone.

May patience be the rock which gives us strength

May peace be the rock upon which your church stands

May kindness be the rock which holds us together

May self-control be the rock that brings stability to your people.

May faithfulness be the rock passed from one generation to the next

May gentleness be the rock that creates shelters for the hurting

May joy be the rock that balances our dreams with the needs of the world.

May you build us up in trust and faith.

May you tear down walls that do not serve your kingdom.

Creator God,

For the times when our frustrations and fears  
 make stumbling blocks of us - forgive us.

For the times when we have participated in systematic structures of disempowerment,  
 prejudice and greed - forgive us.

For the times when we lose heart,  
 when we judge too harshly  
 or withdraw our compassion - forgive us.

Though our walls may crumble,  
 we remember that we, your church,  
 are built on a solid foundation of rock,  
 and through your love we will never fall.



By your spirit, draw us close to you and to each other  
in praise and thanksgiving.

Spur us into action by your life-giving presence,  
embolden us to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Ever loving God,  
we come before you  
in awe at your majesty  
in wonder at your works  
praising your holy name,  
this day and every day. Amen.

#### PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

I imagine most of you are worshiping from your home....maybe you're cuddled up on the couch still in your Pj's, or sitting at your dining table.

Maybe you're worshiping later in the week, watching on your phone on the train to work.

Where ever you are, what ever time it is, just pause now to appreciate how God's peace meets you where you are.....

Pause to consider how worship has moved in and made its self at home in your home, making ordinary places - holy.....

Now take this awareness and carry it with you - sharing the peace of Christ with others, who ever they are, where ever they are.

*The Peace of Christ be always with you.*

#### GROWING FAITH TOGETHER: "Nicknames"

Do you have a nickname?

If you do, who gave it to you?

This is a story about Lewis and Fergus who lived next door to each other and were great friends ever since they started school together. But now that their school had closed because of the Coronavirus, they could only see each other by chatting online.

One very rainy Saturday, they decided to invent a new game for other rainy days, when they had time to chat but it was too wet to go outside.

The game was to make up nicknames for all the animals that could be seen in their gardens and then make up stories about them.

There were three cats, belonging to other neighbours, who often came into Lewis' or Fergus' gardens. One was ginger and he would just sit for hours under the hedge keeping dry, or out on the path if it was sunny. One was black and he never stopped moving from spot to spot, twitching his tail and turning his head from side to side. The third cat was grey and he always ran away if the other two appeared. The boys nicknamed them Ginger Sitter, Prowling Blackie and Shy Smoky!

Then they made up stories about why the grey one was so shy, what the black one was looking out for, and what the ginger one was thinking about as he sat still for so long. After they had made up those stories, Fergus and Lewis made up names for the birds that came swooping down to the bird feeders. There were a bunch of Cockatoo's who always came together, five or six of them, to peck at the nut feeder Lewis had hung up in his garden. Then they often flew over to Fergus' garden to try and take seeds from the feeder that was meant for the smaller birds—what thieves they were! Lewis called them the Nut Peckers, but Fergus called them the Seed Stealers!

There was also a magpie who came on its own and hopped hopefully under the seed feeder or flapped around the nut feeder but could never get near it with all the Cookatoos there. Fergus called the magpie Hopper. Lewis called it Flapper. Sometimes all the birds and cats would disappear in a rush when Lewis' mum let out their dog, Belle. She ran around the garden barking nonstop! Lewis and all his family always called her The Noisy Bell. Fergus thought she should be nicknamed The Clanger! That made Lewis laugh. He told Fergus he was going to give him a nickname: "Can I call you Joker?!"

Lewis was cheered up by his friend making him laugh on their rainy day as they told their funny garden stories about the Nut-Pecker-Seed-Stealers, Flapper-Hopper, Shy Smoky, Prowling Blackie, Ginger Sitter and The Noisy Bell.

Fergus loved being called Joker. "And here's what I'm calling you," he told Lewis, "you're now Boredom Buster!"

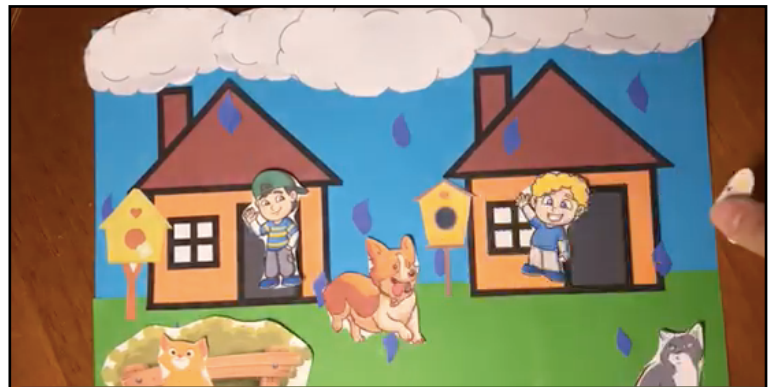
On Sunday, Joker and Boredom Buster got a message from their minister, with a Bible story and some activities to do. Joker saw the story first and couldn't wait to chat to Boredom Buster. "Look! Even Jesus gave a nickname to one of his best friends! He called Simon Peter 'The Rock'."

The boys had a lively chat about why Jesus might have thought 'The Rock' was a good name for his friend. What do you think? Then they wondered what nickname they would give Jesus!

"I would call him Brave Adventurer!"

"I would call him Happy Friend."

What would you call him?



#### ALL - AGE PRAYER

Whoever,  
wherever,  
whatever we are, Jesus is there.  
He loves us being us.

He loves us when we are angry,  
he loves us when we are sad,  
he loves us when we are happy,



he loves us when we are alone,  
 he loves us when we are together,  
 he loves us when we are ourselves.

The world might want us to be something else  
 but whoever we are,  
 wherever we are,  
 whatever we are,  
 Jesus loves us! Amen.

## BIBLE READINGS

Romans 12:1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. <sup>3</sup>For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup>For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. <sup>6</sup>We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; <sup>7</sup>ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; <sup>8</sup>the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Matthew 16:13-20

<sup>13</sup>Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup>And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup>He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup>And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup>And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup>I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." <sup>20</sup>Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

SERMON: 'WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?' by Rev Dr William Emilsen (Ellie's Dad)

We live in a risky world dominated by two superpowers.

Powerful weapons are developed and displayed.

Military bases are expanding across the world.

Spying and hacking are on the increase.

Economic sanctions are threatened.

It is an anxious time.

And ... as if that wasn't enough,

these two superpowers are less than truthful about the pandemic.

One attempts to hide its origins;

the other tries to ignore it altogether.

The risk behind all these troubling signs

is that you spend so much time worrying about the future

that you can lose your sense of equilibrium.

You can become resentful and anxious.

You are never sure if what you are hearing is the truth.

Australians feel vulnerable at this time.

We want our freedom and our prosperity,

and we don't want to rock the boat,

especially when that boat involves two great superpowers;

we want to get along.

But we know there can be a risk

In succumbing to the claims of one or the other.

In the early church Rome was the superpower,  
and it is significant that Matthew sets today's gospel story in the region  
of the Roman city, Caesarea Philippi.

Caesarea Philippi was where Herod the Great built a temple  
out of white marble to honour the first Roman emperor,  
Caesar Augustus (27 BC–AD 14).

At the time of Jesus' ministry,  
Caesarea Philippi was under strict Roman control.  
and Rome was expert in controlling its subject-people.  
The Roman Empire could be ruthless and demanding when it chose.  
The first-century Jewish historian, Josephus,  
gives us an example of Roman ruthlessness in his book *The Jewish Wars*.  
Writing thirteen years after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD  
and around the same time Matthew's Gospel was written,  
Josephus tells us that Jewish prisoners in Caesarea Philippi  
were thrown to wild beasts  
or forced to fight and kill each other simply for entertainment.

You had to learn to get along with the Romans.

You had to give the appearance of fitting in,  
toeing the line, if you wanted to get on.

But there was a cost.

There was always the temptation to compromise your faith,  
your values and your identity:

because of the fear of Roman power.

Today's gospel is a story about contesting the powers of this world.

In the border region of the Roman imperial stronghold of Caesarea Philippi,

Jesus challenges his disciples to discern and name who he really is.

His question challenges them to see beyond the monuments to Caesar

and the ubiquitous reminders of the ruthless power of Herod the Great

and his sons and grandsons like Antipas who beheaded John the Baptist

and Agrippa who put St James the Apostle to death.

"Who do people think that I am", Jesus asks the disciples,

and all the answers they give rightly identify Jesus a great prophet,

as some extraordinary person:

–John the Baptist come back to life,

Elijah who was believed to herald the coming of the end times,

Jeremiah who railed against Israel's infidelities and preached repentance,

or one of the great prophets who spoke truth to power.

Having listened to a survey of popular opinion,

Jesus now makes the question more personal and penetrating:

"But who do **you** say that I am?"

Simon Peter answered Jesus' question,

and his answer of just a few words goes to the heart of the matter:

"You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God."

Peter names Jesus as both the fulfilment of Israel's hope for a deliverer,

the long-awaited Messiah,  
 who, at least in the minds of the people,  
 would forcibly drive the Romans occupiers out of their land.

**And** Jesus is the one who bears a unique and intimate relationship with God.

This was a very bold confession,  
 especially in the shadow of Caesarea Philippi.

It is like a young student activist on the streets of Hong Kong  
 demanding sovereignty.

It was like Martin Niemoller (1892-1984) and the German "Confessing  
 Church" standing against Nazis propaganda and persecution,  
 even at the risk of arrest and confinement in a concentration camp.

Jesus responds to Peter's confession with a promise that a new movement,  
 a new community, a "church", will emerge from his ministry.

"You are Peter ... on this **rock** I will build my church."

Jesus' promised "church" is like a new Exodus from the powers of slavery  
 at work in places like Caesarea Philippi.

The good news to take away from the story of Peter's powerful confession  
 is that Jesus wants to create a peculiar, self-aware people  
 who live in the world differently.

It is a call to break free from the entanglements of empire.  
 to draw deeply on the story from which we sprang,  
 and to trust in God's promises.



We, in the Church today, are just like Peter and the disciples.

We also live in the midst of superpowers that are not unlike Rome.

And our superpowers, too, unsettle us  
with demands and threats and uncertainty.

In such a situation, it is tempting to pull our heads in,  
retreat to something safe,  
give up thinking about the abuse of power because it is all too hard,  
or simply go along with what we know is not right.

But this text says to us,  
don't quit thinking,  
don't stop feeling,  
don't quit hoping,  
and don't just go along with what you know is not right.

Rather, claim your particular identity  
as the people who trust God's promises  
and who know that God's good purposes  
will prevail in the world.

We do not need to be aggressive  
or quarrelsome  
or anxious  
or despairing,

because the taproot of our community, the church,  
is grounded deep in the bedrock of Peter's confession  
and Jesus' promise that nothing,  
not powerful empires,  
not the pandemic,  
not even the power of death, can overcome it.  
Jesus' word of promise outlasted the Roman Empire.  
And it will endure beyond every superpower  
and every empire  
and every rogue nation and individual that threatens brutality and violence.  
God does not quit.

As a Church we are called  
to remember where we came from,  
remember with whom we belong,  
and remember who you are;  
you are a people carved out of rock,  
(chips off the old block!)  
you need not fear,  
you need not despair,  
and you need not succumb to the claims of the powerful.

You are God's future,  
and you have a hope that will not be disappointed.

SONG: 'In Gentle Witness' by Rev Michael Earl

(to the tune 'How Can I Keep From Singing')

1. In gentle witness, quiet hope,  
in myriad pilgrims yearning,  
the scattered church, her hymns subdued,  
goes on, to God, returning.

*Refrain: With muffled songs of joy and praise,  
and muted bells still ringing,  
with hearts of faith, and strains of prayer,  
the voice of Christ is singing.*

2. In human cries, in darkened hours,  
in grief and lamentation,  
the Spirit's power draws ever near,  
to break the isolation.

*Refrain*

3. In wards of mercy, gowns of grace,  
a company of healing,  
the weak, with tender touch, attends,  
God's holy face revealing.

*Refrain*

4. In all the struggle, and the strife,  
as all the world's in hiding,  
the love of God makes no retreat,  
but ever is abiding.

*Refrain*

#### PRAYERS FOR OTHERS AND OURSELVES

God of the sea, land, air, and space,  
we pray for your continuing blessing on our troubled planet.  
Just as Peter saw Jesus for who he is,  
we can see our world for what it is,  
your glorious creation, the gift of life.  
We ask for the boldness to do everything  
we possibly can to renew and rebuild our planet,  
to protect it for all who come after us.

As one body in Christ  
the eternal community of your church,  
we pray for guidance and support  
as we continue

to bear witness to you,  
 in a world where indifference  
 far outweighs passion,  
 we ask for creativity, confidence, and hopefulness,  
 in how we share your message to  
 our communities and to our world.

Living God,  
 we pray for ourselves,  
 for this community of your beloved children,  
 that we may continue to be the lamp stand that allows your light to shine into the world.  
 That we will use all the gifts you have given us  
 to proclaim your message of love,  
 to live into your kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven.

As the winter ends,  
 we pray for all your children, young and old.  
 For those facing HSC and end of year exams in the middle of a pandemic.  
 For the Firies, wondering what this summer will bring.  
 For those who are sick in hospital,  
 or recovering at home.  
 for those who make sure we have food on our tables,  
 and for those who labour tirelessly  
 to keep us safe and healthy,  
 we ask for your love and support,  
 that whatever this new season will bring,  
 they will find peace and surety in you.

God of all,  
 We pray for your blessing  
 on all that we are,  
 and all that we do,  
 that we may help build your kingdom today and every day.  
 Amen.

#### COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Zoom Heart Tank today 2-3pm

In-Person Heart Tank next Sunday in the church hall 2-3pm

Please register your attendance with Elaine Alinta

SONG: 'The Grace' by Malcolm Gordon.  
 Jesus, may your grace be upon us  
 Father, may your love be within and before  
 Spirit, may you gather and hold us forever more  
 forever more

Amen, Amen, Amen  
Amen, Amen, Amen

# SENDING

Jesus, you ask us– ‘who do you say I am?’

Help us know you.

Grow our understanding of who you are,  
what you stand for,  
and what you require of us.

Let the door to such knowledge  
and relationship be unlocked.

Let your Kingdom be born in us;  
and through us be born into our world.

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Lover, Beloved and Love itself.  
Amen.

The Abingdon Worship Annual 2020 . Abingdon Press.

Spill The Beans

<https://malcolmgordon.bandcamp.com/track/the-grace>