

Wilderness / Outback Sunday
20th September 2020

The third Sunday of the Season of Creation 2020
celebrated by

Pitt Street and Glenbrook Uniting Church Congregations

This third Sunday has been prepared by
the people of Pitt Street.



In the presence,
in the peace,
in the power...
...let us celebrate life on planet Earth
with the Spirit of Life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

In this season of Creation we celebrate
all of life as sacred and interconnected.

As we gather, we acknowledge the traditional owners
of this land; land that was taken from them
without their consent, treaty or compensation.

The Spirit of God has long-dwelled with the First Peoples
of this ancient land. We honour the Gadigal people of the
Eora Nation, on which the Pitt Sreett Church stands and
we pay our respects to their elders past, present and future
and also to the people of the desert lands as we gather
to worship God.

Again we join with the Glenbrook Congregation and pause
to reflect on the land of the Dharrug people, on which the
Glenbrook Uniting Church stands and to pay our respects
to their Elders past, present and future.

We invite those who can, including children present with us,
to place on a space in their home some symbols of the outback
- rocks, tough grasses and objects from Aboriginal art together
with pictures of lizards, emus, dingoes and similar creatures.
We rejoice as these are placed.

ALL CREATURES *(alt)*

*To tune TIS 100
Words
used with permission*

All creatures of the Fount of Love
lift up your voice and with us sing
Alleluia, alleluia!
O burning sun with golden beam,

and silver moon with softer gleam,
O praise Her, O praise Her,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Swift rushing winds that are so strong,
and clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise Her, alleluia!
Fresh-rising morn, in praise rejoice,
and lights of evening, find a voice;
Refrain

Dear Mother Earth, who day by day
unfold rich blessings on our way,
O praise Her, alleluia!
All flowers and fruits that in you grow,
let them Her glory also show,
Refrain

OPENING RESPONSES

We Invite the Outback to worship with us:
Uluru and the red centre,
Deep gorges and mountain ranges.

We invite the flora to sing in the sun:
Ghost gums and spinifex,
Mallee trees and Sturt's desert pea.

We join with the fauna of the Outback in praising God:
roaming dingos and wallabies, goannas and hovering hawks.

We acknowledge and call on the Dreaming to join us in praise:
Songs of ancient custodians deep in the rock,

Spirit of life deep in the sand and the hills.
We celebrate the song of the Outback!
Sing Outback, sing!
Spring has come- Murrai'yunggaray.
The waratah blooms in the bush.
Flying foxes gather in the branches.
We offer our thanks and praise.

WELCOME & LIGHTING THE RAINBOW CANDLE

Welcome everyone to the third Sunday in the Season of Creation. This Sunday we are thinking about the wilderness and the outback.

Each Sunday we acknowledge the children and young people who are part of our community. We light the rainbow candle for them and for all children and young people.

PRAYER OF AWARENESS

Let us pray:

Creative One, you have given us what we need
to be faithful people,
living in harmony
with all of Earth's creatures.
Yet we are self-centred,
taking for granted the sacred balance of life.

SUNG KYRIE

Kyrie eleison, kyrie eleison, kyrie eleison
Christe eleison, Christe eleison, Christe eleison
Kyrie eleison, kyrie eleison, kyrie eleison

We hear creation groaning.
We hear fellow creatures crying out in pain.
And we hear members of fauna family weeping.

Kyrie eleison...

We remember birds and animals
with whom we have felt a close kinship,
creatures that are endangered
and species that have become extinct.

Kyrie eleison...

A time of silence

JESUS' PRAYER

Remembering Jesus, we pray together.

*God, you are life for us, holy be your name.
Your new day come, your will be done,
on earth as in your vision.
Give us this day our bread for the morrow;
and forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Strengthen us in the time of test,
and deliver us from evil.
For the power and the splendour
and fulfilment are yours, now and forever. Amen.*

WORDS OF RECONCILIATION

The Spirit that provides for all life on Earth
offers us generous grace.

So rejoice!

We are held in Divine Presence,
loved and forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

SHARING A SIGN OF PEACE

May the peace of Divine Presence be with you!
And also with you!

ALLELUIA

TiS 720

Caribbean traditional

Halle, halle, hallelujah!
Halle, halle, hallelujah!
Halle, halle, hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

STORY TIME

“Mad Magpie”

written and illustrated
by Gregg Dreise

Listening for words of Spirit

Romans 8: 18-27

We give thanks.

Gospel Mark 1: 9-13

*For the Word that was in the beginning,
For the Word that invites and inspires,
For the Word embodied within us we give thanks.*

CONTEMPORARY READING

*Excerpt of a reflection by Australian indigenous woman, (selected text)
Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr*

NGANGIKURUNGKURR means 'Deep Water Sounds.

Ngangikurungkurr is the name of my tribe. The word can be broken up into three parts: Ngangi means word or sound, Kuri means water, and kurr means deep. So the name of my people means 'the Deep Water Sounds' or 'Sounds of the Deep'. This reflection is about tapping into that deep spring that is within us.

Many Australians understand that Aboriginal people have a special respect for Nature. The identity we have with the land is sacred and unique. There is a special quality of my people which I believe is the most important. It is our most unique gift. It is perhaps the greatest gift we can give to our fellow Australians. In our language this quality is called dadirri (da-did-ee). It is inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness. Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call "contemplation".

When I experience dadirri, I am made whole again. I can sit on the riverbank or walk through the trees; even if someone close to me has passed away, I can find my peace in this silent awareness. There is no need of words. A big part of dadirri is listening.

Through the years, we have listened to our stories. They are told and sung, over and over, as the seasons go by. Today we still gather around the campfires and together we hear the sacred stories. As we grow older, we ourselves become the storytellers. We pass on to the young ones all they must know. The stories and songs sink quietly into our minds and we hold them deep inside. In the ceremonies we celebrate the awareness of our lives as sacred.

The contemplative way of dadirri spreads over our whole life. It renews us and brings us peace. It makes us feel whole again.

SONG: "Mother Earth"

*by Monica Brown
used with permission*

Refrain

*It's your time, Mother Earth to receive from us.
For so long we have taken so thoughtlessly from you.
It's your time.*

*Time to give your barren land a million trees,
To your rivers and seas, water that's clean.
To your breath of air a chance to be fresh and clear;
'Cause it's your time, Mother earth, to receive.*

Refrain

*Time to give back to you what you've given to us
From your womb, Mother Earth, such beauty and grace
In your rhythm of life.
God looked upon you and saw you were good,
So it's your time, Mother Earth, to receive.*



*Wandjina on slate, from Mowanjum in the Kimberley area
A gift and used with permission*

An elder from the Mowanjum community, (in the Kimberleys, W.A.) told Isobel, a member of the Pitt Street Congregation, that Wandjina is the ancient spirit who made everything and knows everything, and that "for some of us, Jesus as the Word gives a mouth to Wandjina."

REFLECTIONS:

Beth Sergeant

Hello friends, many of you will have seen and experienced more of outback Australia than I have, but perhaps like me, you've flown across the country and seen the low ridges of our geologically ancient continent. They look like the gaunt ribs of some very old beast. That's how I picture our Mother Earth.

We lived for many years in Dubbo in the central west of this state. Once I was showing the sites to an overseas visitor. She wanted to see the outback. Her idea of outback was where there was no fences. She headed for Bourke on her motorbike. I'm sure she found the area where there were more stock grids than fences. On a lighter note, 50 years ago, Dubbo was the last place to buy deli cheese further out than that it was that processes cheddar in a foil pack. But seriously wilderness, I suggest, is where no-one can live permanently.

Last year, I finally joined the Uniting Church's annual walking on country tour. Something I've been keen to do since I'd read that beautiful and neglected Uluru Statement from the Heart. So my journey was to the heart. We visited Aboriginal and Islander Churches and met inspiring leaders. We saw too ill health, poverty and struggle. I saw for my first time, Uluru, Alice Springs, the south of the Flinders Ranges, Cooper Pedy. My travelling companions, about 40 of us, share their experience of indigenous spirituality. Both in the Flinders Ranges and at Uluru, Kata Tutja the creation times came alive for me. The land formations made sense. I might say developed personality as we were told and shown the features of their origin stories. I think of Moses at the burning bush, Elijah at his cave mouth, John the baptist and Jesus himself in the wilderness of Judea. All of them had challenging experiences and felt God's leading in those desert places.

Now in the aloneness of this pandemic time I pray that we may value this stretch of our pilgrimage. Personally I hope to be open and listening for God and that the cool winds of the hovering Spirit may soothe and replenish us too. From the far away but equally rugged area, Peter Millar of Iona, quotes from an indigeneous woman who speaks of dadirri, meaning sitting or walking on her land, just listening. He adds this prayer, Mother and Father God, Creator of the Deep Quiet, may be never be a stranger to the place within our hearts where we are at one with Life's Source and tiniest bloom. Amen.

Peter Bennett

In the northwest corner of South Australia is the country of the Pitjantjatjara and Yankuntjatjara Anangu people where we have been privileged to live for the last thirteen years. I pay respect to the Anangu and their elders who have lived on their lands for many thousands of years. I am thankful for the welcome and hospitality and friendship they offered us.

I have lived in cities all my life. I realise how much I need the support of city life for my daily bread – food, clothing, shelter - and for the other benefits that technology has brought us. I would not like to try to live in the wilderness where John the Baptist ate locusts and wild honey, and where Jesus is subsequently reported to have been driven to be tempted by Satan. We did eat tjala and maku – that is honey ants and witchetty grubs – and it was impressive to be with elderly ladies digging deep into unpromising looking ground where they knew these treats would be found. On the one occasion I went with Rosie to a camp overnight I was awake shivering the whole night as the cold of the ground went through me. It made me recall learning in school in Adelaide that indigenous Australians coped with the desert cold by letting their body school temperature fall several degrees. My feeling was they would have had no choice. On the other hand, as

the summer temperatures can approach 50 degrees, people still die in these remote parts from a few hours without water.

My cultural and spiritual life is bound up with the people and institutions of the city. But I was born 20,000 km away from where I now live, I have lived in several cities, and I will never have the connection to a specific place that ties the Anangu to their land. Older Anangu know the place they were born and the place they want to be when they die. We have much to learn from people who over millenia have not only gained all their physical needs from this country but have also been able to develop a rich spiritual and cultural life which still continues.

Christianity had a sympathetic introduction at the Presbyterian mission at Ernabella due to the wise leadership of Dr Charles Duguid. Staff learnt to speak Pitjantjatjara and encouraged and attended traditional ceremonial practices. Christian prayer and worship and often a personal relationship with Jesus remain important in the lives of Anangu.

Ownership of the lands by the Anangu extending over 100,000 square Km was recognized in 1981 by the South Australian government in the APY Land rights act. However the country of the Pitjantjatjara and Yankutjatjara people extends into Western Australia and the Northern Territory and includes the great rock Uluru and Kata Tjuta. South Australia's highest mountains, hot springs, waterholes and desert are part of the magnificent country.

We experienced the peace of solitude and quiet in the vast open spaces of the desert. The spectacular night sky of the clear desert was a regular source of wonder and joy. I remember the visit of the comet McNaught in 2006 which shone in the southern sky for several nights. We could sit out at sunrise and sunset with an outlook stretching 360 degrees around the horizon.

At school in the 1960s I studied a poem by Gerald Manley Hopkins.

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil crushed.

He mourns the spoiling of the land by human commerce but concludes...

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Even during our short time on the APY Lands big changes were happening. The arrival of electricity wires to bring power from a central power station, the construction of a large reverse osmosis plant to provide good drinking water, the construction of bitumen roads to replace the dirt tracks, and the mixed blessing of mobile phone coverage, even the accumulation of rubbish and the ownership of domestic cats were signs of the inevitable encroachment of the outside world.

The Anangu date their connection to these lands to creation time. They have always been there and have obligations to care for the country. The relationship is reciprocal.

When Anangu were told the government was considering giving them freehold title to their land, their response was 'what are you talking about, this has always been our land.'

In ignorance I asked a friend, a senior Yankutjatjara elder, who had been involved in the land rights negotiations what he thought about

constitutional recognition for indigenous people. He said 'we don't want that, we want a treaty'.

Alec Derwent Hope, born in Cooma, has been called the twentieth century's greatest eighteenth century poet. In his somewhat bleak poem Australia he credits the deserts with the potential for spiritual renewal in opposition to the urban civilization of the colonisers, saying he would:

'Turn gladly home
From the lush jungle of modern thought
Hoping, if still from the deserts the prophets come,
Such savage and scarlet as no green hills dare
Springs in that waste'

We have a spiritual need for wilderness areas but wilderness as part of God's creation should exist intact solely for its own sake. We thank God for desert and wild places and like Anangu may we love and care for the land. May we listen to and learn from insights offered from the wilderness.

Rosie Whiley

Wilderness and the Outback ...How much cultural meaning is layered on both the place and the people of these places. The desert/the outback/the red centre/the heart/the dead heart/the wilderness: very evocative and sometimes conflicting images. Harsh, dangerous and indifferent OR still, silent and peaceful? A place of extraordinary colour and beauty OR a barren nothingness? A place of testing OR a place of visions? A place to be conquered OR a place to walk lightly?

Add to this the central image the desert has in the Judeo-Christian tradition, The Israelites encountered God while wandering in the desert; Jesus went into the desert and was tempted there. The desert:

a place of intense experiences where God is encountered and the spirit grows.

Today many seek to reclaim the desert as a central part of contemporary spiritual life: fostering solitude, purification and then re-emergence into the life of the community.

We headed out into the desert to be with Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara Anangu, a desert people in 2006 .

I acknowledge and pay respect to Anangu and thank them for their generosity in welcoming us into their land and allowing us to live with them for many years I try to recall what I was expecting to find I grew up in country NSW where we had a small indigenous population. Years ago I had travelled for work to Lake Mungo and we had spent a few months years before in Alice Springs while Peter did a locum with the Royal Flying Doctor Service. I had a basic understanding of indigenous issues and that SA had handed back the land to Anangu in 1981 and they spoke and were strong in their own language.

The physical memories of the desert are of walking in sandy creek beds and on rocky dirt tracks as if in a hot oven, billowing red dust pouring out from behind travelling cars, flies, sticky flies and the smell of the earth.

But I cannot separate my experience of the desert from my experience of its people. One of the facts I knew, like everyone does, was that Indigenous people have a deep connection with the land , but I came to feel the depth of that connection: an attachment that is always present and Anangu are happiest when expressing it.

In my first job in Indulkana there were two young women I got to know well. On one occasion we travelled to Pukatja, also called Ernabella, a

trip of about two and a half hours. For the whole journey they would be pointing out the window at different rocks, rock formations, gullies ,creek beds and vegetation, making sure I observed them and telling me stories about them. They were so animated, excited, and they related to these places like long lost old friends. They made me feel these were living beings and I remember how they would sing to them. On the way home, after dark, they would tell me about the night sky, and as we got nearer to Indulkana the more excited and happy they became. This joy at returning home, with animated talking and singing was something I experienced often travelling with Anangu and it is infectious. You feel the deep affection for their land and despite the difficulties in their lives you become aware they see a harmony and richness in the life around them, given by the land, which they share with generous stories and laughter.

In Anangu culture different family members can have responsibility for looking after children. You will hear people say “she growed me up” when talking about the person who cared for them. People also say “the land growed them up”: A deep, real and personal feeling of being nurtured and cared for by the land. One of the Elders said- ‘I love this country. It has watched us Anangu for many years. It is a wise country.’ It was for me a slow process connecting with another culture and appreciating it.

I remember an Easter Day worship service. At services people are scattered around a small covered stage. Some pull up in cars, some are on the ground or sitting on rocks, and there may be just a few chairs. There are children running up and down, maybe on bikes or kicking footballs, and there are dogs everywhere. Cars leave, others arrive, and there may be a dogfight or two. It was not my idea of a service of worship. Yet the Spirit is there. You hear it in the singing, and the voices of people who read and speak. It is also in the singing that happened most evenings for weeks before and after Easter.

Another experience was when we attended a funeral of a senior elder at his homeland. We were part of a convoy of vehicles travelling there. At one point we stopped at a creekbed which was his birthplace. Everyone got out, walked around and talked. There was no formality; the significance was in the stopping; being there: in that place.

The indigenous understanding of land as mother was familiar to me. But living with Yankutjatjara and Pitjantjatjara I felt the depth of this connection, a humbling experience when so much of Western culture's relationship with the land is characterised by a detached development and progress model, with associated climate change and extinction rates. We have much to gain from those who have a profound spiritual connection to their earth, a maternal nurturing and caring received from the land, an experience of God, a loving God.

For the desert and its people I give thanks.

SONG: 'FOR YOU DEEP STILLNESS'

Words by Julie Perrin
Music by Robin Mann
Used by permission

For you, deep stillness of the silent inland
For you, deep blue of the desert skies
For you, flame red of the rocks and stones
For you, sweet water from hidden springs

From the edges, seek the heartland
and when your burnt by the journey
may the cool winds of the hovering Spirit
cool and replenish you.
In the name of Christ.

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND SOLIDARITY

Let us pray for the people of the outback.

- We give thanks for the first people who have nurtured the land from time immemorial. May they continue to feel their deep sense of belonging and custodianship of the land.
- We pray for farmers and their families, many of whom in desert country have thoughtfully observed the ways of the first peoples, and have learned to listen and nurture the plants and animals around them.
- We pray for the church in its many forms. We remember the John Flynn Memorial Church in Alice Springs, for its role of hospitality and its youth programme reaching out to youth who have not much to do.
- We pray for Frontier Services and all Ecumenical and Christian gatherings across the outback. May these groups continue to offer strength and love.
- We pray for ourselves as we remember the people of the outback. May we and they work to support renewable energy projects as practical tools for repair of the planet.

In our circle of prayer today we remember the lands and people of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Peru. We are thankful for the beauty of the region, forests, mountains, rivers, lakes, and ocean coastlines, and especially indigenous peoples' relationship with, and care for, the natural environment. We pray for coca farmers to find sustainable incomes from other crops, for an end to drug trafficking, and effective assistance for those who are addicted.

Here in Sydney we pray for the the people and ministries of the NSW.ACT Synod General Secretary Jane Fry, Assoc Gen Sec Bronwyn Murphy, Moderator Simon Hansford and secretariat staff.

Holy Spirit, God in us and with us,
enable us to be people of the Spirit.
Empower us to be a community
where people find hope and new life. Amen.

OFFERING AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

This is the time in our service
when we would normally bring our offering to God.

The grace and kindness we are offered transforms us.
We give in response to the gifts we have received.

We pray together:

**Spirit of Life,
May what we give today bring healing and hope
for Earth and all of Earth's creatures.
May the whole creation be restored
to wholeness and harmony. Amen.**

WALKING GENTLY WITH EARTH

HYMN: 'Spirit, Spirit of gentleness'

Words: Jim Manley

*Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow through the wilderness, calling and free—
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea.*

You moved on the waters, you called to the deep,
then you coaxed up the mountains from the valleys of sleep;
and over the eons you called to each thing
awake from your slumbers and rise on your wings
Spirit...

You swept through the desert, you stung with the sand,
and you goaded your people with a law and a land;
and when they were blinded with their idols and lies,
then you spoke through your prophets to open their eyes.
Spirit...

You sang in a stable, you cried from a hill,
Then you whispered in silence, when the whole world was
still;
and down in the city, you called once again,
when you blew through your people on the rush of the wind.
Spirit...

You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes.
from the bondage of sorrow, the captives dream dreams;
our women see visions, our men clear their eyes.
with bold new decisions, your people arise.
Spirit...

BLESSING

A blessing from the Yoruba people, West Africa.

Enjoy the earth gently,
Enjoy the earth gently;
For if the earth is spoiled
It cannot be repaired.
Enjoy the earth gently.

SYMBOLS RETURNED

Please return your symbols to the place
from where they came as a sign of
respect to the First Peoples.

SENDING OUT

Go in faith
To be the caring people of Earth. **Amen.**

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