

# St Andrews Glenbrook Uniting Church

## Worship-At-Home - 4th October 2020

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**Introduction:** This week you are invited, where possible, to gather with others to share DIY worship at home. Below are resources you can use and adapt to suit your group. If the Spirit takes the conversation or activities in a different direction - Trust it! x Rev Ellie.



### Gathering Activity

You might like to place some items representing of a vineyard ( grapes wine) and a pile of stones representing the stones taken up to stone the servants and son, and the stone that becomes the cornerstone.)

As you prepare for worship today give thanks for the blessings that you enjoy, for the things that give you joy, for the opportunities you have had in your life.

- Who played a part in those blessings
- How often do we remember that the good things we enjoy are not just of our own doing?

### Prayer of Adoration and Confession

O planet weaver, the skies  
declare your glory  
O star-spinner, the vault of heaven  
proclaims your handiwork.  
Day to day pour forth speech,  
Night to night declares knowledge,  
Yet there are no words,  
their voice cannot be heard.  
But creation's pure sound reverberates  
throughout the cosmos  
For in the heavens  
you have set a tent for the sun  
and on earth a place for us all  
Yet we often forget  
That we are creations of your breath,

tenants of your vineyard.  
We silence your voice.  
We subjugate your land  
We mar your image within and around.  
We reject the cornerstone and kill your son.  
Yet you do not shy away.  
You meet our hate with love  
our violence with steadfast loving kindness,  
our forgetfulness with remembrance  
Remind us each day and each night  
that we can kill your love  
but we connect keep it dead and buried.  
Redeem us each day and each night

that we might live in tune  
with the words of your son,  
with the reverberations of your cosmos  
thus enabling the words of our mouths

and the mediations of our hearts  
to be acceptable to you,  
O Lord, our rock and redeemer.  
Amen.

**SONG: 'Garden'** written by Mikali Anagnostis (Leichhardt Uniting Church)

1. We're making a garden; we're working the ground  
In land that's bombed and torn,  
Your love soaks through the soil, new life can yet be born.
2. All welcome to the building; all invited to the fruit.  
On Earth, God's planned a garden;  
every hand that's gripped a sword can make a plough-share too.

*Come, join the work; God's bringing life, God's bringing life.*

*Hands in the same dirt;*

*enemies are one body now.*

*Come, sing new words; God's bringing life, God's bringing life.*

*Lay down your swords; the wars you've learned are over now.*

*God's turning our weapons into ploughs.*

3. Our hands won't be idle;  
Our hearts won't grow cold.  
In the barren ground before us,  
We can see a garden, we can see a home.
4. Though drought is around us, Though fires will come,  
We've tasted the Harvest, Our God has drawn us close,  
Your love has made us one.

*Come, join the work; God's bringing life, God's bringing life.*

*Hands in the same dirt;*

*enemies are one body now.*

*Come, sing new words; God's bringing life, God's bringing life.*

*Lay down your swords; the wars you've learned are over now.*

*God's turning our weapons into ploughs;*

*new life will come from death, somehow.*

**Lectionary Readings:**

*Exodus 20:1-4,7-9,12-20 Psalm 19 Philippians 3:4b-14*

Focus text: **Matthew 21:33-46**

**33** "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. **34** When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. **35** But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. **36** Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. **37** Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' **38** But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' **39** So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. **40** Now when the owner of the vineyard

comes, what will he do to those tenants?" **41** They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."

**42** Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

this was the Lord's doing,

and it is amazing in our eyes'?

**43** Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. **44** The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."

**45** When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. **46** They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

### **Bible Note:**

This week's parable is part of series of parables told by Jesus to the chief priests and elders of the people who had sought to trap Jesus in such a way that they could then create a blasphemy case against him. However, Jesus has turned the tables on them and is now, through story and imagery, laying out for all to see the real motivations of those who were questioning him. There is a delicious dramatic tension to the scene. You can sense the rapidly disappearing bravado of the elite in the face of Jesus' logical tearing apart of their own authority. Jesus does this by inviting them to engage in the stories he tells. Through their own responses and the juxtaposition between those responses and their own lives the chief priests and elders essentially convict themselves.

One helpful hint in engaging with this text is that a vineyard was often used as a metaphor to represent Israel. There is also a foreshadowing here in Matthew's gospel to the crucifixion. An allegorical reading of this parable places the chief priests and elders in the role of the tenants of God's vineyard, the prophets are the slaves sent by the divine landowner, and Jesus is the son who is beaten and killed.

The story reveals the failure of the tenants to honour the authority they had been granted by the landowner, God. In usurping that authority for their own ends, they have given up any claim to have authority by God's grace.

**The question to ask ourselves this week, however, is where does this parable bite today? Who is the recipient of Jesus' sting in the tail today?**

It is easy for us to read an ancient story such as this as mere observers, watching on with a detached hubris. If we are honest with ourselves, are we not more likely to be lumped in with the chief priests and elders of the people? Consider how the Western developed world has taken advantage of the resources of this planet, this global vineyard, for its own ends creating wealth beyond belief often at the expense of poorer, less powerful nations and people. When we consider our own actions, how much of the time do we make decisions that we can, hand on heart, say are based more on God's kingdom values than on selfish desires and wishes? And when we make the direct connection to the church

today, the tenants of God's vineyard, how do the actions of our churches, nationally or locally, reflect the values of the kingdom of God? How much does our internal wrangling over who has authority distract us from living out the gospel?

This parable is not one locked in time and in the particular issues of the chief priests, elders and Pharisees and their dishonouring of God. It is one that reveals a constant threat to the values of God's kingdom and the life and ministry of Jesus: the seizing of what is not yours for your own ends. It is the history of colonialism, of empire, of slavery, of indentured servitude, of unfair trade, of multinational corporations which privatise their profits and socialise their losses—pocketing wealth in the good times and seeking government handouts in the tough times, of removing rights from workers, and on and on.

Jesus draws on Psalm 118 (vv. 22-23) to emphasise the point that while Jesus has come to reveal truth to the world, his teaching is rejected, the stone rejected, and yet it will become the cornerstone of a new community rooted in the purpose of God. How we still long for that reality amidst our messy and failed attempts to live up to that aspiration.

### **Retelling For Young People: "Let's Make It Ours!"**

Once upon a time there was a town with a park right in the middle. The town park was everybody's favourite place.

If you asked the oldest people in the town, they would tell you that they still remembered the days when there was a factory on the park land! A big, smelly, dirty factory.

And when the factory closed down, the family who owned it gave the land to the whole town, and the factory was pulled down, and everybody helped to turn the old place into a new park for everyone to enjoy.

Instead of the big, smelly, dirty factory, trees and flowers were planted. Grass was sown. Paths were laid. Swings were put up. A pond was dug. Ducks were brought in. A shelter with wooden seats and a special place for barbecues were built. Years later, you would never have guessed there had ever been a factory there. What a wonderful gift—a park that was everybody's favourite place.

Some people said that there was a particular part of the park that was their favourite spot of all. One elderly couple loved the shelter best because they could sit down for a rest. There was a group of friends who loved to sit on the grass by the pond, watching the ducks. A lady who was blind loved to stand under a lilac tree in summer and smell the blossom.



Another group of four friends had a favourite willow tree where they liked to sit leaning against its trunk facing north, south, east and west! But the willow tree grew its branches low on the trunk, so the children began to pull off those branches so that they could still lean against the trunk.

"Let's not waste these branches!" they said. So they made a circle of branches around the tree, and sat inside the circle. That favourite place under the willow tree felt very special indeed.

One day the friends said to each other, "Let's make it ours!" So they made the circle bigger and they laid more branches on it to make it thicker and higher, leaving one small gap to go in and out to the trunk of the tree. Then they took knives and carved their names in the tree trunk. They tied plastic bags around the trunk where they stored bottles of juice and a Frisbee. Then they brought a piece of wood that they had painted, and they put it outside the circle.

It said, 'KEEP OUT!' The friends said to each other, "Isn't it great that this is our tree now? This is our circle! This is our place to sit! We've made it ours!"

But when the elderly couple walked by on their way to shelter they felt sad when they saw the willow tree. It no longer looked as nice as it used to. The friends going to the pond to see the ducks felt annoyed when they saw the willow tree. Why was anyone carving their names onto something that belonged to everyone? The blind lady felt angry when she heard the voices from under the willow tree. Who was that, saying it was their tree now, when it was everyone's?

And so when summer came around again, and the park was busy, the people from the town began to say to each other:

"Don't you think we should talk to our friends under the willow tree?"

Don't you think we could find a way to make the whole park back into the beautiful gift that it is for everyone?

What can we do?"

Well, the elderly couple organised a barbecue for everyone, and the whole town came. The friends who sat under the willow tree came too. And everyone tried to make everything alright again...

What do you think they all said?

**Invite the children to role play their imagined conversation about how the situation in the park might have been put right.**

## **Reflection**

It's not about us.

We repeat that to ourselves.

It's not about us.

Cleverly distancing ourselves  
from all those unfortunate targets



of Jesus' scathing condemnation.

It's not about us.

We're just over here quietly doing the best we can,  
learning from the failings of others  
while God chuckles  
and remarks:

They're at it again!

Distancing themselves from my teaching  
removing themselves from implication  
if only they could see:

it's SO about them.

As wilful now as any generation before,  
as righteous  
and smug  
and 'well-meaning'  
and downright cruel,  
it is SO about them  
for their lack of compassion  
and their clinging tightly to all that they have,  
for their taunting others with their wealth,  
and consigning children to rubbish heaps...

It is SO about them.

If only they would wake up  
and hear my challenge  
to effect change  
by letting go,  
by giving up control,  
by working for justice,  
by having compassion,  
by following me,  
the vulnerable God,  
into all the places  
where my children suffer,  
and follow me out of their sanctuaries  
into the streets  
where I am to be found,  
weeping too.

### **Reflective Prayer**

God you call us to tend your land  
to till your garden  
and to feed your people.



But often we confuse  
dominion with domination,  
service with subjugation.

In our bewilderment we substitute  
your loving intent with our selfish will,  
your persistent presence  
with our power.

May the example of your self-emptying Son  
awaken us to the great reversal of grace  
that sets us all free to tend your land  
and love all your people.  
Amen.

**SONG: From Heaven You Came** by Graham Kendrick  
with verses 3 & 4 written by Jean Jones

1. From heaven you came, helpless babe,  
Entered our world, your glory veiled;  
Not to be served but to serve,  
And give your life that we might live.

*Chorus:*  
*This is our God, the Servant King,*  
*He calls us now to follow him,*  
*To bring our lives as a daily offering*  
*Of worship to the Servant King.*

2. There in the garden of tears,  
My heavy load he chose to bear;  
His heart with sorrow was torn,  
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.  
*Chorus:*

3. You showed the way, how to serve,  
to see the need, to hear the cry,

to feel the pain and the fear.  
You answered; did not pass us by.  
*Chorus:*

You taught the truth: God is love,  
And God forgives as we forgive.  
If we are last, we'll be first.  
And so you taught, and so you lived.  
*Chorus:*

3. Come, see his hands and his feet,  
The scars that speak of sacrifice,  
Hands that flung stars into space  
To cruel nails surrendered.  
*Chorus:*

4. So let us learn how to serve,  
And in our lives enthrone him;  
Each other's needs to prefer,  
For it is Christ we're serving.  
*Chorus:*

**Questions of discussion & prayer**

- Where do you recognise the abuse of the privilege of power in our world today?
- Why is it that people find it hard to let go of power?
- Make a list of people you feel abuse the position of 'respect' in which they have been placed, or placed themselves. Then pray for them.

**Conversation Starters with Teens**

- How do you judge who has leadership qualities?
- What about a person makes them leadership material?

Think of leaders you admire and write down or discuss the characteristics or qualifications that makes them a good leader?

- In our faith, how do we understand leadership and authority?
- What characteristics did Jesus have that made him leadership material?
- Using the parable, what characteristics does the kingdom look for?
- What one thing will you change this week, one thing to work towards that brings the kingdom closer?

## **Prayers for Others & Ourselves**

If all our accomplishments,  
all our good decisions,  
all our wisdom,  
our work,  
our will  
were to be stripped away  
we still belong to you, O God.

Therefore we press onwards towards the goal.

Not to earn your grace  
but to share your love.

So we pray for the twisting of our priorities,  
for the confusion of our belonging,  
for the marring of your image.

We are your children,  
we are your tenants,  
we are made in your image.  
May we live up to that reality,  
in our actions and thoughts.

We pray that those in power  
might seek service over celebrity  
and work to uplift the poor  
rather than their popularity.

We pray that those without power  
might find strength in you  
and partners in us  
even when we feel powerless.

We pray for the courage  
and strength to press onward.

We pray for humility and compassion to transcend the past  
and press forward to what lies ahead.

For you are our beginning,



you are our present,  
you are our destination. Amen.



## **ALL-AGE GAMES:**

### **Garden Tag**

***You will need: room to move and a chair to serve as home base.***

Designate one person to be the gardener, another to be the bee keeper and the rest of the group will be worker bees.

The Gardener sends the bees into the garden to gather pollen by giving them specific direction: hop to the other side of the room; skip twice around the room; and so on. After completing the task the bees return to the hive/homebase.

When tagged by the bee keeper, the bee must stop and perform a simple exercise before completing the task and returning to the hive. For instance; star jumps; standing on one foot; and such like.

Play continues until the bees all complete their tasks when a new gardener and bee keeper are chosen.

Take a moment to talk about the importance of listening and following directions. These are some of the ways we show love and respect to God and one another.

### **Respect Or Reject**

***You will need: a list of people, celebrities, TV shows, films, singers, actors, leaders, issues.***

A simple game that may lead into some discussion over the choices people make.

Work through the appropriate list (for your group) that you have created. When you call something out from your list the children have to call out either "Respect!" if they approve or "Reject!" if they do not.

When there is a lot of division over one of the items explore why that is with the children.

This may lead into some discussion over what and who we respect and how that respect is earned.

### **Sending**

As one of God's children  
you are not cast aside.  
God loves you  
and cherishes you.  
You belong and are treasured.  
Take this affirmation  
and live into it this week.

May you feel God's love,  
Christ's inclusion,  
and the Spirit's presence  
as you go,  
this day,  
this week,  
and evermore. Amen.