

The times they are a changing!

Call to Worship

Rev Dr Moira Laidlaw

Let us praise God
***who meets our needs
and leads us to places of tranquillity and rest.***

Let us praise God
who comforts us and replaces our fears with overflowing love.

Prayer of Adoration

Rev Dr Moira Laidlaw

Shepherd God, we praise you for enfolding us in your great love.
We rejoice in the knowledge that your care for us is so great that we lack nothing.
You provide for all our needs, even the strength to cope in times of darkness and distress.
The depth of your care for us is revealed in the person of Jesus, who was prepared to go to the cross to prove that your goodness and mercy is more powerful than evil and death.
In response to these many blessings, we have gathered together in this, your house, praying that this time of worship will be a fitting response to the many blessings we receive from you.
This we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen

Song TIS 659 The Lord's my shepherd

1. The Lord is my shepherd,
And I want to follow
wherever he leads me,
wherever he goes.
Over the mountains,
the waters and the byways,
valleys and highways he's waiting for me.

*I want to go to meet him there,
to lay myself down in his love.
The Lord is my shepherd
and I want to follow wherever he leads me,
wherever he goes.*

2. And while on the journey
to where we are going
he promised to be there to help us in a long,
and over the mountains we'll walk on together,
to know all the wonders he's given to me.

*I want to go to meet him there,
to lay myself down in his love.
The Lord is my shepherd
and I want to follow wherever he leads me,
wherever he goes.*

Brian Boniwell Based on Psalm 23

Prayer of Confession

Rev Dr Moira Laidlaw

Jesus, servant King and Light of the world you penetrate the darkness of the world with your love and your life, graciously enlightening us in ways which enable us to see the world and our neighbours as you see them. We confess, however, that there are times when we choose to reject the gift of your insight, preferring to 'close our eyes' to the pain and suffering which are daily experiences for so many people.

When selfishness blinds us to the needs of others;

Jesus, Light of the world, forgive us.

When our insensitivity blinds us to the hurt we cause others;

Jesus, Light of the world, forgive us.

When our prejudices blind us to the equal dignity and worth of others;

Jesus, Light of the world, forgive us.

When our pride blinds us to our own faults;

Jesus, Light of the world, forgive us.

When the lure of materialism blinds us to the poverty of others;

Jesus, Light of the world, forgive us.

Jesus, Light of the world, help us to walk in your light so that goodness, righteousness, and truth are made visible as we reflect your love and your mercy in and through all we say and do.

Amen

Assurance of Forgiveness:

Rev Dr Moira Laidlaw

Hear the good news! "Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light".
Know that we can "live as children of the light" (Ephesians 5: 8) because in Jesus, Light of the world, we are enlightened; we are healed; we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

Song TIS 162 Thank you for giving me the morning

1. Thank you for giving me the morning,
thank you for every day that's new,
thank you for all my hurts and troubles
I can take to you.

2. Thank you for all my friends and helpers,
thank you for people everywhere,
thank you for showing me, Lord Jesus,
how to help and care.

3. Thank you for times of working, playing,
thank you for all that I can do,
thank you for all that's bright and cheerful,
and for music too.

4. Thank you for comfort in my sadness,
thank you for all that understand,
thank you that your hand holds and leads me,
everywhere I am.

5. Thank you for speaking to me, Jesus,
thank you for meeting with me here,
thank you, because you love all people,
those both far and near.

6. Thank you that you're so good and loving,
thank you that I am filled with you,
thank you, you make me feel so glad and
thankful as I do.

Martin G Schneider

Readings:

1 Samuel 16:1-13

John 9:1-41

Sermon

The times, they are a changing!

This message has changed three times since I started drafting it. I was going in one direction but decided to change direction when the Coronavirus was getting more serious and there were restrictions in holding large gatherings of people. Things have changed again and rather than preparing a sermon to be presented in church, I have prepared a message for people to read through email or a printed copy.

We are facing unprecedented changes to our lives as the threat and spread of this virus continues.

Our readings today also have people facing changes or threats to their lives. On the other hand, Psalm 23 gives comfort to many people in times of hardship or grief.

The changes to our lives from the Coronavirus are causing a lot of worry, confusion, grief and pain to many of us.

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

King Saul had disobeyed God, and God had rejected him as king. Samuel now has the unenviable job of going to the king and telling him and then he is sent to anoint a new king - while the present king is still alive. A very risky job.!

Samuel is told to go to Bethlehem and say that he is just going to make a sacrifice to God there. He is to invite Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice, and then anoint the new king.

This seems simple enough. Along comes Jesse's eldest son Eliab. Here is a tall, handsome young man – surely just the material for a king!.

But God says: "*do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*" 1 Samuel 16:7 NIV.

Seven of Jesse's sons are presented before Samuel and all are rejected by God. Then the youngster is brought in from tending the sheep. They probably had to wait for him to shower and put on his best Sunday suit! This is the chosen one, the boy David.

Samuel had made a judgment that Eliab was obviously the one to be anointed, but he had to listen to God speaking to him. We, too, have to listen to God speaking to us through the Holy Spirit.

This is particularly important as our lives are turned upside down with the Coronavirus.

As a church community we have to be looking for God's guidance, as well as for love, grace, strength and patience to weather a very difficult time.

Read John 9:1-41

This is a very long reading, but the story is easy to read.

The Pharisees had it all mapped out. They had rules and regulations for every aspect of their lives, what they could do, and what they couldn't do, how they must worship their God.

Some people like it all to be worked out for them and don't like to have to make choices. They feel safe when everything just goes along as it always has done. The Pharisees were like this.

Some of us are comfortable in church when things are familiar and feel threatened when things change.

Although, by now, we are probably used to having different preachers each week, and varying service formats, we may feel uncomfortable when a service format is vastly different, or when the furniture is moved around. We can feel threatened by too much change.

Today we are faced with a total disruption to how we have 'been the church'. We can't even meet together on a Sunday morning

The Pharisees felt threatened when Jesus came along preaching and healing people. He was not one of them and he even disregarded their sacred rules and regulations.

In our reading, Jesus even dared to heal someone on the Sabbath!

Shock! Horror!

The church officials were aghast, how could any religious man even consider healing someone on the Sabbath.

In their rules they were not to work on the Sabbath. Jesus had broken at least three of the laws.

1. He had made clay. This was classed as work. He was not allowed to make clay as this was work.
2. He had healed someone. It was forbidden to heal on the Sabbath. Medical attention could only be given if life was actually in danger. Even then, it could only be to stop the patient from getting worse, not to make him better.
3. Lastly it was laid down in the law regarding the Sabbath and healing: "As to fasting spittle, it is not lawful put it so much as upon the eyelid."

The rules and regulations were sacred. They must not be broken and certainly they were not up for discussion or negotiation.

Today everything is changing in our community and even in our church. We can no longer meet as a community to worship God together. We will miss the fellowship and friendship we usually share every Sunday morning and at other times as we meet in other groups.

Many of us are feeling threatened as things are changing too quickly. How are we going to cope now we can't come together on Sunday morning for worship and fellowship?

To varying extents, this is how we all must be feeling! We have a need to work through it, and a need for guidance. This will be very hard on those of us who rely on the comfort of knowing where we stand. Those who like things to be the same and familiar.

The kingdom of God

Jesus brought a different outlook to life. He came and showed compassion for people in need and taught them about the kingdom of God.

This kingdom is something that we look forward to, but it is also something we experience now in our daily lives.

As everything is changing around us, let us continue to be Jesus' disciples. We are his church in our community. We may have to be careful about going out and meeting people, but we can care for each other in different ways.

It is a time where we need to ask ourselves...How can we meet the needs of people, especially the spiritual, emotional and material needs in these difficult times, where there are some food and other shortages in our supermarkets, where we are bombarded with all sorts of conflicting information, where we have concerns for our health and the health of loved ones?

We can still keep in contact over the phone. This helps others not feel too isolated or forgotten.

We can pray for each other.

Some of us may be able to do some shopping or take people to medical appointments.

Our Pastoral Careers especially will be ministering to those under their care. We will be providing the Sunday Service in written form each week, and look at other maybe more creative ways which will enable us to feel we are still part of a vibrant and connected church family.

And we can find comfort in the words of Psalm 23.

Psalm 23 New International Version (NIV)

A psalm of David.

¹ The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,

³ he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Song TIS 129 Amazing grace

1. Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

2. As grace first taught my heart to fear
so grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

3. Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come:
God's grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

4. The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

John Newton

Prayer of Intercession (Written by Bev Plaizier)

Loving God,

We come today as our beautiful mountain area begins to burst forth in colourful and vibrant leafage bringing new energy to our environment.

Yet, whilst this change occurs so many other changes are surrounding us.

As we come to bring our concerns in prayer we are reminded of Christ's acts of compassion in the face of uncertainty!

Whilst steady fear grips our community, nation and world we are mindful that many in our church and wider community face daily issues of uncertain diagnosis and live with increasing pain and disability. May the care they are given bring sustaining comfort.

We therefore bring every good intention for those caring at home or in health care and extremely pressured aged care facilities.

May the orderlies and nursing assistants, caterers, nurses, doctors and pharmacists and deliverers of the many vital everyday essential delivery services be sustained and encouraged.

We bring especially to our prayers the scientists working for swift answers for vital vaccines. We are thankful for their expertise.

We are thankful for our church communities time and concern to keep us safe and connected. May all our laity be enjoined to keep watch for each other and those around us who may go unnoticed.

We are reminded of Christ's continuing actions of compassion even in adversity in the Easter message.

Despite some mania or hype in our community which disadvantages the more vulnerable, we are grateful for the ongoing food services from our Katoomba Uniting premises. We are truly thankful for these and the responses which are springing up in our community with care hubs instigated through Get up and free NRMA counselling and

Red Cross emergency services after bushfires . In these we see humanity at work at its best and we are heartened by the part we can all play and grateful for those in these vital services.

May our government act in considered ways to secure everyone's safety and bring just measures to assure the very many staggering to absorb job losses and impending lack of vital resources are sustained.

We bring thanks for the challenging work at many state and local government levels during these baffling and uncharted times.

We come now seeking to practice calm in our lives knowing that we are loved and cherished in this church community and drawing on that strength and the unconditional love displayed by Christ.

May we continue to take that calm into our family and community with a sure knowledge of the Peace which passes all understanding.

Amen

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.**

[Matthew 6:9-13](#)

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

Song - TIS 653 This is a day of new beginnings

1. This is a day of new beginnings,
time to remember, and move on,
time to believe what love is bringing,
laying to rest the pain that's gone.

2. For by the life and death of Jesus,
God's mighty Spirit, now and then,
can make for us a world of difference
as faith and hope are born again.

3. Then let us, with the Spirit's daring,
step from the past, and leave behind
our disappointment, guilt and grieving,
seeking new paths, and sure to find.

4. Christ is alive, and goes before us
to show and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings;
our God is making all things new.

Benediction

Rev Bruce Prewer

We are numbered among those whose eyes have been touched with the salve of Jesus Christ.

Amen! Once we were blind but now we can see!

See clearly and walk gently wherever you go this week.

Look gladly on those who encourage, and deal patiently on those who irritate.

See light where others see gloom, and hope where many see defeat.

Look upon weak souls with mercy and face the tough characters without fear.

Travel calmly with the confidence of those who have caught glimpses of a divine glory,

In and through Christ Jesus our Saviour.

The grace of your Brother Jesus will redeem you,

The love of your Eternal Father will undergird you,

and the friendship of your Sisterly Spirit will empower you.

Amen