



Leura Uniting Church
ORDER OF SERVICE, 6 September
Stephen White
Ordinary Sunday 23, Year A

332

The Passover

Gathering of the People of God

As we come to our time of worship you may like to prepare a space where you can be peaceful and focus on being accompanied into the holy presence of God.

You might like to light a candle. Be comfortable and warm wherever you are sitting.

I have included a YouTube links for the hymns. If you want to listen to the hymns or sing along with music, click on the link, or copy and paste it in your internet page.

Remember you are not alone. You are in God's presence and have those whom you love and are loved by in your heart.

While we are not coming together in the church for worship, we are still together in spirit as we participate in our Worship Service at home. So we are in a sense gathering together in spirit.

I may not conduct this whole Service at Zoom church but cover some parts of the message so we will have time for discussion.

Call to Worship

Jesus said:

Wherever two or three people are gathered together in my name, there I am in the middle of them.

In the name of Jesus we have gathered here:

To rejoice with the Spirit who inspires us,

To worship the God who utterly loves us,

And to celebrate the Lord who still lives among us.

[Rev Bruce Prewer]

Prayer of Adoration

With worshippers throughout the centuries, we offer you, O God, our thanksgiving and praise with music and song, because our lives are graced by your faithfulness and your glory.

You delivered the Israelites of old from enslavement and death simply because you loved them. You delivered us from enslavement to sin and death through the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ.

As the Passover marked a new stage in the history of the Hebrew people, so the death and resurrection of Jesus marked a new and blessed stage of humanity's relationship with you. Eternal God, your acts of grace astound us and fill us with unending songs of praise and we honour you with our worship and our lives in Jesus' name.

Amen

[Lectionary Generated Liturgy]

Song TIS 52 Let us sing to the God of salvation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8pFxKuRN3A>

Verse 1

Let us sing to the God of salvation
Let us sing to the Lord our rock
Let us come to His house with thanksgiving
Let us come before the Lord and sing

Chorus

Praise our Maker praise our Saviour
Praise the Lord our everlasting King
Every throne must bow before Him
God is Lord of everything

Verse 2

In His hand are the earth's deep places
And the strength of the hills is His
All the sea is the Lord's for He made it
By His hands the dry land was formed

Verse 3

Let us worship the Lord our Maker
Let us kneel to the Lord our God
For we all are the sheep of His pasture
He will guide us by His powerful hand

Verse 4

Let today be the time when you hear Him
May our hearts not be hard or cold
Lest we stray from the Lord in rebellion
As His people did in time of old

CCLI Song # 28287

Norman Leonard Warren | Richard Thomas Bewes

- © Words: 1973 Richard Bewes - The Jubilate Group (Admin. by Jubilate Hymns Ltd, sub to Hope Publishing for various regions) (Admin. by Hope Publishing Company)
- Music: Norman Warren - The Jubilate Group (Admin. by Jubilate Hymns Ltd, sub to Hope Publishing for various regions) (Admin. by Hope Publishing Company)

For use solely with the SongSelect® [Terms of Use](#). All rights reserved. www.ccli.com

Prayer of Confession

Merciful and gracious God, when we remember that we have been clothed with Jesus Christ from the time of our baptism, we are filled with a sense of wonder and joy that you should care for us so deeply. Such care for us forces us to examine our response to such an outpouring of love on your behalf.

Sadly, we confess that there are times when our words and actions, our weak or unconvincing witness deny the existence of your love stitched deep within the fabric of our lives.

When our behaviour is patterned more on the values of the world than the values of Jesus:
forgive us and weave your Spirit anew within us.

When we clothe ourselves with habits which reflect our own selfish desires rather than the selfless nature of Jesus:
forgive us and weave your Spirit anew within us.

When the lives of neighbours are unravelling because of poverty, broken relationships, substance abuse, discrimination, and we fail to love them as Jesus loves us:
forgive us and weave your Spirit anew within us.

When we believe that we have to gather up the loose ends and tangled threads of our lives and our families and communities on our own:
forgive us and weave your Spirit anew within us.

Merciful God, take the frayed strands of our lives and weave them into something beautiful. This we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen!

Assurance of Forgiveness:

Hear the good news: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. (based on 1 Timothy 1:15)
And so I declare to you: in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

[Liturgies on Line]

The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!
And also with you!

Song TIS 428 Help us, O Lord, to learn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWCfGIIgp2c>

Verse 1

Help us O Lord to learn
The truths Your Word imparts
To study that Your laws may be
Inscribed upon our hearts

Verse 2

Help us O Lord to live
The faith which we proclaim
That all our thoughts and words and
deeds
May glorify Your name

Verse 3

Help us O Lord to teach
The beauty of Your ways
That yearning souls
May find the Christ
And sing aloud His praise

CCLI Song # 7048673

Charles Steggall | William Watkins Reid Jr.

- © Words: 1959. Renewed 1987 The Hymn Society (Admin. by Hope Publishing Company)
- Music: Public Domain

For use solely with the SongSelect® [Terms of Use](#). All rights reserved. www.ccli.com

CCLI Licence # 300742

Readings:

Merril Hillis

Exodus 12:1-14

Matthew 18:15-20

Sermon**The Passover**

Today we celebrate Father's Day. To most of us, family celebrations are a time of rejoicing. On Saturday we had most of our family up. It is great when we can all be together and seeing our grandchildren playing together.

Think of the special times when you have joined with family on a holiday or anniversary, sat around the table for a bountiful feast of good food, and shared in robust conversation mingled with memories, laughter, and perhaps tears. Reunions like that are rejoicing at its best.

Unfortunately some of our gatherings are a bit subdued this year due to COVID-19.

Moses

God's people had been in slavery in Egypt for four hundred years. They owned no land. They didn't even own themselves. What future they had was filled with images of continued gloom and desperation. They understood pain, misery, and oppression—the kind of ill treatment that comes with cruelty. Perhaps they had come to expect that nothing better would ever come their way.

As they cried out to God, God heard their cries. The God we love and serve hears the deep longings of our souls. The sparrows may well fall from the heavens but not without God knowing. Our greatest need is met, not so much in having our prayers answered by God, according to our intentions, but simply in knowing that God **hears** our pleas. We rejoice in the connectedness we feel with God. What matters to each human being matters to God.

The theologians speak of God's transcendence and imminence. Nothing can be more profound and confounding than to consider that the Creator God who set the earth and the stars in motion — who created us in his own image — is the same God who knows our names, who has numbered the hair of our head, and who hears our prayers.

God hears our cries and knows our hearts.

God steps in.

If you recall the story, Moses was a Hebrew baby who was bought up by the daughter of Pharaoh, but he was aware of his identity as one of the Hebrews. He took revenge on a cruel Egyptian and escaped Egypt.

Many years later Moses is confronted by a burning bush, but a bush that was not consumed by the fire.

⁷ The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹ And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.

¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

Exodus 3:7-10 NIV

So Moses heads back to Egypt.

²⁹ Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, ³⁰ and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, ³¹ and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

5 Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.'"

Ex 4:29- 5:1 NIV

Now Pharaoh refuses to let the people go. After all they are the main workforce for the kingdom. The Egyptians needed the Hebrews to do all the manual labour.

So Pharaoh makes them all work harder, suffering more.

Moses and Aaron confront Pharaoh and Moses performs miracles before him – turning his staff into a snake, turning the waters of the Nile into blood. But Pharaoh's magicians are able to replicate these feats.

After a week Moses returns to Pharaoh and the final eight plagues begin –

- Frogs
- Gnats
- Flies
- Death of the Egyptian livestock
- Boils
- Locusts
- Darkness for three days

But we are told that after each plague Pharaoh's heart is further hardened.

And finally death of all first born is announced.

The Passover

The Israelites are told to gather in their homes on the night of the last of ten plagues—the night the death angel would arrive.

They are to eat a special meal with a unique menu: roast lamb without spot or blemish, bread unleavened by yeast (there was no time for bread to rise), and bitter herbs that reminded them of the severity of their enslavement.

When the slain lamb's blood is available, they are to splash the blood on the doors of their homes. When the hour of death comes later that evening, the angel would "pass over" their homes.

Thus, it was the Passover meal, eaten that first time in anticipation of God's victory for his people. It was to be eaten in the years to come as a celebration of God's presence among his people. And so, year after year, even to this day, Passover is celebrated as the central feast of the Jewish community.

But this first night, the Passover as it became known, was not a celebration. I am sure the people were feeling anything but celebratory. Moses had come and offered hope, but after each of the plagues their suffering seemed to increase. They were probably very anxious this night. What was going to happen? After all each time Pharaoh had said they could go, he changed his mind.

In later years, the remembering of this night was to become a joyous celebration of God saving His people from slavery.

Over three thousand years, Jewish people have continuously celebrated that special meal called the Feast of the Passover. The festival is held in the first month of their year. It is a highlight for the young and for the old of every family. Jesus grew up observing the feast and holding it as very precious.

New Testament.

In New Testament times the Passover had become a pilgrim festival. One hundred thousand Jews from most parts of the world descended on Jerusalem during the Passover celebration.

Preparation for the event was elaborate. Early in the day, leaven was removed from the homes and burned in a ritual ceremony. Work ceased at noon. Around 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the slaughtering of the Passover sacrifices began. Temple Levites sounded the three-fold trumpet blast. Others sang the hallelujah psalms. Worshippers brought their lambs to be killed by the priests, and the animals' blood was caught in gold-and-silver trays. As the animals were being dressed, the priests tossed the blood against the great altar and burned it, along with fat portions of the animals.

The dressed animals, with legs unbroken and with heads still attached, were then returned to the worshippers, who returned home and cooked the animal in a clay oven. The meal was served on low tables around which worshippers reclined on cushions. All were dressed in festive white garments.

After the blessing, the meal began with the eating of the lamb with the bitter herbs, dipped in harosheth—a paste of mashed fruits and nuts. The designated "Son" of the family would then ask the ceremonial question, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" What followed was a recital in song and story of the exodus from Egypt. The long history of Israel was recited, ending with a prayer for the redemption of the land from the occupying power of Rome.

Rev Bruce Prewer wrote:

In the week during which Jesus was executed, we are told that he "longed to eat the Passover" with his disciples. Note that word "longed". He yearned with all his heart to just once more celebrate God as Saviour before his own horrific suffering and death. That particular Passover meal was arranged secretly in an upper room. It was that final meal with his friends that has become the model for what we Christians have named the "Last Supper".

The Passover was a household meal, not presided over by clergy but by the senior member of the household. Even the youngest child participated in the ritual meal.

Although emotions of every sort filled the room, there is no mistaking the note of celebration. Jesus and his disciples celebrated the Passover meal and remembered their own holy history.

At its end, Jesus took what we would call "the leftovers" and gave to both bread and wine new and elevated meanings. In the liturgy, Jesus took the bread and cup, gave thanks, and then gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat and drink. This bread, this cup, is given for you."

The first Passover was also a serious evening, full of uncertainty and fear. The "last supper" was a celebration of the past, but became serious when Jesus started talking about his "body" and his "blood".

In both cases, they led us into what was to happen. The Passover meal was in preparation for the act of God that saved the people from slavery in Egypt. The Last Supper was to prepare the disciples for God's saving people from their sins.

The Passover meal was celebrated to remind the people of what their great God had done.

Each time we come to the Lord's Table, we are reminded of God's grace so overwhelmingly poured out for us. This meal is a time of rejoicing. We sit at the table together as the family of God, the Body of Christ. May each heart declare love and loyalty to our Lord, who has brought us here and has made us to sit forever in the heavenly places. Thanks be to God.

Questions:

1. Share some special experiences in sharing in the Lord's Supper.
2. What does the Lord's Supper mean to you?

Notices: Do be sure to check our latest church bulletin and tune in to Zoom church.

Offering

While we can't place our offerings in the offering bags, you are reminded that you can made your offering by Giving Direct, direct debit (see bank details in the Bulletin) or putting money aside for when we can physically meet together.

Offering Prayer

We thank you, loving Father, for the abundance of your gifts to us, for the pain and suffering you bore for us, and for the joy at work within us. Receive these offerings we bring as expressions of our devotion. Lead us in the way of faith that we may learn more clearly of you and follow you more closely. **Amen**

Prayers of the People Mark Hillis

We are called to prayer, into conversation with the creative presence of the universe: the one we so often and inadequately call God.

Ever-living One, Spirit divine, lead us in our prayers today: for without your prompting, our words are empty and our thoughts lack focus.

We pray for people we have never met, other than through news stories from all over the world. We offer our thoughts, silently, for those situations and peoples who have come to our attention in the past week. *[A time of silence is observed]*

We pray for the people of Syria. They have suffered so much and deserve some peace and rest. Left in ruins by countless conflicts, international intrusion, and cruel leaders, the people have cared as best they can for one another. Now, at last, there is some rebuilding going on. Peace with the Christian Church in Syria: may their witness shine like a bright light.

Peace to the people of Syria.

Many Lebanese and Armenian Australians are distressed and angry with the political vacuum and neglectful leaders of Lebanon. Reconciler and Redeemer, rouse all people of faith to combine their voices for reform and for the good of Lebanon. May your people there and here in Australia witness to a better way.

Peace to the people of Lebanon.

We pray for all peoples in the world and in Australia who have been thrown into grief and fear by the COVID 19 pandemic. For those who have lost family members in death we pray. For those who have suffered anxiety and distress in the face of the disease; and for those who have bravely gone to work in the midst of the struggle to end it. We who do not know when or how this pandemic may end hope that it shall. We share our plans and dreams for such times yet to be.

Peace to the people of the world.

We pray for creatures of all kinds who live upon this planet. We pray that humanity will not destroy any more of their essential habitat. We admit we are diminished by every loss of life, and by all threats to other species. Help us determine what positive things we can do as individuals and communities. Open the eyes of those who are blind to all but self-interest. Give us courage to act for the environment, and to expose those who despoil it.

Peace for all life on our earth!

We pray thankfully for the many caring communities and organisations in the Blue Mountains, our home. Strengthen us for diligent action to support just and life-giving causes. Guide us into helpful networks and relationships. Encourage us in support of the heritage of the First Peoples of this plateau. Let us be respectful and ready to listen and learn. May we give clear messages to our leaders that we care about this environment and that we care about the future generations who shall inherit it.

Peace to the creatures and peoples of the Blue Mountains.

We take a little time to focus our thoughts as a Church community. When we consider how seriously Jesus encouraged mutual accountability amongst his disciples, may we ensure that our loving commitment to one another is uppermost when we praise, discipline, rebuke or encourage. When tempted just to be nice or polite, guide us into more robust concern for one another in the way of Jesus.

We think of those who have undergone surgery in the past week. We think of those suffering from illness, loneliness, or any needs of which we are aware. We pray for these persons and situations in silence, together, now. *[A time of silence is observed]*

Peace with all those for whom we pray and who pray for us. In the name of Jesus, AMEN.

*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 685 The power of your love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ga6Qtxzd6vk>

Verse 1

Lord I come to You
Let my heart be changed renewed
Flowing from the grace
That I found in You
And Lord I've come to know
The weaknesses I see in me
Will be stripped away
By the pow'r of Your love

Verse 2

Lord unveil my eyes
Let me see You face to face
The knowledge of Your love
As You live in me
Lord renew my mind
As Your will unfolds in my life
In living ev'ry day
By the pow'r of Your love

Chorus

Hold me close
Let Your love surround me
Bring me near
Draw me to Your side
And as I wait
I'll rise up like the eagle
And I will soar with You
Your Spirit leads me on
In the pow'r of Your love

CCLI Song # 917491

Geoff Bullock

© 1992 Geoff Bullock Music (Admin. by CopyCare Pacific Pty. Ltd.)

For use solely with the SongSelect® [Terms of Use](http://www.ccli.com). All rights reserved. www.ccli.com

CCLI Licence # 300742

Benediction

May you who are **strong** go out into the world with gentleness,
and you who are **weak** go on your way with new strength.

May you who are **confident** by nature walk now with humility,
and you who are **anxious** step out with more certainty.

Get on with life, knowing that you are the sisters and brothers of Jesus,
and the children of the Most High God.

The love of Christ Jesus redeem you from all evil,
the love of God hold you fast when all else fails,
the friendship of the Spirit keep you in perfect peace,
Now and evermore. **Amen**

[Rev Bruce Prewer]