

Sunday 18th September 2022

Morning Worship 9.00 am.

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

SKY SUNDAY

Welcome!

We worship this Sunday with the skies. We celebrate with the clouds, the winds, the dusk and the dawn. We listen to the sounds of sky proclaiming God's presence. We stand in awe before the vast reaches of space above us and thank God for the fragile piece of stardust we call Earth.

Lighting the Christ Candle

In the name of the Creator, who colours the sky,
the name of Christ, who died under dark skies,
and the name of the Spirit, the wind in the sky. Amen.

Holy! Holy! Holy!

Sky is filled with God's presence.

Christ, we come into your presence today,
to worship in this sanctuary called Earth,

Holy! Holy! Holy!

Earth is filled with your presence.

Acknowledgement of country

Before we begin this worship service, I would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet – the Ngunnawal and Ngambri People. I would also like to pay my respects to the Elders, both past and present, and to the Elders of other Aboriginal communities. This is the place where God has been together with the first people for a long time. It is upon their ancestral lands that the Wesley Uniting Church is built and where we worship.

Life of the church (Announcements)

Song TiS 418: She sits like a bird brooding on the waters (John Bell)

She sits like a bird, brooding on the waters
hovering on the chaos of the world's first day
she sighs and she sings, mothering creation
waiting to give birth to all the Word will say.

She wings over earth, resting where she wishes
lighting close at hand or soaring through the skies
she nests in the womb, welcoming each wonder
nourishing potential hidden to our eyes.

She dances in fire, startling her spectators
waking tongues of ecstasy where dumbness reigned
she weans and inspires all whose hearts are open
nor can she be captured, silenced and restrained.

For she is the Spirit, one with God in essence
gifted by the Saviour in eternal love
she is the key opening the scriptures
enemy of apathy and heavenly dove.

Call to worship

We invite the skies to worship with us:

**the subtle orange skies at dawn
and the bold red skies at sunset.**

We join the heavens in praising God:

**proclaiming God's glory across the globe
and hailing God's name with the evening stars.**

We join with the atmosphere in worship:

**the air, the moisture, the oxygen,
the wind and all the expressions of God's Spirit.**

We call the clouds to celebrate with storms:
**to carry the life giving drops of rain,
that give hope and healing to Earth.**

We invite the winds to join our petitions:
**to carry our prayers to God above
and breathe our hopes to Christ in person.**

We celebrate the song of the skies!
Sing! Skies! Sing!

**We invite you to name sky creatures
to join us in worship:**

*We name, silently or aloud, other creatures or parts of the sky or atmosphere
and invite them to join us in praising our Creator.*

We celebrate the song of the skies!
Sing! Skies! Sing!

Opening prayers

We hear voices crying out in the wilderness, O God.
The earth cries out for healing.
The creatures cry out for the restoration of their habitat.
The trees and the fields cry out for water.
The land cries out for nourishment,
the oceans cry out for balance,
the sky cry out for clean air,
and we cry out for wisdom, O God.
Meet us in this place
that we may walk alongside you
on the winding path
toward your renewed creation. **Amen.**

Prayer of confession

God of the sky,
we seek your grace.
Too often we have been silent,

in the face of injustice,
profiteering, and greed.
In our silence,
we are accomplices to the destruction
unfolding in your creation.
By our patterns of consumption,
we have contributed to the breaking of ecosystems.
Through our investments,
we seek the quick profit
at the expense of the earth.
Forgive us for our complicity.
Engage our creative minds
to start now in building a just,
sustainable economy that honours your creation.
Amen.

Words of affirmation

We can start now in seeking justice
in all the ways we engage with Earth and Sky.
Though it may feel like a journey through the vastness of sky,
just as God was present with the people of Israel in exile
and with Jesus amid temptation,
God, too, is with us. We are not alone.
The Spirit is calling us to begin healing the world this day.
Amen.

The Peace

Song: The Garden by Mikali Anagnostis

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 ploughshare too.

Chorus

*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 turned 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.

Chorus

*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 turned our weapons into ploughs.
New life will come from death, somehow.*

THE PEOPLE HEAR THE WORD OF GOD

Opening the Word with young folk

Scriptures

Old Testament: Jeremiah 4.23-28

'When the heavens mourn'

Jeremiah sees Earth return to chaos and the skies respond with mourning.

I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void;
and to the heavens, and they had no light.

I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking,
and all the hills moved to and fro.

I looked, and lo, there was no one at all,
and all the birds of the air had fled.

I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert,
and all its cities were laid in ruins before the Lord, before his fierce anger.

For thus says the Lord: The whole land shall be a desolation;
yet I will not make a full end.

Because of this the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above grow black; for
I have spoken, I have purposed; I have not relented nor will I turn back.

Psalms: Psalm 19.1-6

'Good News from sky'

The Psalmist declares that the sky announces God's presence on Earth,
and that space proclaims the work of God's hands.

1 The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

2 Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.

3 There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;

4 yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,
5 which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them;
and nothing is hid from its heat.

Epistle: Philippians 2.9-13

‘Jesus is now the Cosmic Christ’

Jesus Christ, after being humbled in death, is exalted above every name.

Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me,
not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence,
work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;
for it is God who is at work in you,
enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Gospel: Mark 15.33-39

‘Three hours of darkness’

When Jesus hangs on the cross, the sky turns black in sympathy.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

Song ATAR 605: God of Creation

God of creation,
open life giver,
present at birth and
all through our days;
author of sunrise,
song in the night sky-
here in this place,
we offer our praise.

Jesus, companion,
teacher and healer,
friend of the grieving,
suffering the poor
stand with your people,
whisper among us
promise of mercy,
goodness for all.

Spirit of comfort,
blow through creation,
stir up new life, breath
peace through our world.
Healer of hearts and
hope for tomorrow,
weave all our sorrows
into new dawn.

Hear we give thanks for
life in its fullness,
blessings received, your
gifts to us all.
Make us a people,
filled with compassion,
selflessly giving,
serving your world.

Message: As we look to the sky

THE PEOPLE RESPOND TO THE WORD OF GOD

Prayers of the People

God of all Creation,
we come to you in praise and thanksgiving
for the beauty of your creation.

God, give us strength for the journey.

We come bearing burdens
that weigh heavy on our hearts
and make our bodies weary.

God, give us strength for the journey.

We ask you for healing presence
with all who are ill,
and pray that your creation
provides healing and sustenance.

God, give us strength for the journey.

We call for your wisdom
to grace leaders of government,
that they may prioritise care
for the most vulnerable people and places in your world.

God, give us strength for the journey.

We reach for your courage
as we seek new ways of living
that nurture and honour your creation.

God, give us strength for the journey.

We ask you to hear the prayers of our hearts,
both those spoken aloud and those we hold close.

Provide space for people to pray silently or aloud.

After each spoken prayer, repeat the response,

“God, give us strength for the journey.”

We give you thanks
for the present of your Spirit
in all times and places.

God, give us strength for the journey. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

THE SENDING OUT OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Extinguishing Christ Candle

Song 749 TiS: Thuma mina

Thuma mina.
Thuma mina, thumb mina,
thuma mina Somandla. (repeat v.1)

Send me, Lord.
Send me, Jesus; send me, Jesus;
send me, Jesus; send me, Lord. (repeat v.1a)

Lead me, Lord.
Lead me, Jesus; lead me, Jesus;
Lead me, Jesus, lead me, Lord. (repeat v.2)

Fill me, Lord.
Fill me, Jesus; fill me, Jesus;
Fill me, Jesus; fill me, Lord. (repeat v.3)

I will go, Lord.
I will go, Lord; I will go, Lord:
in your name, Lord, I will go. (repeat v.4)

Traditional South Africa

Commissioning and Blessing

Go out in joy;

letting yourselves be led into a whole and complete life.

As we look to the sky,

enable us to see the wonder of what is beyond our reach.

Listen to the hills and mountains bursting with song,

Notice the great trees of the forest joining in the procession,
exuberant with applause.

No more thistles and thorns, but stately eucalyptus,

Great and lasting evidence of the wonders of God.

Amen.

Liturgist: Rev Karyn Burchell-Thomas

Preacher: Rev Gareth Thomas-Burchell

With thanks to our musicians, readers, Flowers, A/V and steward teams

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