

28<sup>th</sup> July 2013

## **Gathering Music**

### **Entry into Celebration**

*The gong is sounded three times*

Come in. Come into this place,  
where the ordinary is sanctified,  
where life is celebrated,  
where the joy of community is experienced.  
Come into this place.  
Together we make it a holy place.

### **Lighting the Community Candle**

*The candle is lit*

**Hymn:** “Gather the Spirit” SLT 347

Gather the Spirit, harvest the power.  
Our sep’rate fires will kindle one flame.  
Witness the mystery of this hour.  
Our trials in this light appear all the same.  
Refrain:  
Gather in peace, gather in thanks.  
Gather in sympathy now and then.  
Gather in hope, compassion and strength.  
Gather to celebrate once again.

Gather the Spirit of heart and mind.  
Seeds for the sowing are laid in store.  
Nurtured in love, and conscience refined,  
with body and spirit united once more.  
Refrain:

Gather the Spirit growing in all,

drawn by the moon and fed by the sun.  
Winter to spring, and summer to fall,  
the chorus of life resounding as one.  
Refrain: *Jim Scott*

### **Opening Sentences**

We gather in this sacred place.  
May we create here a circle of love.  
A place of wisdom,  
A place of connection,  
A place of hope.

### **Welcome**

### **Time with the children**

### **Meditation**

### **Silence**

### **Music for reflection**

### **Reading from our Religious tradition**

Luke 11: 1-13

Our Reader today is Ruth Doobov

### **Contemporary Word**

### **Reflection**

### **The Peace**

This is a place of peace.  
A place where we befriend one another.  
Let us greet one another as a sign of peace.

**Hymn:** “God has aTable” TiS 544

### **Care Candle**

We are a people of all ages who enter this space bringing our joys and concerns.

*Joys and concerns are shared*

**Response**

In caring for one another

**May we be untiring.**

In sheltering one another

**May we be strong.**

In holding one another

**May we be tender.** *G. Vosper*

So we take this flame and light our special Care Candle.

**Offering**

Our offering for the celebration of life in this place and beyond and our gifts of bread and wine shall now be received.

*Stand for presentation*

**Presentation**

**By our smallest actions we become part of a bigger world.**

**Our giving today becomes an expression of our spirit of generosity and caring for a hurting world.**

**Invitation**

In his ministry Jesus shared many meals with his disciples, his friends and even with strangers.

It was a ministry of commensality, a table ministry, the sharing of food and wine and conversation.

In the time honoured tradition we share together.

We share bread and wine, the simplest things.

Bread and wine, blessed and taken.

The Bread – broken

The Wine – poured out

Let us share together these symbols that have become such a part

of our tradition.

All are welcome to the table.

**After Communion**

Spirit of love, Spirit of compassion, may the celebration of the wonder and mystery of your presence, strengthen and enable us to be your body, the Church.

**Words of Mission and Blessing**

May people of faith inspire us,

May wisdom and justice empower us,

May we be wise and strong and creative,

May we celebrate life and hope. *Ruth Burgess*

**Hymn:** “Beauty for Brokenness”

TiS 690

This week at St. James

Birthdays

Anniversaries,

Significant events/life changes

Journey Candle

Morning Tea

## MEDITATION

Today we recall our namesake, ST James the Greater, and his pilgrimage. It reminds us that we are a pilgrim people.

Part of the process of pilgrimage is to pause and take stock, to reassess, perhaps even to take a new path.

As we will be speaking later about prayer, our meditation this morning invites us to do just that-reassess, take stock, look where we are going and what we are thinking.

I invite you to take your shell, which is a symbol of pilgrimage, and share this journey.

John Spong says, "Prayer became for me the way I lived, loved and struggled".

Prayer for me is "living".

Quote from Frederick Buechner-

"Whatever else it may be, prayer is at least talking to yourself, and that's in itself not always a bad idea.

Talk to yourself about your own life, about what you've done and what you failed to do, and about who you are and who you wish you were, and who the people you love are and the people you don't love too.

Talk to yourself about what matters most to you, because if you don't you may forget what matters most to you."

After sermon.

Time of reflection.

We are going to play a song from the musical, Godspell.

Mary Magdeline, sensing that Jesus' life is in danger sings this beautiful song.

She doesn't say I'll pray for you, she says, "Take my hand and let me walk with you."The song is called "BY MYSIDE".

## SERMON – PRAYER

Luke 11: 1-13

It was very tempting to skip this Gospel reading set down for today. For me it poses many problems.

“Ask and it will be given you, search and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened to you.”

I don't think so!

The second part reminds me of a child who continually pesters a parent for something they want – eventually the parent weakens and gives in. Not particularly edifying!

Why then am I here this morning delivering this message instead of Ken? Firstly, I have read and discussed with three friends, chapter by chapter, Gretta Vosper's book “Amen” – all about prayer.

My copy of the book has underlining, comments in the margins, question marks etc and it's a shame not to share some of that with you this morning.

Secondly, Richie, my 9 year old grandson in Perth, said to me when we were there recently – “Ma, I don't believe in God or Jesus.” “Why not Rich? “ “ Because I don't believe in magic.”

His only exposure to Christian teaching has been a Scripture Teacher at school.

That's how a 21<sup>st</sup> century thinking 9 year old sums it up.

Worrying, isn't it?

I suspect prayer fits into his idea of magic.

How we view the Bible is so important.

We must remember “God” is the subject of the Bible – Not the Author.

The writings of priests, prophets, psalmists, gospel writers and apostles have been collected and some selected to make up our Bible.

All the writings reflect the “God view” of the particular author.

Val Webb says quite plainly that any idea, any notion, any image, any characteristic we have attributed to God is man made. No one can be sure of any claim they make.

Hence we must question the writer of Luke's teachings regarding prayer.

For progressive congregations the concept of a God out there who attends to all our requests, who intervenes in the laws of nature, who performs miracles has disappeared.

With this in mind Gretta Vosper has written this book in which she talks about prayer, both our personal prayer and our communal prayer as a congregation.

I want to share with you some of her comments.

“It is now devastatingly clear that if we hope to create any coherence between prayer and the real world, there are going to be losses. Removing the foundational understanding of a theistic, all seeing, all knowing, all everything god as a source of all goodness has implications for our hymns, our architecture, our rituals and our language.”

“Even if we choose not to eliminate the language that presupposes a supernatural deity and instead ‘fuzzy’ our way through our liturgy, symbols and god language by calling it metaphor and myth we can’t fudge it when it comes to prayer.”

“Prayer has been used as the vehicle for much that we need in life – our attitudes, our feelings, our strength, our comfort, our peace, our courage, and all these are as important as ever. But they are also available in a multitude of ways, not all exclusive to the practice of prayer.”

She says that as we struggle to meet these needs and try to find safety in an insecure world, let’s go straight to the facts of our existence and that is our dependence upon one another and the fragile hope that it is only and can only ever be in our own hands.

A further quote.

“Throughout human existence, we have prayed because prayer went out before us as a line of protection, a shield against the terrors and traumas of life. We have sheltered ourselves behind it, confident that it would hold off the greater sorrows, the ones we couldn’t bear, and filter through to us only those our hearts could carry.

We have wrapped our vulnerabilities with the image of a divine being whose outstretched arms made our way safe and, when the night came, curled around us and offered peace.

We know, you and I, that the image isn’t the reality. We haven’t known protection. We have had our hearts torn, our world ravaged. We know our children and our children’s children can never be protected from pain or sorrow by prayers we utter or incantations we cast out to the universe.”

“I want nothing less than a language that honours the reality of the quest for security and does not cover it up with theological constructs that

soothe our anxieties but do not call us to the greatness of our own humanity.

We need language that will challenge us to get up from our knees, hand us back our dignity, ignite our compassion, and help us find all those crucial ways we need to live love into the world.”

“We have no prayer that can keep us safe. We have no prayer that can intervene in the laws of the universe and keep away illness, evil, calamity. We have no prayer that can heal a sick child or extend the life of a loved one. We have no prayer that can change people’s minds and make them understand us, or that can turn their hearts and make them love us. We have no prayer that can move mountains. We have only ourselves. We have only ever had ourselves. But we have done all these things and we can do more.”

All quotes in this document are taken from the book “Amen” by Gretta Vosper, published by Harper Collins Publishers Ltd 2012  
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