

**A GATHERING LITURGY FOR THE  
CELEBRATION OF THE END OF A MINISTRY AND  
PARTING OF WAYS**

Sunday 29th March 2020. Lent 5A.

**GATHERING**

We come together from our separate lives,  
each of us bringing our concerns, our preoccupations, our hopes, and our dreams.

We are not yet fully present.

The strangeness of our gathering, technology – strange and wonderful holds the promise of new ways of gathering even the possibility of including those who are confined to home or bed. Our bodies hold the anxiety of our time.

It is now time to let go of these pressures and really arrive...

*(Silence)*

When you are ready, repeat silently to yourself: 'Here I am'.

'Here I am' is used in the Torah to signify being present in body, mind, and spirit.

It means settling into where we are and simply being "here". *(Adapted/Nan Fink Gene)*

**ENTRY INTO THE CELEBRATION**

The creator of life and the giver of life is with us.

Life in all its fullness is God's offer to all.

*(Adapt.WARC)*

**Let us celebrate the richness and diversity of life.**

**OPENING SENTENCES**

Praise to Creativity God, present through the ages,

**source of our living.**

Praise to Creativity God, dancing within us,

**transforming and overflowing our lives.**

We pray:

**May our coming and our going be blessed, this day and forever more.**

**May it be so.**

**HYMN:** "Brother, Sister..." *(Tune: 'Servant Song', 87.87)*

**Brother, sister I'm beside you,  
Let me be as Christ to you,  
Pray that I might have the grace  
to let you be as Christ to me.**

**I will share your problems with you  
I'll support you in your space  
I will help you run your distance  
I will look you in the face.**

**I'll remember that God made you  
I'll not take your dignity  
I'll encourage you in your skills  
to create and feel and be.**

**WELCOME**

A warm welcome is extended to all.

Your presence enriches all of us and this time of celebration together.

## **CENTERING**

This is the time to be slow,  
Lie low to the wall  
Until the bitter weather passes.  
Try, as best you can, not to let  
The wire brush of doubt  
Scrape from your heart  
All sense of yourself  
And your hesitant light.

If you remain generous,  
Time will come good;  
And you will find your feet  
Again on fresh pastures of promise,  
Where the air will be kind  
And blushed with beginning.

*John O'donohue*

## **EXPLORING**

### **Wisdom from our Religious Traditions**

#### **John 11:1-26**

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill.

So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."

But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?"

Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them."

After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him."

The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right."

Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

### **AFFIRMING**

**Eternal Spirit**

**Source of all that is and ever shall be,  
may knowledge of your holiness inspire all peoples.**

**And may your commonwealth of peace and freedom  
flourish on earth, until all of humankind  
heed your call to justice and compassion.**

**May we find the bread that we need for today.  
And for the hurts we cause one another  
may we be forgiven in the same measure  
that we forgive.**

**In times of trial and temptation, help us to be strong;  
When life seems overwhelming, help us to endure;  
And thus from the yoke of sin deliver us.**

**May you reign in the power of human love,  
Now and forever. Amen**

*(Tom Hall)*

### **PARTING WORDS**

The God we worship is never confined to any holy place.  
So go and travel with the God found in ordinary and surprising places.  
You are wayfarers, following roads to the end of the earth,  
pilgrims on your way to the end of the age.

**We are travellers on the road to freedom,  
a community of grace, with good news for all we meet.**

Travel lightly, travel together, learn as you go:  
you are disciples, the mission is urgent, the journey is long.

**We will take heart.**

When the way is uncertain,  
shadows are sinister and dangers threaten,

**we will not be afraid.**

**For we are in God and God is in us.**

### **WORDS OF BLESSING**

Go in peace.  
And may the Holy God surprise you on the way,  
Christ be your company,  
and your faith lift up your life.

**Amen! May it be so!**

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## THE LETTING GO OF THE PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP

### **Ian says:**

My ministry with you concludes today.  
Almost nine years, yet it seems no time at all.  
We have shared our journeys and learned from one another.  
Our faith has been nurtured.  
We have accepted the blessing.  
We know that we are blessed. And we are thankful.

### **An elder says:**

When you were inducted  
we promised to take part with you  
in the work of God by word and action,  
and you made solemn vows before God  
to serve faithfully among us.

### **Judy (the presbytery representative) says**

Since the church lives by the power of the Word,  
it is assured that God has never failed  
to provide a witness to that Word.

On the 3rd of July, 2011, the Presbytery of Loddon Mallee  
inducted Ian Stewart as Minister of the Word among the congregations of Bendigo South.  
We witnessed your promises to take part  
in the public worship of God,  
to contribute to the work of God,  
and to make a Christian witness in this community  
by word and action.

The Presbytery believes that Ian's ministry  
now lies in another place,  
and has confirmed his call  
to the role of Minister of the Word  
to the Southern Mornington Peninsula congregation  
in the Presbytery of Port Phillip East.  
The time has come to mark the end  
of his particular responsibilities  
in Bendigo South,  
and to send him with God's blessing  
to this new ministry

### **Ian says:**

Brothers and sisters in Christ,  
you called me to minister with you,  
and charged me to preach the Word,  
preside at the sacraments  
and to oversee the pastoral life of the congregation.  
You will call another minister in my place  
and I must lay down the tasks you committed to me.

I return these symbols of office, and these pastoral lists to you with the names of the people for whom I have cared, and ask you to continue to care for these people, and to share them with my successor.

***Ian names the items as he does whatever is decided: the Bible, water for the Baptismal font, the bread and the chalice.***

**Judy says**

And now, on behalf of the Presbytery of Loddon Mallee,  
we thank you for your ministry of God's grace  
with the people of the South Bendigo cluster.

We release you from this ministry,  
and commend you to the pastoral care  
of the Presbytery of Port Phillip East.

As you enter into your new placement  
we pray for God's blessing  
on you in this new sphere of life.

Be strong and of good courage, do not be afraid:  
for it is the Lord who goes with you.  
Your God will not fail you or forsake you.

*Deuteronomy. 31:6*

*We say the Aaronic blessing together:*

**The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face to shine upon you  
and be gracious unto you.  
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you.  
And give you peace**

***The Chairperson of the Cluster briefly farewells Ian.***

***Ian replies.***

**THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

***Ian calls the congregation to prayer, saying:***

Let us pray:

**O God, you bound us together for a time  
as chaplain and people  
to create a community of hope in this place:  
we give you humble and hearty thanks  
for the ministry which we have shared.  
We thank you for your never-failing presence  
with us through these years  
and for the deeper knowledge of you  
and of each other which we have received.**

*Silence*

**We thank you for those  
who have been members of Christ's family here.  
We thank you for opening our hearts and minds  
again and again to your Word,**

**for feeding us abundantly with the sacrament  
of the community of Jesus, your son,  
and for our pastoral ministry of care one for another.  
We thank you that our future is in your hands, O God.**

And now we pray your prayer as one:

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

#### **FINAL PRAYER**

#### **Judy says:**

Let us pray.

**O God, be with those who leave,  
and with those who stay;  
and grant that all of us, by drawing nearer to you,  
may always be close to each other  
in the communion of saints;  
through Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.**

#### **Presbytery concludes the service.**