

ORDER OF SERVICE

A worship time (with reflection) drawing on Readings for Pentecost 3, Year C. Theme: Transformation out of death to life

Introduction::

In the following Order of Service alternative approaches to parts of the Service are offered in the shaded boxes.

A resource section at the end of the Service contains Bible readings in full, the Letter to be read at the point of the Reflection/Homily, and some images that may be found useful for the different approaches.

...adding another dimension

Call to Worship

A Leader says:

Never put your trust in princes or politicians,
nor in any child of earth's dust, for they cannot help you.
No matter how important, they stop breathing like the rest of us,
on that day their schemes perish and return to the earth.

**Happy are those whose help comes from the God of Jacob,
whose hope rests in the God of Christ Jesus.
This is the One who makes and sustains heaven and earth,
who keeps faith with us forever.**

Bruce Prewer

Call to Worship

Posters of royalty, politicians and/or celebrities ² are held up and enter the worship space from the side, as the leader slowly reads the words of the first paragraph, with appropriate pauses.

As the second paragraph is read by the congregation, the Bible is brought centre stage of the worship space and the posters are laid on the ground

Acknowledgement of the original custodians

As we gather, we acknowledge that the land on which worship this day was cared for by the indigenous people of this region for thousands of years. We pay our respect to their elders, past, present and emerging; and commit ourselves to work for justice and reconciliation for all first peoples.

Greeting

Welcome in the name of Christ.
God's grace, mercy and peace be with you.

And also with you

As we gather together today,
we turn our attention to God who loves us,
who transforms us through death into life;
and calls us to be witnesses in the world to this resurrection power.

We join our worship with those across the Synod and within the Synod meeting, gathering to worship God.

Song

TiS 187
TiS 102

Let all creation dance
Praise to the living God

Song: Let all creation dance

Individuals may be invited to dance (with streamers) and musical instruments during the singing of this song.

OR **Here's a New Day**

Here's a new day,
fresh gift from God of grace.
We sense God's presence in this sacred space;
let us be mindful of God's blessing here,
pausing, rejoicing, held in God's good care.

Here in awareness,
gift from God of grace,
may we awaken in this sacred space,
moved to compassion, open heart and hand,
linked to each other, meeting love's demand.

Here in creation,
gift from God of grace,
divine embracing of the human race;
woven together, intimate and free,
holy the ground connecting you and me.

Here in belonging,
gift from God of grace,
interconnected in this sacred space,
and in the web of life each one may share,
held in God's love, surrounded by God's care.

Words ©Pilgrim Publishing 2010

Words: Helen Wiltshire

Music: Woodlands (Walter Greatorex 1877-1949) TiS 161

Prayer (UiW2)

O God, our God, how great you are.
On the first day of the week
we commemorate your creation of the world
and all that is in it.

**Thank you for the light which wakes us
morning by morning,
and for the greater light which shines in Jesus Christ.**

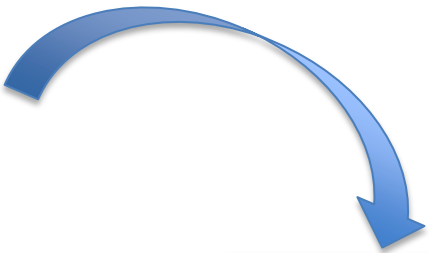
O God, our God, how great you are.
On the first day of the week
you raised Jesus from the dead.

Raise us with him to new life.

O God, our God, how great you are.
Again on the first day of the week
you sent the Holy Spirit on your disciples.

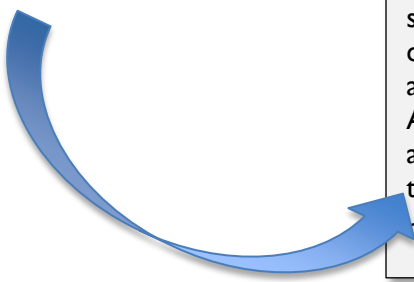
**Do not deprive us of your presence,
but renew the Spirit in us day by day. Amen.**

A Tome of Thanksgiving – for young and old



Prayer

This prayer may be offered with different halves of the congregation taking different sections.
One half reading the non-bold and the other half of the congregation reading the bold.



Thanksgiving

Taking the butterfly image found in the Resource section below,
Invite people to name in the wings of the butterfly those things that remind them of God's constant love and care; signs of the spirit of God bringing new life into the creation. (Children may need to be coached in this activity).
At the conclusion of the activity invite people to name aloud those things which they have identified. Invite them to bring their butterflies forward and place on the communion table.

A time of Lament (UiW2)

How can we know where to go
when truth seems grey and shifting,
like muddied sands before a tide of painful life?

Show us the way, Holy Spirit of God.

How can we choose the way of peace
when there is violence in front
and violence behind,
with no space of freedom between?

Show us the way, Holy Spirit of God.

How can we give to those who need,
when systems destroy their dignity
and our gifts only take away their power?

Show us the way, Holy Spirit of God.

How can we decide what is right
when one value contests another
and Solomon's choices seem simple by comparison?

Show us the way, O Holy Spirit of God.

**In your wisdom shine new light,
in your courage lead us on
and in your compassion give us understanding. Amen.**

Affirmation of Hope (UiW2)

Look, listen, in the silences
of your own hearts.
Hear the gentle sound of my rising
within you.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Look, listen, in the silences
of your common humanness.
See the wonder of the power for healing,
my gift to you for the journey.

Come, Holy Spirit, and heal us.

Readings

I Kings 17:8-16

Ps 146 (adaptation of Psalm: Bruce Prewer)

Hallelujah!
Praise the living God, O my soul!
**As long as I live, I will give praise to God.
As long as I have breath, I will sing praises.**

Let nobody put their trust in earthly rulers;
no human being can give the help you need.
**All will cease to breathe and return to dust.
All their big ideas will perish.**

If you want to be happy, trust the God of Jacob,
put your hope in the one living God;
**The One who called heaven and earth into being,
who shaped the sea and everything in it.**

Who forever keeps faith with us
who gives justice to the oppressed people;
**Who provides enough food for all the hungry,
and sets the prisoners free**

Time of Lament

4 directions prayer

Facing a different direction for each stanza
of the prayer; i.e. facing east for the first
section;

South for the next stanza,

West for the third stanza;

North for the final stanza

OR using posters found in Resources pages
below...

The community (if small in number) walk to
the first poster and spend a moment looking
at the image placed on the wall (chair or
floor) then read the stanza. (mud flats)

Then walk to the next location in the space
and spend a moment in silence looking at
the poster – then reading the 2nd stanza
(war)

Similarly for the third stanza (poverty) &
then the 4th stanza (choices)

Then move to the centre (perhaps facing the
cross – or in a circle) to read the
Affirmation of hope together

Psalm 146

This Psalm could be sung rather than read...

TiS 90 I'll praise my maker while I've breath
(based on Psalm 146)

Our God opens the eyes of the blind,
those who are weighed down are lifted up.
Sincere folk find they are Divinely loved,
and our Lord watches over the refugees.
**God upholds the rights of widow and orphan,
but the paths of the wicked lead to ruin.**

This is the only faithful God
who will be there for us, forever;
**Through all generations,
God of the redeemed!
Hallelujah!**

Gal 1:11-24

Luke 7:11-17

For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,
thanks be to God

Reflection/Homily

*(see Reflection/Homily in the form of a Letter
in Resources pages below – to be read to congregation
in place of a sermon)*

Affirmation of Faith *(Dorothy McRae-McMahon)*

We believe that death is real,
that within our life we can destroy ourselves
and the life of others.

We believe that new life is possible,
and that it can be created
and recreated by God.

This we believe.

We believe that life is more powerful than death.

That, in Jesus,
we see love that could not be defeated,
justice that refused to lay down its dream,
courage that stood beyond its weakness
and hope that defied every despair.

This we believe.

We believe that life
dances on in the power of the Spirit,
singing songs of universal joy,
leaping past us in its freedoms
and calling us on into life.

This we believe.

Christ us died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Song Tis 417 Loving Spirit, loving Spirit

Offering *(UiW2)*

O God, this is the offering of our time, talent, and treasure.
May these gifts be used with wisdom, and with justice
in the church, and throughout the world. **Amen.**

Shared Reflection – Guidelines

1. One individual reads the passage (Luke 7:11-17) slowly.
2. The reader asks: What word or phrase catches your attention?

Each person in silence identifies the word or phrase that catches their attention. (1 minute)

3. Each shares the word or phrase around the group. (3-5 minutes, NO DISCUSSION)
4. Another person reads the passage slowly.
5. The second reader asks:

Where does this passage touch your life today?
Where does it challenge you? Where does it comfort you?

Each person in silence identifies where this passage touches their life today. (1 minute)

6. Each shares. (3-5 minutes, NO DISCUSSION)
7. Passage is read a third time.
8. The third reader says “ Now, each of us is invited to write or name to ourselves an answer to this question: ‘From what I’ve heard and shared, what do I believe God wants me to do or be? Is God inviting me to change in any way?’” (5 minutes)
9. Each shares their answer. (5-10 minutes, NO DISCUSSION)

Prayers of the People (adapted from UiW2)

In community and compassion,
we pray to the risen Christ,
who comes to meet us, saying:
Risen Christ,
grant us new life.

For those who cling together in fear and anxiety:
refugees from political, economic and social oppression.
Risen Christ,
grant us new life.

For those who refuse to be satisfied with easy answers:
doubters and searchers, researchers and analysts.
workers for justice, compassion and reconciliation.
Risen Christ,
grant us new life.

For those who act boldly in faith and commitment:
givers and sharers, carers and seekers.
Risen Christ,
grant us new life.

For those who stand among us as signs
of hope and compassion:
teachers and leaders, pastors and friends.
Risen Christ,
grant us new life.

Risen Christ, wherever we are,
grant us the faith and courage
to recognise you in our midst.
Risen Christ,
grant us new life.
Amen.

Song TIS 106 Now thank we all our God,
TiS 376 I know that my Redeemer lives
TiS 596 Fill my whole life, O Lord my God,

Blessing and Sending Out of the People of God

Good people - the good news is to be
writ large in our life, worship, faith and mission;
for God brings us out of death and into life.
Go now to be such a people of faith;
and the grace of Christ attend you;
the love of God surround you;
the Holy Spirit keep you;
this day and for ever.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Prayers of the People

A Leader says:

Let us pause in silence, and bring all that we have
shared before God in prayer. Let each of us recall
especially the hopes and concerns of the person on our
right.

After shared or silent prayer (3 minutes)

Let us recall our hopes and concerns for the world.

After shared or silent prayer (3 minutes)

Let us recall our hopes and concerns for our Uniting
Church and its Moderator and General Secretary, and
the members of Synod meeting this day.

(Pause for shared or silent prayer: 3 minutes)

And as we remember the story of God's gracious
presence with us through life and death, we lift our
prayers on behalf of all the world, and all creation. We
say together the words that Jesus taught us:

Our Father...

A leader concludes:

Ever-faithful God you gather us out of the darkness
that has spoken its worst in the death of our Savior,
into the light of Christ. Enable us to recall your
unwavering love for all people and to see and trust the
signs you give us that proclaim the good news of
resurrection and abundant life. We pray in trust in
Jesus' name
Amen.

OR

This prayer can be offered in other ways depending on
local tradition and preferences....
It may be an open prayer time with people naming there
concerns concluding their contribution with the phrase
'Risen Christ' and the congregation responding 'grant us
new life'

Service resources

Bible Readings

I Kings 17:8-16

⁸Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ⁹“Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” ¹⁰So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink.” ¹¹As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” ¹²But she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.” ¹³Elijah said to her, “Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴For thus says the LORD the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the LORD sends rain on the earth.” ¹⁵She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

Gal 1:11-24

¹¹For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; ¹²for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹³You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. ¹⁴I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. ¹⁵But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus. ¹⁸Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; ¹⁹but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord’s brother. ²⁰In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! ²¹Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, ²²and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; ²³they only heard it said, “The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy.” ²⁴And they glorified God because of me.

Luke 7:11-17

¹¹Soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. ¹²As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother’s only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. ¹³When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, “Do not weep.” ¹⁴Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, rise!” ¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. ¹⁶Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has risen among us!” and “God has looked favorably on his people!” ¹⁷This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

Reflection/Homily - to be read in place of a sermon

Dear friends in _____ (please insert your local name) Uniting Church

I have been asked to write to you to draw your attention to some important things. In many ways, what I want to say will be a reminder of things you already know, already believe, and already live out in your daily lives. But, from the earliest days of the Christian church leaders and teachers have written letters to be read out in the context of worship. The letters were supposed to bring encouragement, to strengthen your relationship to the wider church, and sometimes to offer a word of challenge. As the Synod meetings take place over this weekend, we will be conscious of faithful service, ministry and mission that take place in local congregations week by week, year by year. And we would ask you to pray for those who gather at the Synod, as they seek to discern the mind of Christ for the church in the midst of challenging times.

The important thing that I was to say can be stated very easily, although believing it and living it is much harder: *God brings us out of death and into life.*

Of course, this claim lies at the heart of our faith because we believe that God is the one who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 4:24; 8:11). Christian faith and the life and mission of the church are sustained, however, by the truth that what God has done for Jesus he will also do for us and for the world. And so, wherever we encounter or experience the reality of death and dying, we are called to believe again: *God brings us out of death and into life.*

Our Old Testament reading tells the story of one woman who had experienced death. She was a widow, a situation that probably resulted in poverty and social isolation. When Elijah the prophet turns up at her village and asks for food and drink she is put in a difficult position, and confesses that she has so little food that all she can do is go home and prepare a last meal for her and her son. After that is eaten, there is only death. Elijah's response is to promise that, however close to the end she feels, God will provide for her. *God's generosity turns her away from death towards life.*

The Psalm set for today is also a celebration of God's power to decisively alter the course of life away from death and towards life. We are warned not to trust human leaders or authority figures not because they are of no value, but because they will die one day. Only the 'living God' can sustain us because God 'forever keeps faith with us'. God is the one who brings justice, provides food, and offers freedom and protection. In giving sight to the blind and lifting up those who are weighed down, *God brings us out of death and into life.*

This is the God that Jesus and the apostle Paul believed in. In our New Testament readings the movement out of death and towards life is seen clearly in Paul's account of his own call. The revelation of the risen Christ stops Saul of Tarsus, and his violent threats of destruction, in his tracks. He is called to a new life. And in the gospel text, another widow watches as Jesus raises her dead son to life. Both stories remind us that *God brings us out of death and into life.*

But I wonder if you noticed a small detail in the gospel story? Luke tells us that 'the dead man sat up and began to speak' (7:15). Not only him, but the crowd also began to declare the good news that God had 'looked favourably' on them, and the word of what had happened spread far and wide. This is the same thing as happened to Paul. Once you encounter the God who brings us out of death and into life, you have an obligation to take that message to others.

The theme for our Synod meetings this weekend is 'Letters of Recommendation'. The reference is to a passage in 2 Corinthians 3 where Paul describes the Christian community as a 'letter', now written by the 'life-giving Spirit', which is 'to be known and read by all' (2 Cor 3:2). In other words, people are to see the good news written in the life, worship, faith and mission of the church: *God brings us out of death and into life.*

The fact is that the most important letter is not the one that you are reading from me, but the one that you will write for others to read. If God's promise is true, if Christ is alive, if the Spirit is at work, then that letter will say: *God brings us out of death and into life.*

May you know God's life-giving presence as you gather for worship today.

Sean Winter

Co-ordinator of Studies in New Testament; Pilgrim Theological College.

Acknowledgements

This service was prepared by the Centre for Theology and Ministry for use on Synod Sunday 2016 for local worship.

Call to Worship & Psalm 146 by Rev Bruce Prewer <http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocC/C39sun10.htm>

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Affirmation of Faith: Dorothy McRae-McMahon Prayers for life’s particular moments, p76)

Reflection/Homily – Letter from Sean Winter (Pilgrim Theological College, Coordinator of Studies – New Testament) prepared especially for use within the Synod of Vic-Tas on the occasion of Synod Sunday 5 June 2016, for use in local churches.

The Shared Reflection follows a method of reflection on the Bible known as the ‘African’, or ‘Indaba’, or ‘Lambeth’ method, because it was introduced to the Anglican Lambeth Conference by representatives from the African church.

UiW2 Uniting in Worship 2 – CD extra resources