

PENTECOST 2
SUNDAY 14 JUNE 2020
CAVES BEACH

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, all you people come to the giver of life;
come to the teacher of truths;
come to the creator of new horizons.

God calls us,
Christ empowers us,
the Holy Spirit guides our way.
Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Holy God, breath of life, breathe into your people
the fullness of your Spirit. Teach us the ways of Christ. Lead us in our service.
Centre us in your living Word.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

God of love and grace,
we come to offer our adoration,
praise and thanksgiving.

In you we find fullness of life.

In you we encounter pure truth.

In you is found extraordinary beauty.

In you we come to know abundant life.

Receive our praise and thanks, for truly, we adore you. May your goodness be acknowledged in every place. May your people shine with your perfect love.

May you be glorified forever.

O God of all goodness and grace, we hear your calling to come and share in the harvest – your mission to bring about your kingdom. Forgive our deafness and stubbornness as we prefer to get about our own business. Help us to see a need and respond in kindness. Help us to hear the cries of the poor and to bring healing and hope.

Enable us to realise the gifts that you give us for the common good of all.

We confess that we treat too lightly your call and ignore your command to love our neighbour as ourselves. Have mercy on us, we pray, and help us to keep focused on the things of eternity. In the name of Christ. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Though we may fail, God's grace is sufficient.

Though we may struggle,

the Spirit renews the repentant heart. I declare to you,
our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

Lift high the cross <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nGaT8QnYRE>

READINGS

Genesis 18:1-15, (21:1-7)

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. ² He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. ³ He said, "My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵ Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." ⁶ And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." ⁷ Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. ⁸ Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. ⁹ They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent." ¹⁰ Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son." And Sarah was

listening at the tent entrance behind him. ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?" ¹³ The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?'" ¹⁴ Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son." ¹⁵ But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "Oh yes, you did laugh."

²¹ The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. ² Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. ³ Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. ⁴ And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶ Now Sarah said, "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." ⁷ And she said, "Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

Psalm 116:1-2; 12-19

¹ I love the Lord, because he has heard
my voice and my supplications.

² Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

¹² What shall I return to the Lord
for all his bounty to me?

¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord,

¹⁴ I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people.

¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of his faithful ones.

¹⁶ O Lord, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the child of your serving girl.
You have loosed my bonds.

¹⁷ I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice
and call on the name of the Lord.

¹⁸ I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people,

¹⁹ in the courts of the house of the Lord,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.

Romans 5:1-8

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we ^[c] boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³ And not only that, but we ^[d] also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die.

⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

Matthew 9:35- 10:8, (9-23)

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

¹⁰ Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. ² These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his

brother John; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him. ⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, ¹⁰ no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. ¹¹ Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. ¹² As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³ If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴ If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

¹⁶ "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷ Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; ¹⁸ and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹ When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; ²⁰ for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ²¹ Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ²² and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ²³ When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

Jesus shall reign <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5U4IMtvp6bg>

SERMON

Well.... We have developed a very different view of the world since we first went into lockdown on Psalm Sunday. Easter was very much an experience in discovering self-isolation and social distancing, along with a toilet paper rush! Then as we moved through the next 50 days that are called Easter in the church calendar we discovered that there is a whole new and changing world out there while so much else remains unaltered.

We are now entering the 'ordinary' time of the church year and start back looking at Matthew's Gospel. As we are considering opening up our lives and community again it is interesting that this week's readings bring us to reflect on hospitality.

- How do we interact with others in these changing times?

Christ gave his life in a gift of hospitality, to welcome us all to be present with him. We are now entering into a time of learning what hospitality means in today's post COVID 19 world.

- Has it our world changed or is it something beyond our previous imagination?

I am sure that if I was to refer to the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah from the Old Testament we would all immediately think about sexual perversion and degradation. In the Bible we have God's judgement on those towns being a display of fiery anger and destruction. We all seem to recall that there was the threat of violent rape of a man who was a visitor there and this brings about the retribution. However, the sexual threats were not the root cause of God's intervention. Looking across the stories of this event in the Bible we see that the issue was the lack of hospitality. Travellers in those days were vulnerable if proper hospitality was not extended to them. What was offered by these towns was the complete opposite of hospitality.

Turning to the passage from Matthew we see an example about how to treat people and how to respond to others. In His initial missional challenge for the disciples, Jesus instructs his disciples to preach the good news and heal the sick. He says that they should stay in any community which welcomes them but if hospitality is not forthcoming, they should leave, symbolically shaking of the dust from their feet as they go. It is here that Jesus refers to Sodom and Gomorrah saying: "Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of Judgement than for that town." This is not about sex but hospitality.

In the eyes of the disciples and the readers of Matthew's Gospel those two towns are the stark image of a community which has failed miserably to offer any hospitality to a stranger. Jesus

points out that this refusal of hospitality means that they are refusing hospitality to God at the same time.

If we were to review the laws from the time of Moses, we would see that a lot of the issues covered relate to how one deals with both the traveller and the stranger. Today we have a whole industry focussed on travellers and the visits to our homes are generally limited to family and close friends. We don't generally go out of our way in suburban Australia to offer accommodation to strangers.

Australia has a long history of hospitality since European settlement of the previously Aboriginal country. In more recent times there was the hospitality shown to refugees needing temporary shelter from Kosovo. Before that there were boatloads from Vietnam.

Unfortunately this hospitality has changed over the years and we have responded very differently to refugees from Afghanistan, Shri Lanka and even Iraq. This attitude to hospitality might well have forced the disciples to be constantly shaking their feet to remove unwanted dust. In the meantime we have an enviable reputation in relation to assimilating people who do migrate here.

Abraham was the model for the expression of extravagant hospitality when three strangers came his way in our first reading. Abraham begged them to stay, offered them baths, baked goodies and killed the fatted calf. All this to welcome strangers, three of them. (Some people think that there is a relationship in this story to the Trinity.)

I think that we would all see a very different world if everyone was eager to offer hospitality to one another. If we were to regard visitors as messengers from God we would have a world without the fear of potential invaders, fearing threats to our personal property and more disruptions. In their very strangeness visitors give us new insights, new ideas, new understandings when we share with them in love.

The pinnacle of hospitality can be seen in Christ and as we share in the common table that we celebrate each month. We join with Christ in this neighbourly act of communion. In Jesus we have the ultimate hospitality that extends beyond our neighbour and the stranger, to also embrace our enemy. Hospitality moves beyond food, wine and baptism with Christ as He offers us his own life.

Jesus went as far as His death to show how we are loved and welcomed at God's table. As we know Jesus could have changed his direction at any time leading up to the crucifixion with no cost to himself. However what he did do was touch the untouchable, loved the unlovable and reach out to the outcast all the time proclaiming God's unlimited love and hospitality for the broken and the isolated. This action cost Jesus his life but that did not slow him down.

If we look to Paul's letter to the faithful in Rome we hear that old message about how someone might give up their life for a very special person, like one of our modern day icons such as Mother Theresa or Nelson Mandela, but God showed his love for us all by Christ dying for us before we could even make any move to follow Him.

In view of this we need to try and comprehend that regardless of who we are and no matter what our background and what we have done with our life we are fully embraced in God's love. We are invited to stand with one another and embrace the promises of hospitality and inclusion made through Christ.

This brings us to the issue of how we welcome those who are new to us, the strangers.

- How do you approach someone who is new to faith or just to our way of expressing it?
- What do we do when we are connecting with stranger like this?
- How do we allow them to become part of the whole community, not just a fringe dweller?
- How do we remain a part of the community which has grown here over the years but at the same time keep our boundaries and arms open to lovingly welcome and include the stranger?

As we prepare to once again gather, after the hiatus caused by COVID19, how are we going to feel towards one another?

Will we be friends reconnecting, or looking at people who have been changed and reshaped by isolation?

How will any newcomers feel when we are trying to adjust to the 'new-normal' of social distancing and no physical contact?

This week is an excellent opportunity for us to reconsider how we want to live with our neighbours 'post isolation.'

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (Val Willoughby)

In 2 Chronicles 7:14 God said to Solomon: "if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

O Lord, we thank you for this promise and we recognise our need for forgiveness as well as the need for our land to be healed. Evidence is there as we see the sun shining brightly as well as the welcome rain that has fallen on our land. We also thank you that the rain has gone further west and is blessing the inland areas much more now. We pray for those who are still waiting patiently for the healing blessings of rain.

We pray for our governments, Federal, State and local government. We ask that you will guide them to make the right decisions which will help all people, not just the favoured few. Give all leaders wisdom as they attempt to lead our country into the future even with Coronavirus still not defeated.

We pray for each church family and especially for those members who are sad at the loss of loved ones recently.

We ask you to strengthen Rev Mark in his ministry with us as well as our leader of the Church Council, Jan, not forgetting the councillors and Elders who assist in the work of our Church.

We pray for the continuing work of our Church, as we attempt to witness to our whole community here at Caves Beach.

Finally we pray for the builders who are working on our church building, may they be kept safe as they complete the work.

We pray these prayers in Christ's name. Please join me in the Lord's Prayer.

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 for ever. Amen.

O breath of life come sweeping through us. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QHZB_v0ZaY

BENEDICTION

Christ is calling.
The Spirit is leading. God's reign and realm are all about us.
So let us give ourselves anew
to be God's servants wherever we are.

May the love and strength of God
hold us firm.
May we see with the clarity of Christ all that needs to be done.
And may we walk each day
in the power of the Holy Spirit. Go, blessed, now and forever. Amen.