***worship@home resources for 12 July***

Call to Worship

God of mercy,
in Jesus Christ you give us forgiveness and freedom,
**and by your Holy Spirit you give us hope and peace.**
Plant us now in good soil,
**that our lives may flourish and grow
in fruitfulness and love.**

HYMN TiS 474 Here in this place

Here in this place new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away,
see, in this space, our fears and our dreamings,
brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken;
gather us in, the blind and the lame;
call to us now, and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of our name.

We are the young, our lives are a mystery;
we are the old, who yearn for your face;
we have been sung throughout all of history,
called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty;
gather us in, the proud and the strong;
give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
give us the courage to enter the song.

Here we will take the wine and the water,
here we will take the bread of new birth,
here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
call us anew to be salt of the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
give us to eat the bread that is you;
nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven, light years away,
but here in this place, the new light is shining,
now is the kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in, and hold us forever;
gather us in, and make us your own;
gather us in, all peoples together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

Marty Haugen 1950– Words and music by permission G.I. A. Publications Inc. Chicago, Illinois. All rights reserved.

For YouTube version (with Catholic imagery) see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbNXqjwh8is>

prayer

Life-giving God,
We gather together in your presence with expectation,
hungry for an encounter with you,
eager to hear a word from you.
**Open our eyes and ears to the presence of your Spirit moving amongst us.**

May the seeds of your word scattered among us this morning fall on fertile soil.
**May they take root in our hearts and lives,
and produce an abundant harvest of good words and deeds.**

Merciful God,
You have set before us the path
but we have wandered on our own to try to find our way.

**Sometimes we are like children testing boundaries,
ignoring your call until need makes us look back.**

Other times we are like youthful rebels, demanding to be cut loose and set free,
not knowing how much we still need to seek your wisdom and guidance.

**But most of all, we usually think that as adults
and have it all figured out and know our own way,
only to stumble.**

Help us to seek you each and every day,
to acknowledge that we need your wisdom and guidance. **Help us to return to the path and walk with you.
In the name of Christ, our companion on this journey of faith. Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Hear the good news – there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
So I declare to you, that our sins are forgiven.
**Thanks be to God.**

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 65:1-2, 9-13

You are to be praised, O God, in Zion.
 **O you who answer prayer!**

You visit the earth and water it abundantly
 **the river of God is full of water.**You provide the people with grain
 **for so you have prepared it.**You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges;
 **you soften the ground and bless its growth.**You crown the year with your bounty
 **and your paths overflow with plenty.**May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing
 **and the hills be clothed with joy.**May the meadows be clothed with flocks
and the valleys be cloaked with grain;
 **let them shout for joy and sing.**

Matthew 13:1-17

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: ‘Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up.



Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!’

Then the disciples came and asked him, ‘Why do you speak to them in parables?’ He answered, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. The reason I speak to them in parables is that “seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.”

With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says:
“You will indeed listen, but never understand,
   and you will indeed look, but never perceive.
For this people’s heart has grown dull,
   and their ears are hard of hearing,
     and they have shut their eyes;
     so that they might not look with their eyes,
   and listen with their ears,
and understand with their heart and turn—
   and I would heal them.”
But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.

REFLECTION

Premier Daniel Andrews has a really tough job at the moment as he seeks to guide us through the latest surge in coronavirus infections. His message needs to be serious and warn of the dangers, but also compassionate to encourage people to abide by the rules.

Some people – perhaps many of those living in the high rise towers in Flemington and North Melbourne – only have a basic grasp of English and so have not understood the seriousness of the Premier’s messages or of the developing situation.

Others have heard the message but because they have lost their jobs earlier and are not receiving any government support – think foreign students, casuals, asylum seekers – they are forced to seek help and food where they can – where social distancing may not always be possible.

Still others don’t want their lifestyle – or their workplace – compromised by government rules and so have been quietly flouting the restrictions and catching up with their friends and mates in large numbers, potentially spreading the virus.

Many of us, though, are good and obedient citizens who have calmly followed the main message about restrictions even as the guidelines change from week to week. Each person, by doing their little bit, has helped contain the virus so that our health system is not overwhelmed. The result is that most of Melbourne’s suburbs are free of the virus.

And so we find ourselves wondering just how the virus has got away from us when the message, it seems, has been clear from the start. Some simply lack understanding of just how contagious and deadly this virus can be. Others are having to make costly choices in how to respond and are not in the fortunate position of being able to bunker down again. Of course some people want to continue living how they’ve always lived, without due regard for the wellbeing of others. All the while most of us are doing the right thing, holding onto to hope and kindness and love despite the challenges and uncertainties that we face.

So may God grant us ears to hear and wisdom to learn from what the Spirit is saying to us.

HYMN TiS 609 May the mind of Christ my Saviour

May the mind of Christ my Saviour
live in me from day to day,
by his love and power controlling
all I do and say.

May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour
so that all may see I triumph
only through his power.

May the peace of God my Father
rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort
sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me
as the waters fill the sea;
him exalting, self denying,
this is victory.

May I run the race before me
strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus
as I onward go.

Katie Barclay Wilkinson 1859-1928 *alt*. Music © D. R. Gould

Gentle YouTube version here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_ZBhSxWots>

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Creator God,
for all the blessings of this life, we give you thanks –
for our families and friends, for neighbours and strangers, who nurture us,
that your love, your word, like a seed,
may grow to produce in us, good fruit.
**May your love be like a seed, taking root and growing strong.**

God of wisdom,
We pray for the leaders of our nation and especially for our state Premier Daniel Andrews,
that they may lead with strong hearts, gentle hands and generous spirits,
with compassion and mercy, with wisdom and grace.
May they reflect your will, guiding all their actions and decisions.
**May your love be like a seed, taking root and growing strong.**

God who provides,
We pray for those currently serving in harms way in hospitals,
those who respond to emergencies and who maintain peace,
for those living in fear,
for those who worry about how they will pay the rent and put food on the table,
and for those struggling just to find dignity in the current circumstances.
May your grace bring peace and safety to all people.
**May your love be like a seed, taking root and growing strong.**

Compassionate God,
We pray for those suffering from illness or disease—
whether of mind, body, or spirit.
Restore these, and all those we carry in our hearts whom we name before you now …
bring them to wholeness and health.
May your mercy shower each of us with healing mercy and love.
**May your love be like a seed, taking root and growing strong.**

We bring you these our prayers in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray, saying:
**Our Father in heaven …**

COMMUNION OF EMPTY HANDS

*The following liturgy allows for the absence of bread and wine – while retaining familiar foundations in these uncertain times … you will need an empty plate and an empty cup …
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**The Lord is with us
We lift our hearts to God
We give thanks to God**

For God not only created the earth and the heavens,
but all things that have lived and will yet live.
The stories, described by prophets and saints
of past, present and future, dance together
in reflection of God’s own glory,
for all life has an Author.

The Author became known in the Word,
the One who came as Emmanuel, God with us,
born as One with us, living among us,
teaching, healing, weeping and sharing with us.
Living a life of compassion and justice,
the Word was rejected by the world and executed.

Together we proclaim the mystery of our faith …
**Christ has died
Christ is risen
Christ will come again**

Our story is grounded in the story of Jesus of Nazareth…
The Lord Jesus, on the night of his betrayal, took bread,
and after giving thanks to God,
he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
‘Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.’

In the same way he took the cup, saying:
‘This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.’

Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup
we proclaim the death of the risen Lord, until he comes.

In the empty plate, we choose to see the world’s hunger.
We remember that millions of people, this day,
lack bread for Communion, bread for breakfast, bread for life.
We acknowledge that we ourselves hunger, this day,
in ways that no earthly bread can satisfy.
Hospitable God,
**meet us in our unmet hungers –
and help us to put our abundance at the service of the poor**.

In the empty cup, we choose to see the world’s thirst.
We remember that millions of people, this day,
lack wine for Communion, fruit for juicing, water for life.
We acknowledge that we ourselves thirst, this day,
in ways that no earthly cup can quench.
Hospitable God,
**meet us in our unmet thirsts –
and help us to put our fullness at the service of the empty.**

In faith and hope, we hold out our empty hands...
**In these empty vessels and in our empty hands,
we celebrate the mystery and wonder of your love and faithfulness.**

Fill us with your life, broken and given for the world.
In our hands and in our hearts,
we leave space for resurrection, for new life, for new meaning.

Know that the scattered community of God
is placed in the world,
for the sake of the world.

**Amen.**

BENEDICTION

Go into the world rejoicing
that God has called us to be part of his kingdom
that Jesus shows us how to live
and that the Holy Spirit sustains us.
**We go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.**

SENDING SONG TiS 755 You shall go out with joy

You shall go out with joy and be led forth in peace,
and the mountains and the hills shall break forth in singing.
There’ll be shouts of joy, and the trees of the field
shall clap, shall clap their hands,
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
and you’ll go out with joy.

Steffi Geiser Rubin 1950– words, music and arrangement by permission Lillenas Publishing Company, Nashville.

For lively YouTube version see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjL27TlSwYU>