

ORDER OF SERVICE - Sunday 19th July 2020 – Pentecost 7A

Lectionary – Genesis 28:10-19a; Psalm 139:1-12,23-24; Romans 8:12-25; Matthew 13:24-30.36-43

'Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go.' ... Genesis 28:15b

PRELUDE – Gather us O God, AoV.2.139

WELCOME, CALL TO WORSHIP & CANDLE LIGHTING

Saide

Good morning and welcome to worship from your homes, sacred spaces scattered wide, isolated again for many of us and yet still gathered in community.

From psalm 139 the psalmist declares
*O Lord, you have searched me and known me
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
You discern my thoughts from far away.*
Come then let us worship the God who knows us,
the God who sees us, the God who loves us.
Come, let us breathe together wherever we are
As we pray, sing, listen and reflect.

Today we travel with Jacob as he finds himself in an in-between place
and contemplate hope in our own in-between places,
hope for ourselves, our friends and families, communities and the whole creation.

The psalmist says
*'If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
And the light around me become night,"
Even the darkness is not dark to you;
The night is bright as the day,
For darkness is as light to you.*
We light the Christ candle remembering that
Christ is the light of the world.
Held in that light may we beacons of hope.

SONG: O God, you search me and you know me, AoV.2.31

1. O God, you search me and you know me
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down you are before me:
Ever the maker and keeper of my days.

2. You know my resting and my rising.
You discern my purpose from afar,
and with love everlasting you besiege me:
In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are.

3. Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
you have known its meaning through and through.
You are with me beyond my understanding:
God of my present, my past and future, too.

4. Although your Spirit is upon me,
still I search for shelter from your light.
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight.

5. For you created me and shaped me,
gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonders of who I am I praise you:
Safe in your hands all creation is made new.

SONG: [O God, you search me](#), © 1993 Bernadette Farrell, from [As One Voice](#), vol 2, Willow Connection Pty. Ltd.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Oliver Leslie-Collyer

We acknowledge and respect
the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation,
the traditional custodians of this land
since time immemorial.
We are learning that the land
is not ours to own, but to look after;
and that if we listen, we may hear in it
the calling of the eternal Spirit.
Responding to this call,
we commit ourselves
to work for justice, reconciliation,
and care of the earth.

PRAYER OF ADORATION & CONFESSION

Saide'

In the reading for today from Paul's letter to the Romans Paul writes about being led by the Spirit, of suffering and hope.
Fiona will read these ancient words as we pray.

Come let us listen and pray

¹² So then, brothers and sisters,* we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— ¹³for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

Loving God, we are your children
You shape our living with your everlasting love
You turn our attention to the wonders of the world
The joy of children, the turning of the seasons.

¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness* with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Christ our Saviour, we are joint heirs with you
You shape our living with your compassion
You call us out to work for justice and freedom
To walk alongside the unloved and lonely.

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Spirit of all joy, we wait with you
You shape our living with hope
You call us to bear witness to suffering
And to advocate for freedom for all creation.

Loving God, we confess that in this time of isolation and separation
our attention is often turned inwards. Open our eyes again today.
Christ our Saviour, we confess that our hearts are sad, our souls weary
as we work together and yet separately in your name. Breathe on us today.

Spirit of all joy, we confess that the suffering of creation is overwhelming
And so we grieve and work for change. Inspire with us hope for renewal today.

WORD OF GRACE

²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in* hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Come children of God, let us join in hope together
For we can be confident that
in the name of Christ, our risen Saviour
our sins are forgiven.
Thanks be God. Amen

WITH THE CHILDREN

Jacob's ladder – Episode 6 of Sarah and Abraham

Dave

HEBREW SCRIPTURES: Genesis 28:10-19a

Andrew

10 Jacob left Beer-sheba and went towards Haran. ¹¹He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. ¹²And he dreamed that there was a ladder* set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³And the Lord stood beside him* and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; ¹⁴and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed* in you and in your offspring. ¹⁵Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.' ¹⁶Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!' ¹⁷And he was afraid, and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' ¹⁸So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. ¹⁹He called that place Bethel,* but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

SONG: We are climbing Jacob's ladder, NCH 500 recording needed –

1. We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
We are climbing Jacob's ladder
Bearers of the cross.

2. Here we seek and find our story
Here we seek and find our story
Here we seek and find our story
Sisters, brothers, all.

3. Rise, shine, give God glory,
Rise, shine, give God glory,
Rise, shine, give God glory,
Bearers of the cross.

African-American spiritual, Public Domain, from New Century Hymnal

In today's story from Genesis, Jacob is at a place between places – much like us. Jacob has left Beer-sheba, the home of his father Isaac, and he is heading towards Haran and the home of his future father in law Laban – two significant places in the biblical story – and on the way he stops for the night. Which means that right now he is nowhere – at a place that has no name, a place on the way to somewhere else, a place between places. Like us.

What is the place you are in right now? – your home I would assume, unless you are currently applying one of the big four, the Reasons For Leaving. What sort of a place for you is your home, your shelter from the pandemic, right now? Is it familiar? – perhaps too familiar? Is it comfortable, constricting, spacious, crowded, secure, lonely? What spiritual place has the physical reality of lockdown brought you to? And to what extent is it like the place Jacob finds himself in today. A place between places.

Life as we knew it is a long way off behind us. And life as it will be post-pandemic, what even is that place? – I find it hard to imagine, but my sense is that it will be a different place to where we have been before, that here now in between what was and what will be, our world is being reshaped. Where are we headed? What will the place of the future be? What do we want it to be? And what might we do here now in the in between to help in its shaping? What is the promise of this in-between time?

Jacob's story, in fact the story of Abraham's whole family and even of the whole bible, is a story of promise. And today in his place between places, Jacob meets the God of Promise. Jacob dreams that the divine realm is open and flowing with angelic possibility right where he is, right in his nowhere place. And Jacob dreams a divine promise. God is beside him giving all the usual biblical undertakings: promised land, a family like the stars, a great nation and a new creation of blessing for all the peoples of the earth, blah, blah, blah, heard it all before nothing new here. But then God adds a special promise just for Jacob – a threefold promise: I will be with you; I will keep you/protect you wherever you go; and I will bring you home.

Friends, do you believe in a God of Promise? Do these divine promises to Jacob also apply to us? Do you believe that God is with you? Do you believe that God will keep you from harm? Do you believe that God will bring you home? Personally, I've got an easy yes to that first promise, a not so sure to the second, and what does the third one even mean?

That's me, but in Jacob's story, the hardest thing to believe is the first promise, that God chooses to be with Jacob. Because remember, this is Jacob the corrupt trickster, the treacherous fugitive, the greedy grasping inheritance thief. Jacob is human weakness incarnate, a man without promise. And this is the one to whom the loving divine spirit opens itself. God chooses to reshape the future by reshaping Jacob.

It's hard to believe in a God of promise when the undeserving are elevated and the needy brought low. But perhaps Jesus can help because he embodies God's promises. He is Emmanuel, God with us in infant vulnerability and adult frailty. He is the one who refuses the temptation of God's protection saying, "do not put the Lord your God to the test" then going on to drink the cup of suffering (Matthew 4:6-7). He is the one who says, "I go to prepare a place for you in God's house and I will come and bring you to myself there" (John 14:3). And where is God's house? – is it just some far-off fantasy, pie in the sky when we die? Where is this promised place, our true home, to which Christ would bring us?

Then Jacob woke from his sleep, "Surely God is in this place..." says Jacob, "This is none other than the house of God." And he names that place, that nowhere place, that in-between place, that place of promise and possibility, he names it Beth-el, which means House of God.

And here we are. At home in the in-between. Can we embrace the promise of this place? – the promise of Christ – God with us even through suffering, God with us in love for the blessing and renewal of all creation even through our human frailty? Can we embrace the promise of the in-between, saying with Jacob: "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

SONG: Make your home in me, ATW 487 have recording

Make your home in me
As I make my home in you
I am everywhere that you can be
Make your home in me

If you fly to the point of the day's sunrise
Or westward across the sea
If you travel to the uttermost ends of the earth
There I will be

I knew you and loved you before you were born
As a child in you mother's womb
I have seen your struggles in the secret place
I know you through and through (and still I love you)

You will find me in the faces of the broken ones
In the sick, the troubled and the poor
You will find me in the wounds of your very own soul
I am knocking at your own heart's door

SONG: [Make your home in me](#), by Fay White © 1998, from [All together whatever](#),
Open Book Publishers, Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

OFFERING Focus in on open hands

Saide

God knows us. God loves us. God sees us.
Look out the window and breathe. Open your hands and look at them.
Remember the people whose lives you have touched and all who have touched yours.
Day by day we offer what we can, our money, our work, our living and loving.
And so we pray
God bless our offerings today that all may bring glory to you. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Ray

Loving God you call us to bear witness to the groaning of creation.
We hear, we feel, we see the damage done to this world, our home.
We pray for all the creatures of the earth displaced from their habitats.
For people who know and love the land and are yet ignored.
For children crying out for a future where creation is loved and nurtured.
We give thanks for people who hear the groaning and take action.
For emerging hope as calls for climate justice are heeded.

Risen Christ you call us to walk alongside people in need.
We pray for the church, your body at work in so many creative ways
For church leaders throughout the world shining a beacon of hope
For Deidre our President, Denise our Moderator
Jeanne, Linley, Narelle and Heather our Presbytery Ministry Team
For all who offer leadership in congregations here and beyond.
We give thanks for the gifts and graces, skills and generosity
Of all who speak and lead in your name. Lead us all by your Spirit.

Spirit God you meet us in the in-between places.
We pray for people in communities near and far who exist in in-between places
For refugees and asylum seekers, far from their homelands and not home yet.
For First Nations people, living apart from the land, yearning to return.
For so many people living alone amidst the pandemic, longing for connection.
We give thanks for compassion offered, hospitality shared,
For creativity blossoming in the shadows of physically separated living. Amen

NOTICES

Ian

I want to begin by saying thank you to those many people who have done so much work behind the scenes to keep our community connected through this challenging time. You can keep up to date with what they've been doing and all that is happening on our website and through our Facebook group. And here are a few of the things that you'll find there.

- Please join us for the Candlelight for Refugees action at 5pm this afternoon, marking 7 years of detention for refugees.
- During worship next week we will create space to celebrate the ongoing ministry of the Olive Way.
- Our Climate Action group has moved to fortnightly meetings at 5pm on Saturday, they invite us all to participate in the Climate Impacts Survey.
- And if you're watching this on Sunday morning please join me after worship for a Zoom chat at 10:30, the zoom link is available on Facebook and in the Olive Press. And if you can't join can't come but would like to let me know and if there is enough of you, we'll look to schedule a second time.

So have a great week – at home.

SONG: Guide me, O thou great Redeemer, TiS 569, recording needed

1. Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand:
bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore.
feed me now and evermore.

2. Open now the crystal fountain
whence the living waters flow;
let the fiery, cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield.
be thou still my strength and shield.

3. When I tread the verge of Jordan
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs and praises, songs and praises,
I will ever give to thee.
I will ever give to thee.

SONG: [Guide me, O thou great Redeemer](#), by William Williams,
from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins Religious, Collins PUBLIC DOMAIN

BLESSING

Saide

The psalmist says

*Search me, O God, and know my heart
test me and know my thoughts.*

We are caught up in a time of waiting, an in-between time.
We hope for so much in these strange times
For compassion, for justice, for freedom, for renewal
But we don't know this will look like
We can't know and still we hope.

God meets us as pilgrims in the in-between places.
God knows and loves and sees us and all creation.

Let's breathe together as we go into our week
Secure in the everlasting love of God who is our home
Blessed by the Risen Saviour who calls us out into the world
And renewed by the Spirit who sustains us in our living.
Amen

POSTLUDE – Hallelujah from the Student House have recording

'O LORD, you have searched me and known me.' Psalm 139:1

Ministers

Rev Ian Ferguson
Dave Hall

Liturgist

Saide Cameron

Acknowledgement of country

Olive Leslie-Collyer

Children's time

Dave and Clara Hall

Voices:

Greta and Rowan

Amelie and Matilda

Hoth

Hudson

Harriet

Oscar

Bible readings

Fiona Bottcher
Andrew Calwell

Musicians

Elaine Potter (co-ordinator)

Jane Allardice

Quilan Goff

Steph Gesling with Josh Whitty

Glenice Cook

Helen Burnham

Alistair Hunter

Daniel Whelan

Shawn Whelan

Natalie Sims

Andrew Dickinson

Bronte Potter

Prayers of the people

Ray Cameron

Notices

Ian Ferguson

Hallelujah

Quilan Goff

Hannah Friebe

Ralph Eduardo

Jacob's ladder sculpture:

Abilene Christian University,
Texas.

Production

David Cameron

Saide Cameron

Ian Ferguson

Chris Magee

Dave Hall

Meg Orton