

Opening verse:

... there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha...
She was devoted to good works and generous acts. Acts 9:36

Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship

Julie

We continue to ask you to wear a mask during the service for the sake of the most vulnerable amongst us while there is so much virus in the community
Include call out to St Luke's UCA Highton, Geelong, joining us as a congregation via the livestream because their worship leaders have been knocked out by COVID.

Light the candle

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Alleluia!

Come and worship the God who Tabitha knows,
who delights in giving and the bonds of caring
Who calls us from death into life.

Song of praise: Halle, halle, halle, TIS720

Halle, halle, hallelujah. x4

SONG: [Halle, halle, halle](#), Tune Caribbean traditional. Words: traditional liturgical text, from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins *Religious*, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Acknowledgement of Country

Julie introduce

During our worship through this Easter season, we are hearing recorded acknowledgments of country from all around Australia from places where our members live or travel. As we gather here on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri people, let us remember all the peoples of this land now called Australia.

Video: Ray Cameron, Gariwerd

Welcome and Introduction

Julie

My name is Julie Perrin I'll be your liturgist for today.

I come to you wearing the scrubs made as a thank you gift for Allied Health Workers at the RMH where I am privileged to be the UC Chaplain.

Today we meet Tabitha, the only woman in the NT to be individually named as a disciple of Jesus, a woman whose death brought the apostle Peter hurrying back to Joppa. Tabitha, who embodied the presence of Jesus in good works and generous acts, especially acts of making, knitting and sewing. Tabitha the first person to have a taste of the resurrection like Jesus. Hopefully you will leave the service today curious and wanting to learn more about this woman, Tabitha, whose name means gazelle.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession including Word of Grace

Julie

Great Creator, Maker of all that is,
Poet and Potter, who is unafraid of mud.

We praise you for making yourself manifest in human loving and humble making
in care for the vulnerable.

We praise you for the hope implicit in making.

We give thanks for Tabitha, first named woman disciple,
for her delight in giving and the bonds of care.

For your call to her from death to life.

Forgive us our snagged thoughts, our rushed impatience,
our habits of buying that overlook making.

Forgive us for being preoccupied, for believing we never have enough time.

Forgive us our compulsions,

when our generosity tips into pride and we neglect the commandment to rest.

Good Shepherd

You bring us to green pastures, to places of peace.

Even in the valley of the shadow

At the frightening door of death,
the cup of your kindness runs over.

May we dwell with you,

in the place of true belonging

forever. AMEN

May we hear now Christ's word of Grace,

Your sins are known and forgiven,

All: Thanks be to God.

Song: O Christ the healer we have come, TIS638

- 1. O Christ, the healer, we have come
to pray for health, to plead for friends.
How can we fail to be restored
when reached by love that never ends?*
- 2. From every ailment flesh endures
our bodies clamour to be freed;
yet in our hearts we would confess
that wholeness is our deepest need.*
- 3. How strong, O Lord, are our desires,
how weak our knowledge of ourselves!
Release in us those healing truths
unconscious pride resists or shelves.*
- 4. In conflicts that destroy our health
we diagnose the world's disease;
our common life declares our ills:
is there no cure, O Christ, for these?*
- 5. Grant that we all, made one in faith,
in your community may find
the wholeness that, enriching us,
shall reach the whole of humankind.*

SONG: [O Christ, the healer](#), by Frederick Pratt Green, from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins Religious.
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Julie invites children to come and sit down to listen to the Bible reading

Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, Please come to us without delay. So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, Tabitha, get up. Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word:

Thanks be to God

With the Children

Tell the story through the first two pictures made by Nicole Batch.

Image 1 – Tabitha making

Image 2 – Tabitha sick and dying

Photos of members of the congregation wearing home made gifts

Julie's shawl wrapped in your mother's love.

Ian what have you got?

Time for the children to show/tell their homemade eggs.

Anna's saying... 'it's her feeling of God.'

Image 3 – Hamish and Oscar Batch wearing beanies made by their mum Nic

Image 4 – Joshua's shorts made by his Aunty Rebecca

Image 5 – Saide's shirt made by her mother from fabric Ray brought from Bangkok

Image 6 – Kirsty's jumper knitted by her dear friend Helen.

Image 7 – Mal's beanie made with love by Helen who also spun the wool, but didn't shear the sheep

Complete the story, last two pictures.

Song: Jesucristo reina reina ya!, TiS 728

(Jesus Christ reigns!)

1. *Jesucristo reina, reina, ya!*

Jesucristo reina, reina, ya!

Jesucristo reina, reina, ya!

Aleluya, amen! Aleluya, amen! Aleluya, amen!

(Jesus Christ heals)

2. *Jesucristo sana, sana, ya!*

(Jesus Christ loves.)

3. *Jesucristo ama, ama, ya!*

(Jesus Christ lives.)

4. *Jesucristo vive, vive, ya!*

(Jesus Christ saves.)
5. Jesucristo salva, salva, ya!

SONG: Jesucristo Reina Ya, Anon. (from Argentina),
from Together in Song, Harper Collins Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Children to SMP

- younger group - James Clough and Steph Gesling
(note Steph starting out as interim SMP coordinator). Craft activity TBD
- older group - Joel Townsend and Joanne van Ravenswaaij.
Donuts and discussion and Juanita Peaches.

Bible Reading – Psalm 23

Jenne

Refrain: *Shepherd me O God* AOV1-33

SONG: [Shepherd me O God](#), by Marty Haugen, ©1986 GIA Publications, Inc. All rights reserved, from [As One Voice, Vol 1](#), Willow Connection. WORD OF LIFE. Reproduced with permission under ONELICENSE # 604502

During the reading of the Psalm we will sing the refrain “Shepherd me, O God.” Let’s begin singing it now.

*Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants,
beyond my fears, from death into life.*

The HOLY ONE is my shepherd, I shall not want.
They make me lie down in green pastures;
they lead me beside still waters;
they restore my soul.
They lead me in right paths
for their name’s sake.

*Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants,
beyond my fears, from death into life.*

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

*Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants,
beyond my fears, from death into life.*

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the HOLY ONE
my whole life long.

*Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants,
beyond my fears, from death into life.*

Reflection: Making and Sharing

Ian

I was always impressed that my mother could simultaneously knit, read a novel, and watch television. Very good at multitasking her relaxation. She was a constant knitter [jumper], until in recent years she developed severe macular degeneration, her eyes just don't work in the way knitters need them to for counting stitches anymore, and so she has had to give up knitting. That's sad because knitting was such a big part of her life and identity, but not tragic – it turns out there is life after knitting.

I've still got three of the myriad of jumpers my mother has knitted for me over the years and today I am wearing them in honour of her, in honour of all the knitters, the sewers, the makers and sharers. And in honour of Tabitha – Tabitha or Dorcas in Greek, who shows us in the most radical way that there is life beyond the loss of our capacity to make and to share.

Tabitha gets 7 verses in the bible, she is not a main character, but still a remarkable one. She is a maker who shares handmade clothing with the most vulnerable and needy people in her world, the widows, and they love her for it. And Tabitha does these good works and generous acts as a disciple of Jesus Christ. She's obviously not the only female disciple in the bible, but she is the only woman individually named as such. The ancient women's work of making and sharing is thus portrayed in Tabitha as the work of the coming Reign of God, the Commonwealth of Love. Not the only work that women do then or now, but in her making Tabitha performs the work of the creator – like God she is a maker who shares saving healing love. Thus, she embodies the ongoing mission of the risen Christ in the world through the power of the Holy Spirit by making clothes. Tabitha is a disciple. And today I want to honour her and all the makers and sharers who knit, stitch and weave Christ's new creation of divine love into being.

Once I was walking down Sydney Road in the middle of the day, when I came upon a woman kneeling on the footpath sewing a piece of knitting to a lamppost. That's right, friends, knit-bombing in broad daylight! Almost as if it was an accepted part of life in Brunswick rather than criminal vandalism! But, look, I do love me a good bit of craftivism. Like this scarf that was knitted for me by Natalie. It represents in knitted graph form the change in global temperatures over the past 100 years – from 1920 on the blue end to 2020 on the red alert end. And knowing what it represents, suddenly it is not quite so cosy and decorative an object as it first appears – it proclaims an apocalyptic message. Many of these scarves have been presented to Australian politicians to encourage action in the climate emergency – may our leaders be warmed into action by this craftivism.



Here is a painting of Mary knitting while looking after Jesus as a young child. This image was painted somewhere between 1400 and 1410 and it is wrong, because knitting wasn't invented for some hundreds of years after Mary and Tabitha lived. Knitting is a very old form of making, apparently it emerged from North Africa early in the first millennium – but it's not as old as Tabitha – she would have used other techniques to make clothes. And in her making she would have been meeting a basic human need for covering, for warmth, for protection. Is it fair to say, and I'm not a knitter so correct me if I'm wrong, that today knitting is less about basic human survival needs and more about art and craft, creativity and relaxation? Now I know that our Knit and Natter group and the Worldwide Knit in Public Day events that we host here contribute to KOGO – Knit One Give One – a not-for-profit organisation whose mission statement says:

KOGO enhances social inclusion through volunteering and providing hand knitted items of warmth and comfort to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community. Yes, it is Tabitha's work being done. But these days might it not be quicker, cheaper and more convenient to just donate money and buy commercially produced knitwear? Why hand knitting? Personally, I'd certainly always prefer to wear a hand knitted item over a factory produced one, but why is knitting still such a big deal?

I read an interesting take on this from academics Shannon and Steve Taylor. They're New Zealanders who I met in Jerusalem – here's a photo I took of them on the Mount of Olives. Shannon and Steve have done research work on Xn craftivism. It's the kind of research that probably wouldn't make it past the federal education minister's research grant veto, but it is very relevant to the craftivists among us here.



Shannon and Steve examined something that started in 2014 in the North of England. Women from a Methodist church there decided to knit-bomb these little Xmas Angels around their town at Xmas. They made 2870 of them and blitzed all the local the fence posts and doorknobs. By 2017 the project had grown, and 60,247 angels were knit-bombed. After that they lost count as the action spread all over England. The idea was to seed the Xmas message of joy and peace in the community by sending the angels out saturated with prayer – the prayer that those who need to know they are loved may find an angel.



Shannon and Steve asked, why knitting? Why has knitting become this expression of spirituality, mission and world transforming activism in the church? Why is Tabitha having such a big moment in our world right now? Well, it's not just in the church of course. Shannon and Steve observe that since the 1970s there has been a resurgence in everyday domestic craft participation – and didn't it boom during the pandemic lockdowns! This new wave of crafting arises as the world becomes increasingly industrialised, technologized, and commodified. Might the times we are living in "*require good news that is handmade, crafted and personalised?*" ask Shannon and Steve. I'm quoting them now: *Feminist literature has argued that individual activities of making, like craftivism, are forms of resistance to the materialistic tendencies of modernity.* Is that what knitting feels like knitters?! – like resistance, like anti-capitalist social action, like ecological revolution? Strong stuff this knitting. So strong in fact, that it transcends death.

Tabitha gets sick and dies. And it is a heartbreaking scene. The poor widows whom she has clothed are weeping and wailing at her bedside, holding the tunics and other clothing that Tabitha made – nothing knitted obviously, but clothing representing her legacy of love, her participation in divine world-loving creativity, her Christlikeness, her discipleship, her making and sharing of the Kingdom. Then Peter comes and prays himself into that same place – Tabitha's place of love, of lifegiving hope, of generous, generative creativity. Peter speaks from that place the creative word that was in the beginning, the Christ Word, "Tabitha, rise up!" and she does.

She is the first disciple to be given a taste of the resurrection. Thus Tabitha embodies Christ-Sophia more vividly and viscerally than anyone before her. She herself is made and shared anew. She becomes a symbolic demonstration of divine life-giving craft by the great maker and sharer of all things. May we be like her, like Tabitha, disciples who make and share such craft, such life giving love, that not even death can destroy.

Let me leave you with one final craft work suggested to me by Tabitha's deathless love. It's this stole that I am wearing to symbolise the gentle humble yoke of Christ laid upon me at my ordination. This particular stole is embroidered with multiple Jerusalem Crosses, a central cross surrounded by 4 smaller crosses – perhaps representing the 5 wounds of Christ, or Christ and the four evangelists, or Christ and the four quarters of the world.



Whatever the case, however it is formed, the cross of Christ always points us towards the heart of human suffering and the hope of new life. In that sense, Tabitha's life embodies the cross of Christ.

This stole is made using a traditional Palestinian embroidery style called Tatreez. It is a skill many women in Palestine learn as children and practice into adulthood, both to decorate their homes and for income. I purchased it in Jerusalem, on the same trip when I met Shannon and Steve Taylor. I purchased it from the women who made it, in a little not for profit store up an alleyway in the Old City. They were raising money, through traditional crafts, to support needy Palestinian women. Yes friends, Tabitha is still alive in Jerusalem, still doing Christ's work there, still making and sharing the Kingdom of God.

May she also live among us.

<https://handmadepalestine.com/collections/tatreez-cross-stitch-accessories>

https://brill.com/view/journals/ep/7/2/article-p143_143.xml

<https://www.christmasangel.net/about-us/>

Jennings, Willie James. Acts: A Theological Commentary on the Bible (Belief: a Theological Commentary on the Bible) (p. 101). Presbyterian Publishing. Kindle Edition.

Offering with Song: Mothers of Faith

Ian

A song written to celebrate 50 years of women's ordained ministry and 60 years of women in eldership in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa NZ.

*For our mothers of faith
For our sisters in Christ
For the daughters of God we will praise*

*For their courage and care
Their compassion and tears
For their unending prayers we will praise*

***For the women who carried and bore us, now this song we raise!
For their wisdom and ways so inspire us, now our God we praise!***

*For courageous midwives
For the unmarried bride
And her miracle child come to save*

*For the barren of womb
And the poured out perfume
Then the watch at the tomb we will praise*

***For the women who carried and bore us, now this song we raise!
For their wisdom and ways so inspire us, now our God we praise!***

*For the long silent age
For repression's cruel cage
For our part in this pain we confess*

*For the gifts we've returned
And the saints we have spurned
From this blindness we turn and are blessed*

***For the women who carried and bore us, now this song we raise!
For their wisdom and ways so inspire us, now our God we praise!***

*For our mothers of faith
For our sisters in Christ
For the daughters of God we will praise*

*To our Father above
With a mothering love
Won't you lead us in freedom and grace.*

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Offering Dedication

Like Tabitha, grant us lives of generosity and good works.
Like Tabitha, grant us to embody Jesus alive in the world.
Bless the gifts we offer to bring life where it is most needed.

Prayers of the People

Kirsty

My name is Kirsty and I will lead us now in the Prayers of the People. At the conclusion of the prayers, I invite you to light a taper in the chapel space, or at home, for the prayers of your heart. Today in the spirit of Tabatha, our prayers of the people are framed around a scarf, woven, of many colours. Let us pray:

We begin with a single colour. Beautiful in its own right, strong and defined.

-May we celebrate our individuality, and have the courage to be our true selves and respect others for who they are.

We see there are more colours. Similar, but each slightly different from the one next to it.

-May we look to our left and right and see what we have in common, what we share.

We see the range of colours is surprisingly great from one end to another, changing from red to purple.

-May we look around and celebrate the diversity among us.

We see the colours combined, and the richness that is possible when we join together rather be apart.

-May we work together to achieve your vision, knowing that we can do some much more in community than on our own.

We see the a different range of colours, and realise that they are the same colours as before, just put together in a different combination to create a new possibility.

-May we be open to new ways of doing things, of connecting our many parts in a different way to create something new.

As we look at the whole, we see creativity, a vision of something new brought to life.
-May we live out your vision for a new way of living, one with love and kindness at its centre.

We see care, we see the result of skilled hands taking the time to turn the simple into something beautiful and complex.

-May we care for those around us and those afar, taking the time and celebrating the work of our hands.

In this scarf, we see an object created by so many different people:
those who grew the sheep, those who gathered the wool, those spun and dyed it, those who wove it, those who transported it, those who sold it.

-May we never forget our interconnectedness, the importance of each of the things we do.

Creative God, Healing Jesus, Spirit of compassion,

We pause now to weave our own prayers, for ourselves and our neighbours,
for the people and places we know and love, and those we don't know but are connected to through our shared humanity, as we pray for the world, the church and our community.

Pause

May we be your hands, continuing your work and generosity in the places we are, giving of ourselves to others, remembering that a small act can have an enormous impact.

Amen.

Notices

Julie

Sending Song: Lead me on (NCYC07)

*Though I walk through the valley
Of the shadow of death
I will fear no evil
While I feel your breath
Though I may stumble
And fall in disgrace
Shine your light and lead me on*

*Chorus (echoes in brackets)
(Lead me on)
Like a child (Lead me on)
Walkin' down (Lead me on)
Through the dark and shadows
Lead (Lead me on)
Lead me on (Lead me on)
Lead me to the other side*

*Surely goodness and mercy
Shall follow me
And I will live in your house
As long as life can be
Though I may stumble
And fall in disgrace
Shine your light and lead me on*

Chorus

Blessing and Sending

Ian and Julie

Ian: Go now and celebrate people who have set their hands
to crafting, shaping, moulding making.
Give thanks for kindness knitted into garments for skillfully sewn seams and hems
for shapely making, for riots of colour, and quiet unassuming presence.

Julie: Go out now into the world
To live with intention
to decide to care,
to be in relationships of making and giving.

Ian: Let the Good Shepherd be your companion,

Julie: May they lead you in gentleness,

Ian: That even in the dark valley,

Julie: You will know the call to life lived in fullness.

Both: **AMEN**

Thank yous

Thank you for joining us, and thank you to...

Liturgist:
Julie Perrin

Reflection:
Ian Ferguson
(Minister of the Word)

Postlude Song: Jesucristo
Reina Ya, Anon. (from
Argentina), from Together
in Song, 728, Harper
Collins Religious, PUBLIC
DOMAIN

Acknowledgement of
Country:
Ray Cameron

Prayers of the People:
Kirsty Bennett

Musicians: Natalie Sims,
Daniel Whelan, Shawn
Whelan

Bible readers:
Kirsty Brown
Jenne Perlstein

Musicians:
Shawn Whelan
(co-ordinator)
Glenice Cook
Helen Burnham

Children's time:
Ian Ferguson
Julie Perrin
Artwork Nicole Batch

James Balsillie
Courtney Rohde
Joel Hallinan

Editing / Production:
Jane Allardice
Martin Brown
Michael Cameron
Ray Cameron
Saide Cameron

Images:
Ian Ferguson

Closing verse:

... there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha...
She was devoted to good works and generous acts. Acts 9:36