Order of Service – 27/09/26, Season of Creation 4

GATHERING

Here, we cross a threshold – we move into a sacred space, and a sacred time, a space and time 'set apart' for the purpose of communal prayer.
During the service the congregation is invited to stand and sit for different parts of the service, however you are welcome to stay seated if you wish.
A sensory friendly space is available for those who need it.
The worship area is wheelchair accessible.
There is a children's corner with books and activities.

Opening verse – Exodus 17:4

So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do for this people?

Greeting — Peter

The leader greets the people in God's name and calls us into a worshipful space and state. The bible is carried in and Christ Candle lit – we usually stand (if we are able and comfortable to do so) while this happens.

Good morning. As we move through the Season of Creation we are bringing a symbol of the Earth forward as we prepare to worship.

Song – Song of Praise

We usually stand during the songs.

Let's stand as we welcome the Word and the Light singing Ross Langmead's Song of Praise, a doxology written for the opening of Synod 30 years ago. We are singing this song each week for the Season of Creation.

Creator of this great land, we adore you.
Renewer of your people, hear our praise.
Transformer of all life, you often take us by surprise.
Continue to be present in life-giving ways.

Descant: Creator we adore you.
Renewer, hear our praise.
Transformer you surprise us,
Be present in life-giving ways.

Creator of this great land, we adore you.
Renewer of your people, hear our praise.
Transformer of all life you often take us by surprise.
Continue to be present in life-giving ways, Great God.

SONG: Song of Praise, Written for the Commission for Mission by Ross Langmead for Synod worship, September 1996. Used with permission

Call to worship — Peter

Come, feel your feet on the floor, as we worship the God of all Creation.
Come, feel your heart beating, as we worship the One who renews all things.

Come, feel Spirit's living presence, as we worship God together.

Acknowledgement of Country — Peter

We acknowledge the people of the land on which we worship

We acknowledge and respect
the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung 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.

Welcome and Introduction — Peter

People are welcomed, those present and those online. Those contributing are acknowledged and / or introduced and an invitation is issued to morning tea after the service.
The themes of the service are laid out.

Good morning and welcome to worship with us today, whether you are gathering in person or online. Today is week four of Season of Creation and we will be reflecting on the significance of water, what it means for life and creation, for renewal in the waters of Baptism, and as a sign of promise and new life given to us in Jesus and the prophets. Today Cath, our preacher, will explore the image of living water in the book of Ezekiel as we lament and hope together.

This week's artwork from Myrashel's '22 letters of the Hebrew Alphabet' collection is the letter *Mem*. This is the 13th letter and represents '*the waters of wisdom, knowledge, the Torah. It is said that in every person is the thirst for the words of the Creator, which are the waters of life'*.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession — Peter

We pray in adoration, praising and adoring God for being God; and in confession, bringing before God the incompleteness and brokenness of the world and our lives. In response we hear God's word of healing grace.

Holy God,
whose Spirit hovered over the waters at the beginning,
we gather as part of your community of all creation,
thirsty for your grace.

We give thanks for the gift of water,
the veins of our common home,
that sustains the cedar and the whale,
the pasture and the city.

We are grateful for the local waters that nourish
our homelands and our fellow creatures.
We give thanks that in your well-watered garden,
every drop is a sacred testament to your love.

We confess we have treated the gift of creation as a mere commodity.
We have choked the seas with our waste
and watched the warming tides rise in judgment.

We lament the cracked earth of the drought-stricken
and the salty tears of the climate refugee.
Melt our frozen hearts, O God,
and let the waters of repentance flow.
Help us do our part to work with you
to bind up the wounds of the Earth,
caused by our sin, greed, and neglect

God our Creator
who brought water from the rock
sustain us in the desert.

Christ our Lord
who is Living Water
refresh us for the work of restoration.

Holy Spirit
carry us on currents of grace
until justice rolls down like a river and
righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
Amen

Adapted from UCA Season of Creation Guide

Word of Grace — Peter

Friends, God works with us to restore creation,
let us be grateful that through Christ, and because of Christ, our sin is forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

Passing the Peace — Peter

Passing the peace is a tradition rooted in Scripture that embodies our identity as peacemakers (Matt. 5:9; 2 Cor. 5:20) and trains ours hearts, hands, and tongues in the ways of peace. Passing the Peace is part of the Communion liturgy (first Sunday of the month). On other Sundays we may choose to share the peace in response to the Word of Grace or Prayers of the People

Just as we have received the sign of peace in the redeeming and redemptive work of Jesus, let share in a sign of peace with each other:

May the peace of Christ be always with you
And also with you

BUC Garden photos — Cath

An invitation to explore our own space, our gardens with photos from a walking conversation with BUC Gardens Co-ordinator, Merri Bathe

HEARING AND RESPONDING

We hear the story of Jesus, Wisdom Incarnate (in the gospels); the story of God's dealings with Israel (in the Old/First Testament); and the story of God's people through history (in Acts and the New Testament letters). As we hear this story, we are reshaped and formed by an alternative perspective on life – the perspective of the gospel, the good news. The story is told through proclamation, which may include reading the Scriptures, reflection on Scripture, symbolic action, art, music, multimedia resources and silence.
Hearing the story requires a response. We respond by making an offering (of ourselves, our gifts, our money, and our prayers for others).

Hebrew Scriptures – Exodus 17:1-7, p 56 — Gwen

Water from the rock

[1]From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. [2]The people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" [3]But the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" [4]So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do for this people? They are almost ready to stone me." [5]The LORD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. [6]I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. [7]He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word
Thanks be to God

Early Word — Cath

The international theme for Season of Creation this year is Living Water drawing on a vision from Ezekial which we will hear soon.

Something that never ceases to amaze me is that all the water that we come into contact with has been cycling through the earth's systems from the beginning. Through evaporation and transpiration, cloud, rain, snow, glacier melt, drops of this water could have been part of Jesus' own baptism in the Jordan, part of the great flood, part of the healing waters that cleansed lepers, part of our own tears.

It's a powerful reminder about just how interconnected we are, not just with each other but with the members of the earth community who cannot speak, the more than human world, water being such a crucial part of all that is.

Kate has put together this reflective piece with a song written by two members of our congregation, Julie Perrin and Shawn Whelan.

I invite you into a time of reflection. Watch video.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gs4LlFJhvnDHMq9Wjkzu6G9YZ1smXfCM/view?usp=drive_web

In the Bible reading we heard earlier, Moses cries out to God because he hears the cries of the people who have no water. In hearing Moses' cry, God responds.

I suspect most prayer is a crying out to God in some way. We cry out in anger, in despair, in joy, in sorrow. And the earth too cries out.

While we sing this next song, you might like to come and dip your hand in the water to remember the tears of all those who have cried out to God - for the earth, for justice. You might like to offer your own lament or prayer or make the sign of the cross on your own hand or forehead.

You can come down the front or go up to the font at the back.

SONG – How Long, ATG 563

1. How long must we cry out,
'til justice rolls down like a river?
How long must this night last,
And when will we all be together?

Teach me to do what is right,
work in the darkness, trust in the light,
and may love be the path I walk upon.

2. How long will these bombs fall,
And bodies get twisted and broken?
How long will these voices,
Keep shouting loud insult and slogan?

3. How long will your creatures,
Be trampled degraded forever?
How long, must we cry out,
Till justice rolls down like a river?

SONG: How long, © Robin Mann, from All together for good (563),
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Hebrew Scriptures – Ezekiel, 47:1-2,9,12, p 714 — Kenna

Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple; there water was flowing from below the entryway of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east), and the water was flowing down from below the south side of the temple, south of the altar. **2** Then he brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east,[i] and the water was trickling out on the south side.

9 Wherever the river goes,[j] every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish once these waters reach there. It will become fresh, and everything will live where the river goes. **12** On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing."

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word
Thanks be to God

Preaching of the Word — Cath

Sacred Pause

Offering with Song – Deeper River, AoV.2.6 — Peter

We usually remain seated for the singing of the offering song, standing together when the offering is carried forward. Note – the welcomers will come forward to collect the bowls; 'I give by Direct Debit' cards will be on the pews

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1. There's a river running deep within the silence of our souls
where the quenching, healing waters carve their art
at its source a spring of living water, surging and sustained
It's the voice of Jesus waiting for the listening of our hearts.

When the living waters flow in us,
when the living waters flow again,
they will carry us they will wash us down,
they will quench our thirst again.

2. Sometimes the river of our life winds wandering away,
sometimes the rapids tumble restlessly

comes the time to stop and find the deeper river running strong
to drink refreshing waters and hear the spirit's song.

3. Hear the call to thirsty people: there's no need to thirst again
to the weary: come, beside still waters lie.
Full of goodness full of mercy our cup will overflow
when the call of that deep river is a voice we've come to know.

SONG: Deeper River, © 1997 Digby Hannah, from As One Voice, Vol 2, Willow Connection Pty. Ltd.
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Offering Prayer — Peter

We thank You God for the gifts of the Earth, and the gifts of Your people, help us to use these with wisdom, generosity, care, and equity. In the name of Christ we pray, Amen.

Mission Spot — Richard

Prayers of the People with Song – O Lord hear my prayers, TiS 741 — Joanne

We offer prayers for the world, for Christ's people in the world, and for those in need. After the prayer the Christ Candle is taken to the chapel space where people are invited to light a taper for their own prayers at the end of the service.

We'll be entering now into a time of communal prayer. Afterwards, the Christ Candle will be moved to the Chapel space at the back of the church, and you're welcome to light a taper or a candle at home for your own prayers at the end of the service.

Let's begin by taking a moment to tur our focus to our heart and spirit, and as we listen to the music, become more aware of God's presence. Let us pray.

O Lord, hear my prayer,
O Lord, hear my prayer:
When I call, answer me.
O Lord, hear my prayer,
O Lord, hear my prayer,
Come and listen to me.

SONG: O Lord, hear my prayer, by Jacques Berthier,
from Together in Song, Harper Collins *Religious*, WORD OF LIFE

Eternal God, thank you for all the blessings and joys in our life.
Let's all take a moment now to acknowledge and thank God for these blessings, big and small

And thank you for this time when we can bring to you the burdens on our hearts.
Dear God, we pray for everyone going through hard times.

We lift up to you for those who have chronic illness or pain

We pray for people nearing the end of their lives.
Give them courage and peace, and be with their loved ones.

Lord, comfort those who grieve.
Grieving the loss of loved ones or the ending of chapters in their life.

We pray also for the homeless and those in housing insecurity in this very wet and cold spring.

We lift up to you those suffering in war-torn areas,
in Iran, Ukraine, Gaza, and the many conflict areas around the world.

Lord, when we feel overwhelmed by all the suffering and the issues,
and can't see how things could possibly get better

remind us that what we can see is just a sliver
compared to Your vast and infinite perspective on life
We often forget that You can see to the end of every path that we take.

So when we're afraid to let go of our need to be in control of life,
remind us that you love us more than we can even imagine.
And grant us your grace to surrender to your plans for us,
to put you at the centre of our lives.

Lord hear us.

Come and listen to me.

Loving God, we pray for the Uniting Church,
for Christians and for all people of faith around the world

Thank you for the Boroondara Interfaith Network's prayer meeting this afternoon,
Modelling our community how we can live peacefully with people of different faiths.

We thank you for courageous artists like Macklemore
and people around the world taking a public stance
against the genocide in Gaza, even when it comes at a cost

We pray for our Government and leaders around the world
To implement fair policies to put an end to war.

Bless all who work and volunteer
to make this world a safer and more peaceful place.
Lord, hear us

Come and listen to me.

Lord, you call us to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.
But it isn't always easy to love people

Or to forgive those who hurt us or hurt others.

We're too often prone to judging and criticizing people
And would rather nurture grievances than reflect on our own flaws.

So we admit to you dear God, our contribution to the suffering in the world

Loving God, we need your help to get better at loving those
who push our buttons and in doing so,
make us confront those dark places within ourselves.

Help us to become the change we long to see in the world.

We offer to you all our prayers spoken and whispered in our hearts,
In Jesus' name, Amen.

O Lord, hear my prayer,
O Lord, hear my prayer:
When I call, answer me.
O Lord, hear my prayer,

O Lord, hear my prayer,
Come and listen to me.

BEING SENT

Having heard the word and shared the meal together, we are sent forth on God's mission of love. We are again on a threshold, encouraged to go into the world to continue the worship of God in our daily living.

Notices — Peter

We share the life and work of our community with each other as we prepare to be sent out.

Next week's preacher will be Sesi Taunga

Sending Song – You shall go out with joy, TiS 755

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.

SONG: The trees of the field, by Steffi Rubin, from Together in Song, Harper Collins;
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Sending / Words of Mission — Peter

The leader sends people out into the world to live out our faith.

Go now into the world as agents of peace.
Reconciling with God, each other, ourselves
and the whole creation;
our common home

Blessing — Cath

The leader gives a blessing to the people for the next stage of the journey.

And may the blessing of the Holy Trinity of love:
God, creator of this great land
Jesus, renewer of all people
Spirit, transformer of all life
Be with you now and always
Amen

Closing verse – Psalm 36:9

For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

Thank yous

Thank you for joining us, and thank you to…

Liturgist:
Peter Blair
(Olive Way Pastor)

BUC Garden photos:
Cath James
(Merri Bathe)

Bible readers:
Gwen Arnold
Kenna Morrison

Early Word & Preacher:
Cath James
(Minister of the Word)

Prayers of the People:
Joanne van Ravenswaaij

Musicians:
Andrew Dickinson
(co-ordinator)
Michael Cameron
Saide Cameron
Naomi Kim
Bronte Potter
Maggie Somerville

Postlude Song: Deeper River, from As One Voice 2

Musicians: Elaine Potter, Bronte Potter

Images:
Peter Blair
Myrashel

Editing / Production:
Ray Cameron
Saide Cameron
James Clough
Christine Hornby
Fiona MacDowall
Shawn Whelan