

July 12 2020
A Liturgy for use at Home

Notes:

*A liturgy for use at home. Please adapt it as you see fit. Children present might enjoy lighting candles, reading scriptures and leading some of the prayers. Words in italics are instructions. Words in **bold** are said by all.*

Preparation

Light a candle as you read these words

"You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands" (Is. 55:12).

Call to Worship

Let us worship God,
for whom our soul's thirst
and our bodies long.

**Listen, listen to me,
and your soul will delight in the richest
of fare.**

Let us listen for the Word God has sent.

**God's Word will not return empty
but will achieve God's purpose.**

Let us worship God in spirit and in truth.

**Then we will go out with joy and be led
forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills will sing;
the trees of the field will clap their
hands.**

(based on Isaiah 55:2, 11-12; John 4:24)

Opening Prayer¹

O God, you summon the day to dawn,
you teach the morning to waken the earth.

For you the valleys shall sing for joy,
the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

For you the kings of the earth shall bow,
the poor and persecuted shall shout for joy.

Your love and mercy shall last forever,
fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise.

Great is your name.

Great is your love. **Amen.**

Silence is kept

prayer

Confession

*Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call on him while he is near. Let the wicked
forsake their ways and the unrighteous their
thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and
he will have mercy on them and to our God,
for he will freely pardon (Is 55:6–7).*

In silence we confess

Hear then God's word of grace. Our sins
are forgiven!

Amen.

Scripture

Is. 55:1-13

Matthew 13:1–8, 18-23

Collect

Give us we pray, gentle God,
a mind forgetful of past hurt.
a will to seek the good of others
and a heart of love,
that we may learn to live
in the way of your Son, Jesus Christ,
through whom we pray. **Amen**

Sermon

- A written reflection is appended to these notes.
- The Sunday Sermon is online²

Response

- How has God's word borne fruit in your life? When have you been hard hearted? What anxieties or desires threaten to "choke" the seed?
- Have you been discouraged from seemingly unfruitful attempts to share the gospel? How do this week's scriptures offer encouragement?
- Small group life has not been possible in lockdown. If you are interested in meeting online please email: mcguigan@durbmeth.org.za.³
- Give thanks for the many who have continued to give so faithfully and sacrificially.

¹ The Worship Sourcebook

² <https://durbanvillemethodist.co.za/category/sermons/>

³ We'll use the online group to address the MCSA's FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND VIOLENCE theme.

Prayers of Supplication and Intercession

These prayers may help as you hold before God the needs of our nation and church. Pray them as written or allow them to lead you into your own prayers of intercession.

For survivors of abuse⁴

Lord God,
hear our prayer for all in pain and vulnerability:
dispel their darkness and loneliness with your everlasting light,
so that they can recover their self-confidence
and through your grace and mercy find their true selves again,
healed and strengthened by your unconditional love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
God our strength and our redeemer:
you do not leave us in this life
nor abandon us in death.

Hear our prayer for those in despair,
when days are full of darkness
and the future empty of hope.
Renew in them your sustaining strength
for we believe that there is nothing in all creation
that can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All who minister to the sick

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ went about doing good and healing all kinds of sickness and disease among the people:
continue his gracious work among us in hospitals and nursing homes; and send your blessing on all who labour to Prevent suffering and to forward your purposes of love. We pray for doctors and healthcare workers of the DMC family, Bianca, Debbie,

Life giving word

Seeds contain life

In 2005 a Judean date palm seed was planted. Every seed's germination brings joy, but this seed's sprouting was extra-special. This particular seed, recovered from an excavation at Herod the Great's palace, was estimated to be 2000 years old. It is the oldest known seed to have grown into a viable plant – today it is a 3.5m tall date palm.

Kayla, Karla, Stephen, Philip, Glynnis, Gideon, Liza, Magda⁵; may you keep them safe and renew them each day by the power of your Holy Spirit.

The poor and hungry⁶

Loving Father, look graciously on the millions in our world who are hungry, starving and at the mercy of poverty and disease: as you have given us the knowledge which can produce plenty, so give us also the wisdom which can bring it within reach of all. Grant that we who have lived so comfortably all our lives may have the gift of compassion, and do all in our power, as individuals and as a nation, to help others find the abundant life which is your will for them; for Jesus Christ's sake (George Appleton).

From our Prayer Bulletin:

Nellie and Glen Schooling as they mourn the loss of their daughter Candice, Cedric Fryer, Daphne Sneyd, Delores and Aubrey Eksteen, Ronel Breuninger and her family Olga Jardine whose mother is ill.

Dedication

Lord Jesus make me daily conscious of your grace and, as you have called me to serve you make me worthy of my call.

Amen

Our Father...

Sing or listen to a song/hymn

Benediction

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more. Amen

⁴ <https://www.churchofengland.org/>

⁵ Please let us know of medical workers who we may we have left out.

⁶ From "My Personal Prayer Book" by Bishop Geoff Quinlan.

In Jesus' first parable, in Matthew's Gospel, the word of the Kingdom is a seed. A few years back, at church, we handed out bean seeds, encouraging folk to plant them in damp cotton wool, perhaps you remember? We revisited the childhood wonder of watching a seed germinate. Seeds have life in them! The word of the Kingdom has the life of God within it

Sowing

Today we sow the word on Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp —with no idea where it will land or how it will germinate!

As a teen in church I'm sure I appeared like the hardest of paths. I looked bored, my mind wandered, I played silly games in the pew; a nightmare for the preacher. But by God's grace the word was sown in my heart found fertile soil⁷. Who knows, maybe today a teen will roll their eyes at my silly smile but will be unable to resist the compelling, life-giving beauty of Jesus and his kingdom?

At school reunions the friends with whom I used to jostle in the pew laugh with unrestrained delight at the irony that Sean is now a preacher! I can't resist quoting one of them, but I will censor it: *"beep Sean, I can't, beep believe it. You a preacher! That's beep brilliant"*.

I think they know that if the Kingdom took root in me then they are by no means out of danger. I suspect that, in the fertile recesses of their hearts, some secretly hope that, somehow the Kingdom would find a way in. That they too might enjoy the life Jesus offers – remember last week's summons *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls* (Mt 11:28–29).

Some have even said to me: *"it must be great to have a purpose, to do something meaningful- to make a positive contribution"*. Not me, of course, but The Kingdom! Generously sown by the God of love and mercy throughout world. The unpredictability is so exciting. Each week we share liturgies and sermons, music and prayer via social media. It reaches a certain number, some watch, fewer watch until the end. But it is impossible to say how God is at work⁸!

We are amazed by the reach of social media...But God's seed is life-giving however it is sown. We also print hard copies! Thelda, distributes them at De Rust. One of the workers there asked what she was handing out. *"Oh"* she said, *"do you have an extra one"*. Thelda gladly gave her a copy. Thelda's friend is hungry for God's word. God will satisfy her hunger, for God has promised *"Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ... Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food* (Is 55:1b–2).

I watched the word sown on Friday night. I'd popped over to Bersig NG church who were hosting homeless folk in the hall during the cold-front. (A ministry DMC has been invited to share in.) Braam Hanekom, from the Centre for Public Witness, shared a brief word ending (to paraphrase) *"As you snuggle under your blanket know that whatever path you have taken, whatever path your life has taken, God sees you, knows you, loves you, calls you"*.

That seed sown on a cold Friday night in church hall will bear fruit – some yielding 30, some 60 some 100 times.

⁷ Or more likely it the seed hid there until God prepared fertile soil

⁸ As a later parable will make clear

Not all soils bear fruit

This is fun talk, but Jesus does not romanticise Kingdom sowing. You know as well as I do that sometimes we are just plain hard-hearted. We hear Jesus teaching on forgiveness but refuse to let go of hurt. We hear his teaching on mercy and refuse to share. The seed bounces off hard hearts and the evil one steals our joy.

We've all seen folk enthusiastically commit to one or other ministry – but at the first sign of difficulty they fall away. Shallow soil abounds.

And perhaps more than ever, in this thorny moment of history, we know exactly what Jesus means when he says *"the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful"* (Mt 13:22).

Who has not had moments, over recent months, physically feeling anxiety choking faith? Does anyone *not* have *"money worries"*?

Jesus sows, and gardens!

It makes me realise Jesus isn't just sowing. He is tilling soil, uprooting weeds, digging through bed rock, applying fertiliser. If he didn't there would be no fruit! Chances are that, a moment ago, you felt convicted. You realised: *"Oh my Lord, I'm so shallow!"* or *"Lord have mercy I've been hard-hearted!"* or *"Father forgive me I'm choking on life's worries!"*

The fact we are bothered is a sign of God preparing the soil. Friends, God promised, *"my word that goes out from my mouth...will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."* Or, As Paul said, *"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but **God made it grow**"* (1 Co 3:6).

Only God can make bring forth fruit

Friends, not only can we not make the fruit grow, we don't even know exactly what the yield is or how to quantify it - Jesus didn't specify exactly what the yield was. Our task is to faithfully follow Jesus. To learn from him, to learn how to obey him. He will take care of the fruit. Seek first the Kingdom and you will receive all things: *"blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear"* (Mt 13:16). Amen.