

Pilgrimage to Sea of Life



Saturday 3 January 2015
Drysdale Uniting Church

Drysdale Uniting Church—Reaching out with God's love and care

SONG OF WATERS

1. Watch once more the windswept storm clouds;
Suddenly the sky has wings!
God has come to rain among us,
Giving hope to all dry things.
Sing a song of splashing waters,
Pulsing through the veins of Earth.

2. Taste the moisture of the morning,
Smoother than the best red wine;
Toast the lifeblood of the planet:
Here's to God's wild wet design!
Sing a song of flowing waters,
Pulsing through the veins of Earth.

3. View anew the dark blue ocean,
Whales cavorting, spraying foam;
God at play with deep sea monsters,
Feeling very much at home.
Sing a song of laughing waters,
Pulsing through the veins of Earth.

4. Feel the breath of God move softly,
Gentle mists that brush the skin;
Earth is breathing god's own spirit,
Life renewed from deep within.
Sing a song of living waters,
Pulsing through the veins of Earth.

Words: © Norman Habel

Music: J Goss

Tune: Praise my soul the King of Heaven

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LITURGY FOR STATION ONE: GROWTH FROM WATER

Welcome and Introduction

Acknowledgement of country

We acknowledge today the Wathaurong people, the original custodians of this great land that God has provided for us, and as we start our pilgrimage we pay due respect to their elders, past and present.

We
All
Treasure
Earth's
Resources



Call to Worship

Leader: We gather here as God's people of this area, setting out on our pilgrim's journey, appreciating as we travel the wonders of the surrounding waters provided to us by our God.

Pilgrims: *We travel towards the sea, remembering as we do the wonders of the cycle of water so carefully devised by our Lord – and we know that life on, in and above the earth depends on the generous gift of water.*

Leader: Giving God, awaken us to the gifts of your world. May we appreciate the wonders of your earth, and remember that we owe all that we have to you.

Scripture Reading: **1 Corinthians 3:5-9** (from The Message)

Who do you think Paul is, anyway? Or Apollos, for that matter? Servants, both of us—servants who waited on you as you gradually learned to entrust your lives to our mutual Master. We each carried out our servant assignment. I planted the seed, Apollos watered the plants, but God made you grow. It's not the one who plants or the one who waters who is at the centre of this process but God, who makes things grow. Planting and watering are menial servant jobs at minimum wages. What makes them worth doing is the God we are serving. You happen to be God's field in which we are working.

Reflection

Today our pilgrimage is focused on the 'Sea of Life'. To appreciate the Sea of Life we must first understand that the water of the sea, and the water that falls as rain, and the water that as vapour returns to the sky are one and the same water. The almost magical manner in which the water given to us by our Lord can work for our purpose and benefit is truly amazing.

The water here in these bathtubs is provided to quench the thirst of animals, and similarly the water that comes from our kitchens quenches our thirst. Animals grow, and we grow, because our God provided us with water.

The water that comes from our garden hoses makes our trees grow, and the fruit from the trees is for our nourishment, and helps us to grow. We plant a seed, we water it and protect it from anything that can hurt it - harsh weather, insects -and then we enjoy the fruits of our labour. But it is not us who are growing the fruit. Without the soil provided by God, without the water provided by God, and without the sunlight provided by God, we would not have growth.

As we read in the passage from Corinthians, it's not the one who plants or the one who waters who is at the centre of this process but God, who makes things grow.

Poem – There was a time.....

There was a time when all waters ran clean
and fish leaped from every stream to catch the hovering mayfly.
There was a time when birds and bees stirred summer air with wings of ease,
but now that time has gone by.
The time I've known, and seen, and felt,
has been a time when men have dealt with the world like a belligerent child.
In the name of the great money race,
they've taken Earth's pristine face, and with muck, and smoke, and oil, defiled.
Still I pray for the time to come,
when recleansed water sparkles in the sun,
and the moon shines down sublime on a world that was lost and found,
and we can all feel justified and proud, to tell of the passing of that former time.

Prayer

Lord God, provider of all things necessary for growth, we thank you for the gift of water. You provide for us fresh water in abundance, and you orchestrate the magical manner in which the water recleanses itself through nature. Forgive us when we misuse your gift, when we pollute your waterways, when we forget that your world has been left in our hands to care for. May we remember that you are at the centre of all things? Without the gift of water provided by you, we would not grow, our animals would not grow, our plants and trees would not grow, and the earth would be desolate and bare. May we be part of the renewal that we seek in our world? Amen

Song (v1)

Setting out

Setting out on a pilgrimage is different from just travelling from A to B as commuter or tourist. We are pilgrims. As we walk, consider: what intentions, hopes, goals and, especially, what openness do you bring to this experience? What do you already know of the sea of life for which we journey? How important is the sea in our life, in the world, and its spiritual significance? Take notice of the different views of the sea as we walk. Let's go!

LITURGY FOR STATION TWO: SEA TRANSPORT

Gathering and conversation

Responsive Call to Worship (Psalm 46: 1-3, 11)

God is our refuge and strength,
Always ready to help in times of trouble.
**So we will not fear, even if earthquakes come,
and the mountains crumble into the sea.**
Let the oceans roar and foam,
Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge.
**The Lord almighty is here among us;
The God of Israel is our fortress.**

Reflection

When we think about sea transport in the Bible what probably springs to mind is the account where "Jesus calms the storm." Actually there are many accounts of Jesus, his disciples and others travelling by boat or ship, crossing the Sea of Galilee, the Mediterranean Sea and even further.

Matt. 8: 23-27 – "Jesus calms the storm."

Matt. 14: 22-23 – "And straightaway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship and go before unto the other side..."

Acts 13: 4- 14: 28 – we read of Paul's missionary journeys e.g. v4. Paul and Barnabas sailed from Seleucia to Cyprus; v13. Paul and his companions sailed from Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia; ch14: v26 From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch.

Scripture Reading: **Matthew 8: 23-27** (New International Version)

Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

Reflection (continued)

As I have earlier mentioned, many times we hear of the disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee. Some were fishermen before being called by Jesus and so many were aware of the sudden weather changes on the lake. The sea was in a basin in which the winds could easily make their way through a valley that acted as a tunnel down through the sea. This day was one of those days when the weather suddenly changes without a moment’s notice – and the disciples are terrified. Notice Jesus is asleep. It has been a long day for him. He has taught, preached and healed many – spent himself for the Kingdom of God – and now he sleeps. This teaches us that Jesus is completely abandoned to the Father, He can trust in him.

Matthew tells us that the boat is swamped by the waves, so sudden was the storm. The disciples are so afraid that they feel their lives are at stake – and they don’t see any way out of this tumultuous storm. They call out to Jesus, he awakes, rebukes the storm and there is once again calm.

Matthew writes this story to teach his community a lesson. There are many trials that the early church had undergone. The boat symbolises the church which is experiencing dangers in its present state. The disciples are rebuked because of their lack of faith. They are called to abandon themselves completely to him – the divine master – whom even the wind and sea obey.

Perhaps the story that Matthew relates here is typical of our experience. How often do we experience the “storms” of life breaking us and causing us terror within? What are those things that we are easily distracted with? How many times do we feel the same way as the disciples with Jesus asleep? How often do we cry out to God – “why are you not listening? Do you not care? Where are you when I need you? Lord save me, I am perishing.”

The Lord is present among us. He is not asleep, but perhaps our faith needs to be awakened. “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (Eph. 5: 14). Be at peace once again for the Lord desires to give you his peace. When Jesus rebuked the wind and seas there was a great calm. Allow him to calm you of all your fears as you place your trust in Him. Where are the storms in your life? What areas in your life are the most unsettled? Where would you like Jesus to speak of his peace and love – family issues, at work, at home, personality and attitudes?

Prayer

Lord you are a mighty God and price of peace. We ask you to calm the winds and seas, the storms that break out in our lives. We give you our problems and we will trust in you again. Amen.

Song (v2)

On The Way

As we walk together to the next Station, let's notice together where structures have been built on the edge of the sea, to ponder their purpose and to give thanks.

LITURGY FOR STATION THREE: RECREATIONAL USE OF THE SEA

Gathering and conversation

God of All

Our God is the God of all,
The God of heaven and earth,
Of the sea and of the rivers;
The God of the sun and of the moon and of all the stars;
The God of the lofty mountains
and of the lowly valleys.
He has his dwelling around heaven and earth,
and sea and all that in them is.
He inspires all,
He gives life to all
He dominates all,
He supports all.
He lights the light of the sun.
He furnishes the light of the night.
He has made springs in dry land...
He is the God of heaven and earth,
of sea and rivers,
of sun, moon and stars,
of the lofty mountain and lowly valley,
the God of heaven,
and in heaven,
and under heaven.

Scripture Reading: **John 21:4-14** (Good News Translation)

As the sun was rising, Jesus stood at the water's edge, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Then he asked them, "Young men, haven't you caught anything?" "Not a thing," they answered.

He said to them, "Throw your net out on the right side of the boat, and you will catch some." So they threw the net out and could not pull it back in, because they had caught so many fish.

The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Peter heard that it was the Lord, he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken his clothes off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples came to shore in the boat, pulling the net full of fish. They were not very far from land, about a hundred yards away. When they stepped ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there with fish on it and some bread. Then Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net ashore full of big fish, a hundred and fifty-three in all; even though there were so many, still the net did not tear. Jesus said to them, "Come and eat." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. So Jesus went over, took the bread, and gave it to them; he did the same with the fish.

This, then, was the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from death.

Reflection

Finding Bible readings and illustrations from Scripture about recreation in the sense of play and games was not easy. Nor could I find much about recreational activities on prayer sites. It seems, as a whole, human beings tend to separate play and recreation from their spiritual lives.

And yet, why should we? The God we worship is a God of creation and re-creation. Our recreational activities are means to give us rest and a time to renew our energies. Surely this is re-creation in practice.

I found a blog-site called *Wisdom and Life* where the blogger had reflected on a God who plays. Here is part of what he writes:

If God is indeed loving,
If God is indeed joyful,
Shouldn't he also be playful?
You'd think so.

So now the question becomes:
How exactly do you play with God?

I bet you don't think I have the answer.
What brings you joy?
What make your heart sing?
What makes your soul dance?
Do that and that's how you play with God.

Human beings seem to have an affinity for the sea. We congregate around the shores of the continent, we spend holiday times at the beach, we play there with boats, swimming and surfing, with children and families spending days resting or walking on the sand. We gaze at its many moods and we meditate and reflect. Some people say it's because, back in primordial times, we emerged from the sea. It's in our blood.

Jesus walked beside the sea. That's where he met some of his disciples. After the resurrection, John's gospel tells us he was waiting on the beach for Simon and friends to return from fishing and he cooked a breakfast of fish for them. It was one of the first holy acts of communion after the resurrection.

So, it is not surprising that God uses our affinity for the sea as a means of re-creation for us. The sea is not only life-giving, but is also life and spirit-saving; a place of recreation and re-creation; a place to play with God.

Prayer

Lord of Life

We thank you for the enjoyment and refreshment that comes to us through play.

Thank you for the testing and development of our strength and agility.

Thank you for the lessons that come through victory, defeat and participation.

Thank you for the physical, mental and spiritual refreshment that comes to us from our recreational activities.

Thank you for all that shapes our character for good.

For all the gifts that come through play and recreation,

And for the gift of the sea, we thank you, AMEN.

Song (v3)

LITURGY FOR STATION FOUR: SPRINGS

Gathering and conversation

Call to Worship

God of Life, the earth belongs to you and we are your people.

We come in worship, acknowledging how much we need your grace in a world where there is so much violence and greed.

We long for the living water that refreshes and gives life, seeking justice and praying for peace.

You are our hope and our strength; we open our hearts to your word. Amen

Scripture Reading: **John 4: 13-14** (New Revised Standard Version)

Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."

Reflection

Springs were particularly revered as the elixir of the Earth since the waters that emanate from their depths have been touched the least by the crude matter of the exterior world. They carry the memory of the womb of the Earth Mother in its pristine state.

This understanding survives in folklore all around the world, and it was understood by ancient cultures for thousands of years. The reverence of the sacred spring went beyond maintaining the purity of the water; the equilibrium of the individual, the tribe, even the immediate landscape depended on the purity and sanctity of the water emanating from a sacred spring.

Later such places became holy wells.

Even today, many sacred springs are honoured with prayers and offerings. In the Victorian era many patients would be referred by their doctors to find cures for ailments in holy wells and sacred springs. Local traditions today will refer you to a well that has specific cures for eyes, gout, liver, rheumatism and so on.

In this place we recognise the existence of natural springs that have been used by people from early days. Many people used the sea as a means to travel to this site. This became a place of recreation and a place for healing. In Jesus time the well was the outlet for the spring and became a meeting place for people.

Jesus meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well tells us that he provides water of life as much as the water from the well provides physical water for life.

Contemplate the Picture

What do you see in the picture of the Woman at the well?



Song ***(v4)***

Prayer

Lord God, we give thanks for the springs around our world that meet our needs with life giving water just as your words are life giving as well. We recognise the springs in this place that have in the past been seen as healing waters but know that you are the one that provides us with healing. The springs join with the sea as our place in the world joins us to you. For all this we give our thanks. Amen.

Moving on

As we move to the last station, by climbing the cliff face, let us think about the rising sea levels and its effect on many countries in the world.

LITURGY FOR STATION FIVE: FISHING

Gathering and conversation.

Call to worship.

We worship God looking at the sea in all its glory, whether it is gentle and calm, with the waves rolling quietly onto the sand or wild and rough with waves thundering over the rocks. We praise God for this part of creation and marvel at its ebb and flow. We celebrate with the worlds fishing communities praising God for the bounty from the sea. Amen

Scripture reading: Luke 5:1-10 (New International Version)

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people."

Reflection

Today we think of the sea and all who use it. The reading from Luke brings to us the call of the fishermen disciples, Simon/Peter, Andrew, James and John. Like fishermen even today they had been fishing all night to no avail. The nets were empty. Then Jesus came into their lives and everything changed. They had a huge haul of fish that required four strong men to bring it in. Then Jesus told them to follow him and he would make them fishers of men. It changed their lives just like Jesus changes our lives never to be the same again.

To be good at fishing you require fishing gear and maybe a boat, knowledge of fishing and practice; plus lots and lots of patience. It takes time to learn to be good at fishing and it helps to have an expert teacher.

This is the same for us we need Jesus to be our expert teacher. The sea and fishing can teach us much about life and how to be fisher people.

Like this old hymn says:

They that go down to the sea in ships,
That do business in great waters.
These see the works of the Lord
And his wonders in the deep.

Prayer

We thank you God for the sea and all who fish in it. Be with the governments of your world as they find ways to sustain the amount of fish in the oceans. Be with the fishing community as they work to feed your people. Be with us God as like the disciples we would be fishers of men, women and children. Amen

Song (all verses)

Thanks

Blessing

At this ending of our pilgrimage we give thanks God for –

- The meaning behind our theme of *Sea of Life*
- The weather that has allowed us to be together
- Those who prepared the liturgy
- Those who have participated in walking and driving, sharing and taking part.

Above all God we are grateful that we have been able to share with you our thoughts, spoken or unspoken, about the value and beauty of the sea in your world. To you we pray, Amen.

Grace before lunch

Leader: As we pause for lunch in this place, may we be nourished with this food and the food and the fellowship God provides.

Pilgrims: Thanks be to God for food and fellowship enjoyed within the views of the sea – the sea of life. Amen.

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In the Liturgy for Sea Transport the reflection is based on *Even the winds and sea obey* – <http://mglpriestsandbrothers.org>

In the Liturgy for Recreational Use of the Sea the prayer *God of All* is by St Patrick, found in *A Celtic Primer*, compiled by Brendan O'Malley, 2002. The blog site referred to is <http://www.cjpwisdomandlife.com/playful-god/> The prayer is adapted from a Prayer of Thanksgiving, Ashburton Baptist Church.

In the Liturgy for Springs the reflection includes comments from Freddy Silva at <http://www.invisibletemple.com/water02.html>

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The painting used is "The Samaritan Woman" (known by tradition as St. Photina) taken from "[The Year of Grace of the Lord.](#)"

The photo of the waves is from <http://www.ihdwal.com/big-sea-waves-hd-widescreen-wallpaper.html>

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