

Pilgrimage for Neighbours



Saturday 25 March 2023

Drysdale Uniting Church

“Love your neighbour as yourself.”

Matthew 22: 39

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

WHEN I NEEDED A NEIGHBOUR

1. When I needed a neighbour, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

*CH. And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
Were you there?*

2. I was hungry and thirsty, were you there, were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?
3. I was cold, I was naked, were you there, were you there?
I was cold, I was naked, were you there?
4. When I needed a shelter, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a shelter, were you there?
5. When I needed a healer, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a healer, were you there?
6. When they put me in prison, were you there, were you there?
When they put me in prison, were you there?
7. Wherever you travel, I'll be there, I'll be there,
Wherever you travel, I'll be there.

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OPENING

Welcome and Introduction

Call to worship

We come, God of the Journey, as people from different places, different histories, and different lifestyles.

ALL: We come hoping to find companionship for the journey, solidarity for the struggle.

We yearn, with Christ as our foundation, for a new way of living and relating... as neighbours not strangers, as brothers and sisters, not 'them and us'.

ALL: We yearn to live fully celebrating both the diversity of our human family, and the unity of our call to love and justice.

With the gift of your grace we are nourished.

Acknowledgement of Country

The traditional custodians of this place, the Wadawurrung peoples, tended the land and waterways in partnership with the Creator Spirit. Their spirits were closely connected to country, trusting that if country was cared for, that country would care for them. The shared stories from one generation to the next, shared a way of life in which creation provided a bountiful harvest, all that was needed for the people to survive and thrive.

ALL: We honour the elders, the keepers of the stories, past and present and work toward healing and reconciliation.

LITURGY FOR STATION ONE: FARMING NEIGHBOURS

We gather in this place as God's people, whose hearts reach out to our neighbours. As we travel along, let us give attention to our neighbour who is farmer, tasked with caring for their particular plot of land and any waterways that meander through it.

ALL: Our farmer neighbours are neighbours who produce from the land: meat and grain, milk and eggs for our table; vegetable and fruit for our sustenance; and flowers and wine for our pleasure.

Our farmer neighbours bless the community with their produce, as they are blessed by the income from the market. Let us now pray for them.

Prayer

God of abundant grace,

We give thanks for our neighbours, the people who farm the land and waterways in this place. We give thanks for their hard work and inventiveness, finding ways to feed your beloved children and support themselves.

When the clouds disappear and the rain ceases to fall, have mercy on your farmers.

When storms and torrential rainfall threaten livestock and crops, have mercy on your farmers.

When market forces pressure farmers into selling their produce at unfair prices, have mercy on your farmers.

In every meal we eat, we are indebted to God's generous provision and the labour of farmers.

Help us Gracious God to remember our farmer neighbours

In the name of the carpenter from Nazareth called Jesus,

Amen.

***Reading:* **Mark 12:28-34** (NRSVUE)**

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?"

Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; and 'to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength' and 'to love one's neighbour as oneself'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Meditation

There are a number of practical ways in which our love for the farmer neighbour might be enacted in our own living.

Some actions are simple, and we already do them, such as not littering. Some of us may pick up rubbish when we see it.

Any of us can pray for our neighbour who is a farmer; at planting time or harvest time, at birthing times or slaughtering times, or any time at all.

It supports our neighbours who are farmers when we buy produce at the farm gate or at farmers' markets, or if their produce is sold in local retailers.

Additionally, produce which has not been freighted long distances is a more sustainable way of caring for our planet, and hence lessens the impact of climate change on our neighbours, and ourselves. When we love our farmer neighbour in this way, we are also caring for God's creation, and caring for ourselves. All are inextricably connected, through God's wisdom.

Silence

Can you think of other ways we might love our farmer neighbours?

Song (v1&2)

On the way

Having considered some practical ways of loving the neighbour who is farmer, and having heard the thoughts of others, take a time of silent prayer to listen to God's wisdom for any changes you can make in your living, which enhances your love toward the neighbour who is farmer.

"A good neighbour - a found treasure." – Chinese Proverb

LITURGY FOR STATION TWO: BUSINESS NEIGHBOURS

Gathering and conversation

Reading: Romans 15: 1-6 (NIV)

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. ² Each of us should please our neighbours for their good, to build them up. ³ For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." ⁴ For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

⁵ May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, ⁶ so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Quote

A master in the art of living simply pursues his vision of excellence through whatever he is doing, and leaves others to determine whether he is working or playing. To himself, he always appears to be doing both. (L.P. Jacks)

Reflection

For many businesses they are established by people who have a passion and a dream. For some their work, their business, is also their play place.

As a business their job is normally to sell a product or a service and make a profit. In most cases similar businesses do not set up in the immediate vicinity – competition is fine as long as it is not too close.

What businesses do like is sharing information and ideas that might help their business to develop. This networking may be done informally but frequently is done through neighbourhood groups – business breakfasts, lunches, dinners or forums. The networking provides a formal sharing opportunity.

nextdoor.com suggests four ways to be a neighbourly business:

1. Share your knowledge
2. Support a local initiative by becoming involved in the community around you
3. Support your local environment
4. Pay attention to vulnerable neighbours

Networking is one way to get those happening.

In our reading we hear Paul calling for unity. He suggests that the unity should be modelled on Christ as encouraged by Scripture. He says that by building neighbours up it creates a positive environment that encourages friendship and sharing opportunities. Surely that is an aim of being a neighbour. The success of a business is not just the profits.



Consider the Pilgrimage painting titled “Good Neighbours”. What do you see? What do you think it is saying?

Prayer

In a world where people live for pride, eating the bread of vanity: from the conceit that looks for public praise and honours; from the vainglory that flaunts diplomas and degrees; from the arrogance of religious and moral swagger; from the insolence of supposed racial superiority, save your children, Lord.

In a world where people live by force, eating the bread of power: from all attempts to manipulate our friends; from the temptation to scorn a defeated opponent ; from the desire to use chance advantages to disadvantage others; from leaders who love to rule more than to serve, save your children, Lord.

In a world where people live by greed, eating the bread of cupidity: from envy of those with larger homes; from selling our ethics for a few more dollars; from trusting the stock-market more than the Scriptures; from supporting only those charities which offer an income tax deduction, save your children, Lord.

In a world where people live by pleasure, eating the bread of sensuality: from turning food into an extravagant habit; from cluttering our homes with technological toys; from loving things and using people, save your children, Lord. Amen

Song (v2&3)

On the way

As we walk together to the next Station, let's look out how the developers of this area have provided for the residents.

"All will concede that in order to have good neighbours we must also be good neighbours. That applies in every field of human endeavour." – Harry S. Truman

LITURGY FOR STATION THREE: NEW ESTATE NEIGHBOURS

Gathering and conversation

Call to Worship

We hear the voice of God calling

"Love your neighbour as yourself"

We feel the Spirit moving among us,

moving us to acts of compassion and justice.

We know the love of Jesus.

We love because Christ first loved us.

Come, worship God together.

Come, let us serve our God, who calls us by name.

(Rev. Mindi)

Scripture: Mark 12: 30-31 (NRSVUE)

³⁰ you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Reflection

What do we mean when we talk about New Estate Neighbours. New residential developments provide for very small blocks of land compared to the “quarter acre” that a lot of us can relate to. This then brings residences and their occupants much closer to a neighbouring residence.

Now this can be both good and bad.

I think we all know the various ways to make contact with a new neighbour.

As Christians, we have a great opportunity to show God’s love as we make ourselves known to the occupants of the houses close by. For example, standing at the front of our property I can speak to or acknowledge at one time eight neighbours that is if they are at the front of their properties, although it’s not uncommon to say hello to or wave to two or three at any one time. Yet, sometimes you don’t see them for days.

The downside to this proximity can be if your next door neighbour does not welcome your contact and becomes unbearable so to speak. Also you seem to be more conscious of your next door neighbours.

Of course, there are other distasteful things such as loud music, dogs barking, BBQ smell, overlooking and cameras etc.

To be a neighbour requires risk, simply being a religious person will not make you a neighbour, a neighbour isn’t necessarily someone like yourself.

There are people with young children, others still working, and others who are older and retired and many living alone.

Interestingly, over time, a good neighbour can become someone you really don’t know.

In Luke 10. V 29. we see the parable of the Godly neighbour. Jesus tells the story to a religious man who asked in a self-justifying moment. From the story we learn three principles about loving our neighbour.

1. Lack of love is often easy to justify, even though it is never right.
2. Our neighbour is anyone of any race, creed or social background who is in need.
3. Love means acting to meet the person’s need. Wherever we live, needy people are close by. There is no good reason for refusing to help.

So, a neighbour is someone who sees your need and responds.

Prayer

Loving God, help us from evading our responsibility towards our neighbours, make us readily available and generous in spirit to be able to help when needed. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Song (v3&4)

On the way

We set forth again taking in the views of this new residential area. Think about the people locked away behind closed doors who are in need of the neighbourhood spirit.

"Love your neighbour as yourself; but don't take down the fence." – Carl Sandburg

LITURGY FOR STATION FOUR: OLD NEIGHBOURHOODS

Gathering and conversation

Reading: Luke 11: 5-10 (NRSV)

And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything out of friendship, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

"So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

Reflection

"We all have some degree of fear of being attacked, our home broken into, a house fire, or other disasters coming upon us. That's why we lock our doors and buy insurance policies." This fear can be reduced through the development of good relationships, good friendships, with our neighbours. However, a survey found that one in five Australians do not know their neighbours.

In this Parable of the Friend at Night, a friend eventually agrees to help his neighbour due to his persistent demands rather than because they are friends, despite the late hour and the inconvenience of it. This parable is used as an example of praying without giving up.

John McEvilly comments on this parable, by writing, "Our Lord illustrates on what might occur in daily life to any of them ... All the circumstances are of a very pressing character—the hour of

the night so inconvenient, the urgent necessity of the case, not even the simplest means of meeting the wants of the stranger, fatigued and hungry from his journey. Hence, the petition for "three loaves," one for the host himself, one for the hungry, fatigued guest, and a third in case the two did not suffice. In the East the home-made cakes were small." Hospitality is the reason for the friend's request, a sacred duty throughout the Mediterranean world at that time.

At this time we are thinking about neighbours that we know really well – those neighbours that we have grown close to over the years that we regard as really good friends, almost as part of our family. In lots of cases it is children that draw neighbours together as the children grow and interact with the neighbours. It seems that today the lifestyle that we lead does not allow us to generate a friendship more than just a hello and wave of the hand.

If we placed ourselves in this story, could we say that we would be able to knock on our neighbour's door late at night and ask for help? Maybe the answer is depending on what help we need. A true neighbour as a true friend would not be concerned and would know that you are asking because you really do need help; maybe we wouldn't knock but would telephone or text.

It is therefore important for us to develop friendships with our neighbours – making ourselves people who could be asked for help. As the reading finishes off, we need to ask, to seek, to find. In other words we need to be the ones working at making the friendship develop; good deeds can produce good results.

Prayer

We pray for our communities - that snapshot of humanity with all ages, backgrounds, education, employment status, politics and religious viewpoint who are our neighbours in the streets where we live. We pray for all of them; not only those we know by name and chat to through the day, but also less familiar faces about whom we know so little and pass by with just a smile. Bless their homes and families, and let your love and peace so shine within this community that smiles turn to conversations, and strangers become friends. We pray this through Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Amen

Song (v4&5)

Moving on

As we travel to our next station we think about the work of everyone who has responsibility for others.

"Being a good neighbour is an art which makes life richer." - Gladys Taber

LITURGY FOR STATION FIVE: LOST NEIGHBOURS

Gathering and conversation

Call to worship

As we gather at this cenotaph we pray for the neighbours lost due to war. Be with the families who weep with grief.

God be with those who serve in the armed forces now. May they serve to keep us safe and bring peace.

God please be with the peacemakers. As you know it is not easy to change the minds of powerful people.

God be with us as we conclude our pilgrimage.

Reading: Psalm 15: 1-4 (The Message)

“God, who gets invited to dinner at your place? How do we get on your guest list?”

“Walk straight, act right, tell the truth. Don’t hurt your friend, don’t blame your neighbour, despise the despicable”.

Reflection

When I was planning to write about ‘Lost Neighbours’ for this pilgrimage, I was thinking along the lines of neighbours who move away and we lose contact with them, or neighbours who die, and here in this place we remember those who have died serving their country in time of war. Many strong young men lost to their families and friends through a situation caused by greed and jealousy, which most of them would never have even understood.

When people die, we miss them in our lives. This situation arises in everyone’s life. It is out of our control. Everyone dies. Many people move to live in a different area. The loss of these neighbours is also something we cannot control. In the case of those who move away we can make an effort to stay in touch. And we cling to fond memories of those who have died. We never forget them.

But when I sat down to put words to paper I had just a couple of hours earlier made telephone calls to six ladies who live in a block of units owned by Geelong Legacy, to advise them of a meeting with some members of the Board of Management that was to take place the next day. The first five of the ladies quite happily said they would attend the meeting at 2pm the next day. The last lady I called said that she would love to attend, but she refused to be in the same room as one of the other ladies, as they had had a falling out. She said she didn’t know why, but the other lady had stopped speaking to her, and when she asked why, the other lady had responded with ‘You know what you’ve done’. I felt sad for both ladies. Clearly through a misunderstanding of what had been said between them, their previously friendly relationship had suffered badly. And it made me wonder how many times in life we lose friends or neighbours through misinterpretation or misunderstanding when no malice was intended.

The bible reading we heard is a simple summing up of how God wants us to live. “Walk straight, act right, tell the truth. Don’t hurt your friend, don’t blame your neighbour, despise the despicable”.

These are simple instructions, and sound easy enough to follow. But what if a neighbour misunderstands a situation or a conversation and you find yourself on the outer for reasons totally unknown to you?

In the New Testament we read many times, in fact in three of the Gospels, those well-known words that you may hear people quoting regularly, whether they are Christian or not. ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’. I like to think of this in terms of ‘put yourself in your neighbour’s position, try to see situations from your neighbour’s perspective, and show them the love you would like them to show you.’ Misunderstandings will always happen, and friends and neighbours will be lost to each other as a result. It’s a very difficult thing to approach a person who you feel is angry with you, or wants nothing to do with you, but we can ask God to help us, to find the right words to make things right. And if this approach fails, then we can simply pray for our neighbours and leave the rest to God.

When Abraham Lincoln was asked once why he did not destroy his enemies, he replied ‘If I make my enemies my friends, have I not then destroyed the enemy?’

Prayer

‘Lord help us find a way to reunite with those who are lost to us. Give us understanding and strength to mend broken bridges, the courage to approach those who we have hurt or who have hurt us, and the ability to forgive. Let us remember Jesus as he hung dying on the cross, forgiving those who hurt him, and let us do the same. Amen’

***Poem:* THE TIME TO FORGIVE AND FORGET**

Forgive and forget! Tis a maxim worth heeding,
Recall the harsh judgment so hasty and stern;
Not one of us all but is certainly needing
Some friendly forbearance and grace in return.

Unkindness and malice are weeds that grow thickly,
But patience and love may transform them to flowers;
Remember our journey is over too quickly
To waste on ill-feeling a tithe of its hours.

Forgive and forget! Let the bitter thought perish,
Life does not lack sorrow more weighty, more real;
And in the sharp sting of resentment, why cherish
The thorn that must rankle where pardon might heal?

Forgive and forget! For we know not how often
Twill spare us the pang of an endless regret.
Don't wait for the future your anger to soften,
Oh, now is the time to forgive and forget.

Prayer

We thank you for the shelter we have and we pray for the homeless and refugees who have nowhere to call home. We thank you God that we have neighbours who weep with us, and rejoice with us. May we be a good neighbour and be there when needed. May we serve you so that no-one should have to weep or rejoice alone? Amen.

Song (v6&7)

"The only time you should look in your neighbour's bowl is to make sure that they have enough. You don't look in your neighbour's bowl to see if you have as much as them." – Louis C. K.

Thanks and Blessing

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

- The meaning behind our theme of *Neighbours*
- 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 your world. To you we pray, Amen.

Grace before lunch

Leader: As we pause before lunch, may we be nourished with this food, and
the food and fellowship that God provides.

Pilgrims: Thanks be to God for food and fellowship enjoyed. Amen.

Acknowledgements:

This resource was developed at the initiative of the Drysdale Uniting Church, following the success of the Pilgrimage to Living Water developed by the Uniting Church in Australia, Assembly Spirituality Network in 2011. Other Pilgrimages developed by Drysdale Uniting Church have been:

Pilgrimage to Living Stones in 2012,
Pilgrimage to Trees of Life in 2013,
Pilgrimage to Sea of Life in 2014/15,
Pilgrimage to Living Land in 2016,
Pilgrimage of Sky and Air in 2017,
Pilgrimage of Bypassing or Passing by in 2018,
Pilgrimage to History in 2019, and
Pilgrimage to Storytelling 2020.
Pilgrimage to Travelling 2021

All are available from Drysdale Uniting Church at drysdaleuc@yahoo.com.au

This year's liturgy has been written by Graeme Dryden, Rev Karen Eller, Denise McLaverty, Wayne Myers, and Jenni Nickelson. Use of this material in other places is welcomed with acknowledgement given to Drysdale Uniting Church for its production.

The painting used on the cover page is by American painter Alfred Cornelius Howland (1838-1909), titled "Friendly Neighbors", c. 1909

The painting used in the Liturgy for Business Neighbours is "Good Neighbours" by English painter John William Waterhouse (1849-1917) 1885. The quote is from L.P. Jacks, English Unitarian minister and philosopher (1860-1955) in "Brief Prayers for Busy People" by Bruce D. Prewer. Reference in the reflection is to [How to be a neighborly business \(nextdoor.com\)](http://www.nextdoor.com) and the prayer is called "Not by bread alone" from "Australian Psalms" by Bruce D. Prewer.

In the Liturgy for Old Neighbourhoods the quotations are taken from <https://prayforeverything.com/pray-for-your-neighbor/> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/parable_of_the_friend_at_night and the prayer is from <https://prayerist.com/prayer/neighbors>

In the Liturgy for Lost Neighbours the poem "The time to forgive and forget" is by S. E. Gordon.

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