

Clyde and Alexandra

25.07.2021

Gathering with the Saints

He hōnore he korōria ki te Atua
He maungārongo ki te whenua
He whakaaro pai ki ngā tāngata katoa
Honour and glory to God
Peace to the earth
Blessings to all people

Hymn [For the music of creation tune: Blaenwern WOV165ii](#)

Symbol of God's Presence

Prayer

A Pigmy Prayer From the Central West Africa

In the beginning God was.
Today God is.
Tomorrow God will be.
Who could possibly make an image of God?
God does not have a body.
God is a word that springs from our mouths.
And what a word!
There is nothing more to be said.
God is the past, and yet God is.
That is what God is.

Walter Brueggemann, *Awed to Heaven, Rooted to Earth*, p.26

“Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold.”
We are no strangers to the falling apart;
We perpetrate against the centre of our lives,
 and on some days it feels
 like an endless falling,
 like a deep threat,
 like rising water,
 like ruthless wind.
But you ... you in the midst,
 you back in play,
 you rebuking and silencing and ordering,
 you creating restfulness in the very eye of the storm.
You... be our centre:

cause us not to lie about the danger,
cause us not to resist your good order.

Be our God. Be the God you promised,

and we will be among those surely peaceable in your order.

We pray in the name of the one through whom all things hold
together.

And the people say, Amen.

Sharing the Peace

Hymn [*Dear Mother God, your wings are warm around us*](#)

tune: O Perfect Love WOV526ii

Conversation with the Word

What happens in your head and heart when you hear more news about
climate change?

- Hope for the best
- Leave it to others
- Question the science
- Focus on our own security

All of these function as a kind of bubble-wrap: to cushion us from
anxiety and fear.

As always, fear is the key.

John 6 is very helpful in relation to fear. It begins with bread and fish
for all: Jesus challenging FOMO, the fear of missing out (on food),
especially against the assumption that everything needed must be
bought as opposed to foraged and shared. Then this, as paraphrased by
Eugene Peterson:

¹⁶⁻²¹ In the evening his disciples went down to the sea, got in the boat,
and headed back across the water to Capernaum. It had grown quite
dark and Jesus had not yet returned. A huge wind blew up, churning
the sea. They were maybe three or four miles out when they saw Jesus
walking on the sea, quite near the boat. They were scared senseless,
but he reassured them, "It's me. It's all right. Don't be afraid." So they
took him on board. In no time they reached land—the exact spot they
were headed to.

“So they took him on board.” I like that line. That’s the remedy to their fear.

How do we cope with the unbearable, with the utter uncertainty about our planet’s future and therefore the future of all living beings in the decades to come?

Of course we are fearful.

[IRCA slide]

Rural communities have long experience coping with future uncertainty – the weather, markets, government. A gathering here at St Aidan’s back in the day was my introduction to rural ministry networking. Lifting the hearts of rural churches and therefore rural communities. “Farmers Feed Cities” was on a T-shirt I got at the International Rural Churches conference in Canada in 2007. On top of massive changes to world markets and commodity prices, the challenge for rural communities, and churches, was a continuing drift to the cities, shrinking country towns, and rural voices being pushed to the outfields. We’ve kept many rural churches viable and vibrant beyond what mainstream urban thinking expected. But we’re still losing ground: think of how provincial representation has reduced at Assembly and Conference, through cost or regulation, with our voices are pretty much silenced.

Weekend Herald cartoon, 17.07.2021



The ground has shifted in the last two decades. What’s in front of us now with climate change is common ground. Urban and rural share the problem and we need to share the search for remedies.

I believe that our farming people, my family included, know that climate change has to be addressed. In fact, living with the land, they are much less likely to hiding in bubble-wrap. But there is real fear that countermeasures driven by city folks will leave them unemployed. They/we fear those with the power do not understand and perhaps even do not care.

[As Anna Campbell in the ODT](#) put it: "...managing change is about respect." "Farmers are adapting... They listen and take on sensible policies... but when they are spoken to like naughty schoolchildren and treated like idiots..."

Herald columnist Simon Wilson sees this too. He reckons farmers are ahead of the cities in cleaning up water quality and waxes eloquent on "the primary sector climate action partnership" already hard at work. "He waka eke noa: we're all in this together."

Fear is the problem:

Fear of not having a livelihood.

Fear of not having a liveable planet.

Fear of death.

What about the remedy we began with – taking that chap on board. Taking on the Jesus way, including the respect which is crucial to enable working together.

We can suspend fear because, as Christ-shaped people, we trust that we can get somewhere together.

How come we trust? Our heritage of faith expresses it in terms of an ultimate foundation, the source of all life and being. We trust when we see ourselves connected to this source, within an interconnected web in which we simply need to play our part.

Ephesians 3:14-19

¹⁴⁻¹⁹ My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions

of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.

The Message, by Eugene Peterson

As Colin Gibson puts it:

I am a part of the pulse of creation
eternity caught in a moment of time.

Stay well connected to keep pulsing; not bubble-wrapped, but sharing concerns, seeking remedies.

The Howl of Protest has given voice to the voiceless. Let's do our bit to encourage real conversation, listening and working out a good future together.

I'll let this hymn from Colin Gibson say more about our confidence that fear need not overwhelm us. Then we'll take a moment to continue the conversation with your thoughts.

Hymn [*When we go into the night* by Colin Gibson](#)

Continuing the Conversation

Prayers

Let us sit still among the pain of the world.

Silence

Let us name it.

...

Gracious and eternal God,
in whom we find rest and shelter,
hear the cries of our world ...

those for whom today is the beginning of life;
who face new ventures and new challenges;
who are engulfed by loneliness, despair or grief;
who feel cast off from your presence;
who are walled in by circumstance;
whose will to live is exhausted;
who this day will encounter death:

in Jesus' name we pray...

Jeff Shrowder

Offering - Serving in the Week Ahead

We are the people who heal each other,
who grow strong together,
who name the truth,
who know what it means to live in community,
moving towards a common dream
for a new heaven and a new earth
in the power of the love of God,
the company of Jesus Christ
and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Dorothy McRae-McMahon, *Liturgies of the Journey of Life*.

Hymn [*God gives us a future*](#) tune: Camberwell WOV170ii

Blessing

Go out into the world with your chin up and your heart wide open.
Go out into the world and be an agent of God's love.

Rev. Theresa S. Thames, *Sojourners*

Kia tau ki a tātou katoa
Te atawhai o tō tātou Ariki a Ihu Karaiti
Me te aroha o te Atua
Me te whiwhi-nga-tahi-tanga ki te Wairua Tapu
Āke āke, āke, Āmine.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
The love of God
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all. Evermore, Amen.