

Into this place, we gather today in reflection and silence.

We gather seeking truth,

listening beyond words for the rhythm of life.

We gather seeking solace,

for losses that are too heavy to bear.

We gather seeking mercy,

for we find within our own hearts, the presence of shadow.

We gather to heal and shoulder burdens not our own.

We gather to forgive –

freeing each other into hope and new life.

We gather to stand, shoulder to shoulder,

with those who must no longer stand alone.

We gather seeking justice

for there are too many walls shutting out the light.

We think of those who are suffering with different forms of diseases or illnesses, mental or physical and in particular, we remember those who have been affected by the coronavirus. We pray for them and their families that they may find hope and support as they struggle to recover and we give thanks for those who work tirelessly to provide healing and care.

Today, we also hold in our hearts Nancy and her family in our own parish that they may receive strength, comfort and peace during this difficult time.

We heard of avalanches in Turkey, locust swarms in Africa, the fires and now threats of flooding from torrential rain in Australia, the threats to democracy and freedoms in Brazil.

Our hearts ache with those who are grieving over the loss of loved ones, those whose homes have been demolished, the animals who are suffering and those whose livelihood and food supplies are threatened.

We reflect on all those who have suffered under the colonization of their cultures throughout time and place, particularly those of this country.

May we also stand together with the Wet'suwet'en people, praying for justice and peace, for respect for indigenous law, and for insight and inspiration for each of us to know how we might respond.

On this, as so many Sundays, we gather with hearts filled with concern for those in our parish community who struggle with illness, grief, worry or fear.

We cannot pretend that to gather, be moved, notice pain and injustice is anywhere near enough. As we heard in the Gospel lesson, let us remember that we are called to be salt for the earth. We are called to bring a seasoning of love and compassion, to be the flavour of life. We are called to preserve the goodness of life in all of creation.

We remember and give thanks for people who have lived or are living as salt for the world. People who have taken a stand for peace and justice, like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and our very own Viola Davis Desmond. We heard of the way of compassion shown to us by Jesus of Nazareth. We are encouraged and uplifted by young people like Greta Thunberg who was nominated for the Nobel Peace prize this week for her dedication and perseverance to open the eyes of the world to the issues of the climate crisis. Without the use of violence, with the sheer force of their saltiness, these people and many others have managed to change the flavour of the stew in which their people lived.

We have been called to live into our saltiness. May we have the courage to speak out, shine a light on the needs of the oppressed, the lack of compassion, social injustice, poverty, inequality, and ecological injustice.

And may we, also, as a church, be more concerned about defending human rights and the planet we live on,
not about defending a particular concept of faith;
concerned with being compassionate and just and courageous,
not about being doctrinally right;
concerned about being engaged and involved, opening doors of hospitality and welcome,
not about requiring uniformity in doctrine
but unity in love for one another.

May we season our world with love and in our loving, may we be as light that dispels the darkness of injustice.
May we bring wholeness to all we touch, preserving all life with love.

Let us be at peace.