

# PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY GATHERING

21<sup>st</sup> April, 2021

Topic:

*What are the characteristics of a successful church?*



# ORDER FOR WORSHIP

## GATHERING

### Welcome and Introduction

#### Acknowledgement of First Peoples

More than 35,000 years before Abraham left Ur, the ancestors of the Kuarna people walked this land on which we gather tonight. We acknowledge the peoples of the Kuarna Nation, past, present, emerging, and their stewardship of this land throughout the ages.

#### Lighting of the Community Candle

We light this flame as a symbol of  
the creativity of our faith:  
the creativity to explore new avenues of religious insight;  
the creativity to develop a caring community;  
the creativity to envision a world of peace and freedom.

*The candle is lit*

One: Tonight we gather as a community, and as a part of the church.  
Each of us brings: experiences, insights, enthusiasm, questions, faith,  
doubts, and gifts for ministry.  
Together we are the people of God.

**All: We gather in this sacred place  
Knowing every place is sacred.  
We are threads in the web of life.  
We give thanks for connection,  
that we are all part of one another  
and that we are part of the sacred.**

## *CELEBRATING*

### **Celebration of Life**

One: It is good to be alive!  
To share life with each other  
in this wonder-filled and evolving universe.  
We are most grateful.

### **Hymn: Worship is our Celebration**

Tune: Praise my soul TiS 179

Worship is our celebration  
Of the wondrous universe;  
Life in all its human beauty,  
In our worship, we rehearse;  
We now sing our affirmation  
In fine melody and verse.

Worship prompts us to compassion,  
Demonstrating love and care;  
In our worship, inspiration  
Lifts our spirits into prayer;  
We are challenged to live gently,  
Standing by those in despair.

Worship fosters true reflection  
On our work of ministry;  
In our worship, in rememb'rance,  
We connect with Galilee;  
As with Jesus, so in service  
We release faith's energy.

Worship is where real belonging  
Re-affirms our human worth;  
And engagement with 'the Mystery'  
In our worship, can give birth  
To endeavours at enhancing  
Human life throughout the earth.

Worship states our optimism  
And our hopes for better days;  
In our worship we commit to  
Living life in better ways;  
Let our witness to the world be  
One of love and thankful praise.

George Stuart Used with permission

## *EXPLORING*

*What are the characteristics of a successful church?*

### **For Reflection**

Jesus dared to live God's way  
in the midst of all the 'ups' and 'downs' of life.  
We too are called to proclaim our faith faithfully  
by the way we live, and treat one another.

**Silence**

Jesus wanted his disciples to live passionate,  
justice seeking, God centred lives.

**Silence**

Jesus, as human face of God, shared his life  
that others might sense the new signs of hope  
in their everyday lives.

**Silence**

## Hymn: Life's Delight

Tune – Londonderry Air (Not in the AHB or TiS)

With great respect and love of life we gather;  
With courage to encounter fresh ideas;  
To learn of all the myst'ry; we are eager  
To grow in faith, advance to new frontiers.  
To sing and pray, to worship and to celebrate,  
And learn of virtue... this is life's delight.  
We have a 'home' from which our faith can radiate,  
And we revere the other 'homes' with their insight.

The light that shines enlightens every spirit;  
The rain that falls enlivens every seed;  
With loveliness surrounding without limit  
We sense the magic of each gracious deed.  
To sing and pray, to worship and to celebrate,  
And learn of virtue... this is life's delight.  
To see a baby's face and then to contemplate  
The beauty that we see each day and greet each night.

We share the Golden Rule – 'Do unto others  
As you would have them also do to you.'  
And when we greet each race as sisters, brothers  
We bring our human beauty into view.  
To sing and pray, to worship and to celebrate,  
And learn of virtue... this is life's delight.  
To catch a smile and then, in joy, to meditate;  
We're bound together as we find the wondrous light.

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**Readings:** Matthew 16:13-18  
Matthew 25:31-40

## **Quotations for reflection**

*'There is no evidence that the Jesus of history envisioned the establishment of a church'* Bishop J S Spong

(Note that this quote contradicts our first Bible reading)

*'The worth of your church can be determined by answering this question: If your church closed, would the surrounding community who don't worship there notice any difference?'* Rev Dr Roger Ray

## **Presentation**

*What are the characteristics of a successful church?*

As part of the presentation there will be an optional survey to complete as to what you believe as to the importance of each characteristic of a successful church.

As we look at each characteristic there will be opportunities for discussion.

## *AFFIRMING*

One: We are people of all ages who enter this safe space bringing our joys and concerns.

*(Pause as we silently reflect on our Joys and Celebrations; Grievs and Concerns)*

One: In caring for one another

**All: May we be untiring.**

One: In sheltering one another

**All: May we be strong**

One: In holding one another

**All: May we be tender.**

One: For ourselves, for those named or remembered,  
may we be ever mindful of the presentness of the sacred among us, and  
see the new possibilities of the now.

*(Pause)*

**All: The world is ours for a time, may we be encouraged to  
know it;  
the human mind is ours for a time, may we be encouraged to  
explore it and expand it;  
the human heart beats out its number for a time, may we be  
encouraged to be fully alive in our time.**

**May peace be with us and our world this day. Amen**

### **Hymn: The day you gave us**

Tune St Clement TiS 458

The day you gave us, Lord, is ended,  
the darkness falls at your behest;  
to you our morning hymns ascended,  
your praise shall sanctify our rest.

We thank you that your church unsleeping,  
while earth rolls onward into light,  
through all the world her watch is keeping,  
and rests not now by day or night.

Across each continent and island  
as dawn leads on another day,  
the voice of prayer is never silent,  
nor dies the strain of praise away.

The sun that bids us rest is waking  
our friends beneath the western sky,  
and hour by hour fresh lips are making  
your wondrous doings heard on high.

So be it, Lord; your throne shall never,  
like earth's proud empires, pass away;  
your kingdom stands, and grows for ever,  
till all your creatures own your sway.

John Ellerton  
Public Domain

## SCATTERING

### Words of Blessing

One: We leave blessed by our connections to one another, and to the spirit of life.

Walk lightly knowing that there is life that is below your feet and all around you.

Live to love and be a blessing on this earth.

**All: Amen. May it be so!**

*The candle is extinguished*

Notices

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