



Wesley Wellington
75 Taranaki Street
www.wesleychurch.org.nz

Sunday 10 July 2022 Pentecost 5

***Haere mai ki tēnei Whare Karakia
Welcome to this House of Prayer***



**Walking the
Justice Path**

**We are a multi-racial Christian community:
Methodist in affiliation – Ecumenical in intention
Diverse in theology – Inclusive in outreach.**

**Kia ora koutou katoa — Talofa Lava
Malo e lelei — Bula Vinaka Greetings to you all!**

**10am Congregation
10 July 2022 Pentecost 5**

**Leader: Philip Garside.
Organist: Vivien Chiu. Guitar: Heather Garside**

Welcome & Introduction

Call to Worship

What do we bring to God?

Our minds, our bodies, our spirits, our selves.

Do we believe these gifts are good enough for the Divine?

God does not value perfection but rather diversity.

God does not want us to hide our true selves.

God asks us to bring who we really are to worship.

Even bring with us all of our faults and failings?

Yes, with all of our imperfections and foibles.

So we come at God's call,

ready to be loved anew. Alleluia! Amen.

Lighting the candles

As we light these candles, we say together:

**In a time of change and confusion,
we need a source of unwavering light.**

**In a time of transition and change,
we need a light to show us the way.**

May the light of Christ

be this light for every one of us.

May it shine in our hearts all of our days. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Surround us, O God, with your Spirit
in this time of gathering together.

**We have come to this place of sanctuary
in order to be renewed within ourselves,
and also to regain focus as a community.**

We have come for personal reasons,
needing to be uplifted within our souls
and seeking your assistance to help us face the challenges ahead.

**Yet we also come for communal reasons,
seeking strength for the journey
that we share together as your people.**

Loving God, give us the humility to be surprised by your presence
and the wisdom to be open to the insights of your people everywhere,
as we understand anew the mission and ministry to which we are called.

This we pray in your holy name. Amen.

Hymn: Here we stand among God's people HIOS 55 (Lyrics adapted)

1. Here we stand among God's people
giving thanks for all God's care,
and we gladly bring our offerings
to the common life we share.
There's a thread within God's story
that is ours alone to know,
and a vision of God's glory
that our lives are made to show.
2. When the gospel words are spoken,
when the bread and wine are blessed,
Jesus makes us more than welcome
at the table as his guests.
And as we go out to serve him
in our action, work and prayers,
he will send us where we're needed,
when he calls us we'll be there.

3. With the Word of God to guide us
we will learn our whole lives long;
with the Spirit here beside us
We'll be confident and strong
as we work for peace and justice
in our own appointed place,
and we'll stand among God's people
till we see God face to face.

Prayer of Approach

Our hearts long to feel your presence, to sense you near, O God.
Draw us closer to you, day by day.

**Our spirits long for your touch, O God.
Lead us, guide us, direct our paths that our words
and actions may be a reflection of your unending love.**

Loving God, when we rush, slow us down,
so we may listen and experience you
in a soothing touch and the whisper of your Spirit.

**When fear grips our hearts or slows our feet,
be the quiet voice of courage in our spirits.**

Draw closer to us when we feel so alone in our grief,
our despair, our pain, and our struggles.

**We long for your love and your warmth,
for you are our God, our Creator and our hope.**

**For this we give thanks,
through Christ, as we pray. Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Hear now Words of Assurance:

Jesus taught us many things.
How to live, how to love, how to pray,
and how to challenge injustice.

But Jesus also taught us how to accept one another,
in all our brokenness,
and to be forgiving, even when it seems hard to do so.

**We are the blessed people who have known that grace!
We are forgiven. Hallelujah!**

Story time / Introducing the Theme

Walking the Justice Path

Lay out a path with long rope from top of sanctuary down steps to the bottom and back up to the top to the altar table then back down next to the organ and around the pulpit and back to the middle level. Lots of twists and turns.

Have one person at each of the first 5 stations.

One person then steps up to the heavy bucket of concrete and offers to help.

Then both people move to the next station, and so on. So we have a bunch of people by the time we get to the last station – centre middle.

Six Stations:

1. Heavy bucket of concrete blocks: Sanctuary top left.

One person tries to pick it up – too heavy. Another person comes to help. Two people pick up together by hand – better. Two people then put wooden plank under handle and lift - easier. Get them to stand in opposite directions and ask them to walk forward; oops going in circles. Stop re-plan. Face the same way. Follow the winding path to next station.

2. Water. Jug on altar.

Covered with cloth. Several paper cups tumblers also under the cloth. First two people stop at station. Say they are thirsty. Person at station pours water into cups for them. All follow path to the next station.

3. Food: bottom of steps: Plate with biscuits covered by cloth.

People arrive at the station and say they are hungry. Person at station offers them biscuits. All then follow the path to the next station.

4. Medical supplies next to organ (partly hidden) Medic has first aid kit.

One person says they have cut their finger. Medic offers and puts on a sticking plaster. Say that people getting medical treatment usually prefer to do this in private. All then move to the next station.

5. Old choir stalls; Dead shrub in a pot. Book in paper bag.

We haven't look after God's creation well enough. What can we do? Show book. Here is a book *Awhi Mai Awhi Atu*, that has lots of good ideas for churches and groups of people. This book encourages Christians to receive God's love – awhi mai – and to share God's love – awhi atu – in human

community and with the natural environment. This is a reading copy that the congregation can share. Bring book with us to last station.

6. Gathered Community combined activity.

Centre of middle level of steps, where a guitar is waiting.

Let's thank God for all the gifts we are given and for the people we share the Justice path with. Sing the song *Let there be peace on Earth* - twice.

Song: Let there be peace on earth (Lyrics adapted)

1. Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with us:
Let there be peace on earth,
The peace that was meant to be.
With God always with us
Family all are we.
Let us walk together
In perfect harmony.
2. Let peace begin with us,
Let this be the moment now.
With every step we take,
Let this be our solemn vow:
To take each moment
and live each moment
In peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth
and let it begin with us.

Scripture Readings — The Message

Psalms 82

God calls the judges into his courtroom,
he puts all the judges in the dock.
“Enough! You’ve corrupted justice long enough,
you’ve let the wicked get away with murder.
You’re here to defend the defenceless,
to make sure that underdogs get a fair break;
Your job is to stand up for the powerless,
and prosecute all those who exploit them.”

Ignorant judges! Head-in-the-sand judges!
They haven't a clue to what's going on.
And now everything's falling apart,
the world's coming unglued.
"I appointed you judges, each one of you,
deputies of the High God,
But you've betrayed your commission
and now you're stripped of your rank, busted."
O God, give them what they've got coming!
You've got the whole world in your hands!

Luke 10:25-37 – Defining “Neighbour”

Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. “Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?”

He answered, “What’s written in God’s Law? How do you interpret it?”

He said, “That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence – and that you love your neighbour as well as you do yourself.”

“Good answer!” said Jesus. “Do it and you’ll live.”

Looking for a loophole, he asked, “And just how would you define ‘neighbour’?”

Jesus answered by telling a story. “There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man.

“A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man’s condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill – I’ll pay you on my way back.’

“What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbour to the man attacked by robbers?”

“The one who treated him kindly,” the religion scholar responded.

Jesus said, “Go and do the same.”

Sermon: Walking the Justice Path

“A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man’s condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds.”

“I appointed you judges, each one of you, deputies of the High God, But you’ve betrayed your commission and now you’re stripped of your rank, busted.”

Let’s pray:

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts and minds, be acceptable to you O God, Our strength and our freedom giver. Amen.

I have titled this sermon “Walking the Justice Path”, “Walking the Justice Path.”

The Good Samaritan is one of two memorable parables that are only found in Luke’s gospel. The other is *The Prodigal Son*, which I also think of as *The Man with Two Sons*.

These two parables are memorable because the characters are so clearly drawn and identified, the actions they take are well explained, and they cause us to have an emotional response to all of the characters. Some characters we like, others we are disappointed in. We can identify with them, see our best and worst selves in the stories.

Most of us could tell these two stories from memory and get the important details right. We know the gist, the guts of the stories, and could share them with others who hadn’t heard them before.

We can imagine that Jesus told these two stories many times on his travels during his ministry. He would have honed and shaped and worked on and perfected them. When Jesus died, his followers kept the stories alive by re-telling them, passing them on to the next generations. Luke’s gospel was probably written in the 80s or 90s of the first century – 50 or 60 years after Jesus died. We can’t be sure exactly how Jesus told these stories, what words he actually used. But the stories were kept alive long enough to get written down in the gospel, in a form that is accessible and meaningful to us 2,000 years later.

There is a modern parallel. American civil rights activist Dr Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech on 28 August 1963, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington.

Here is a short extract from the speech:

“...So even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood....” And so on.

The speech stunned the American public then and is still riveting today. You can find the text of the speech and audio recordings on the internet.

But this wasn’t the first time that Dr King delivered this speech.

Nine months earlier, on 27 November 1962, he gave a speech at Booker T. Washington High School in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, that was longer than the version which he would eventually deliver from the Lincoln Memorial. An audio recording of that earlier speech has just been found, edited to make it listenable and released.

So, in the same way that we can imagine Jesus working on his parables, we have an important modern orator who worked on and polished his speech until it was ready to be given in its final, best, and most effective form.

Dr King’s speech dealt with contemporary issues of justice for all people in his country, which was a threat to those in power. Dr King was assassinated because of this. Jesus parables and teaching also dealt with issues of justice and he was also seen as a threat to the Romans and the Jewish elite, with a similar result.

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Let’s return to the text of the Good Samaritan parable. The main message, then and now, is that we should show compassion to people

and give aid to those who need help. Jesus sharpens the message by adding two provocative elements.

The priest and the Levite, who should have helped the man, lacked the courage and compassion to do so. They should have done better. Perhaps Jesus wanted his audience to hold their local priests and religious leaders to account.

The other element is that a Samaritan helped the victim. Samaritans and Jews had a long-standing hatred of one another dating back several centuries. We can imagine the audience taking a shocked gasp when Jesus portrays the Samaritan as the hero of the story. Jesus is saying, this is what it means to really love your neighbour, go and do likewise.

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I want to focus in on a detail in the parable that is usually overlooked. Who were the robbers and why did they have to resort to banditry to survive? It is possible that the robbers were just bad, evil men, who took pleasure in hurting and plundering others, but I doubt it. It is far more likely were at the bottom of the heap in their society and couldn't see any other way of providing for themselves and their families, if they had any.

Judah where Jerusalem and Jericho are located, and the whole region including Samaria, Galilee, Perea, and Decapolis were occupied by the Romans who demanded heavy taxes from the local inhabitants. Local puppet rulers like Herod Antipas, whom the Romans tolerated, also levied taxes.

If a peasant family had a small farm holding and lived off the produce of their land and sold their surplus food to pay their taxes, they were only one drought or poor harvest away from disaster. If they ran out of money to pay their taxes, they could borrow some money now in the hope that the next harvest would be plentiful and enable them to repay the debt. But if there were two bad harvests in a row, they would be thrown off their land to repay their debt.

Some former farmers could try making a living as artisans making pottery and other crafts, but this didn't pay well, in a crowded market.

In Galilee, Herod Antipas commercialised the fishing industry. All the local fishermen had to sell their catches to Herod's agents, who paid poor prices for them, making it harder to earn a living from fishing.

All of this created an underclass in society who either, barely scrapped together enough to feed and house themselves, or at the very bottom turned to banditry and robbery to survive. This violence and crime was not excusable then nor is it now, but it was understandable.

* * * *

Do you remember the protest occupation of parliament grounds a few months ago? Why were the people there? Why would spending weeks in an uncomfortable, makeshift camp outdoors, seem preferable to living "staying" wherever they were before coming to Wellington?

There are uncomfortable parallels between Aotearoa New Zealand now and the Roman-occupied Holy Land in Jesus' time.

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It is thought that Psalm 82 is one of several written by Asaph, a court musician in the time of David and Solomon, around 1000 BCE.

Like the Priest and Levite in our parable, the Psalmist is saying that judges must do better. The judges have not protected the poor. They have become corrupt and are not delivering fair judgements. The judges are getting bribes or kickbacks to protect the interests of the wealthy and the powerful.

The Psalmist threatens that God will call the judges into God's courtroom to answer for their actions. The Psalm writer urges God to "give them what they've got coming!" He ends by affirming God saying, "You've got the whole world in your hands!" which has become a popular Christian action song.

Those in a position to dispense justice must do so fairly.

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In the story time we explored what showing compassion and acting justly might look like.

Two people working together can lift a heavier burden than one person by themselves.

We should give water and food to people who are thirsty and hungry.

We should ensure that people get the first aid and medical treatment they need.

We should act justly towards God's creation, our earth, our home. As shown in the book, there are lots of ways we as a church can do this.

We should continue to gather as a worshipping community to praise God and encourage each other.

Christian faith is demanding.

It is based on love, not rules, and makes demands of us that we can't wriggle out of.

Let's Walk the Justice Path together.

Amen.

Song: Let Justice Roll Down Like a River AA85

Refrain:

Let justice roll down like a river,
let justice flow down to the sea;
let justice roll down like a river
let justice begin through me.

1. Justice for all who go hungry,
crying to God to be fed,
left in a world of abundance
to beg for a morsel of bread.
2. Justice for those who are homeless,
victims of war or of need,
trapped on the borders of nowhere,
lost in the canyons of greed.
3. Justice for all who are powerless,
yearning for freedom in vain,
plundered and robbed of their birth right,
silently bearing their pain.

Community Time

Sharing the Peace

Let's greet each other saying: **"God's peace be with you."**

Notices

Sharing Joys, Things we are Grateful for, Sorrows & Concerns

Prayers of Intercession

To the bidding in the first 4 sections of the prayer: "...Teach us to care...",
please sing the response below:



To the bidding in the last section of prayer: ...God in your mercy, please respond
with **"hear our prayer, Amen."**

Lord's Prayer [Sung] WOV 676

**Our Father in heaven
holy be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Do not put us to the test,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

Offering

(We also acknowledge offerings made by automatic payment and online banking)

Blessing of Offering (said together)

**Loving God, you have blessed our lives in so many ways.
You have been our strength every step of every day.
Now we offer you our lives, our all.
With every gift, you have blessed us,
so now our every gift we offer to you. Amen.**

Hymn: One more step along the world I go

1. One more step along the world I go,
one more step along the world I go,
from the old things to the new,
keep me travelling along with you:

Refrain:

And it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.

2. Round the corners of the world I turn,
more and more about the world I learn;
all the new things that I see
you'll be looking at along with me.
3. As I travel through the bad and good,
keep me travelling the way I should;
where I see no way to go
you'll be telling me the way, I know.
4. Give me courage when the world is rough,
keep me loving though the world is tough;
leap and sing in all I do,
keep me travelling along with you.
5. You are older than the world can be,
you are younger than the life in me;
ever old and ever new,
keep me travelling along with you.

Benediction

The world is waiting for a message of love and new life;
go and proclaim this message with all that you have.

We go, knowing that we are not alone. Amen!

The Grace (Said together)

**The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen**

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Liturgy for this service was adapted from:
Gathering *Pentecost 1 2022 (Year C) Prayers for Worship*, United Church of
Canada;

Let Us Pray, Janet Nelson 1999: & Philip Garside.

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