



## Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish Sunday 2 June 2024 – Pentecost 2

The service this morning was prepared by Eleanor Ashby,  
one of our Lay Preachers

### **Welcome to our service this morning.**

In working together on our shared mission, we commit to seven core values:

***Togetherness, Humility, Curiosity, Love, Inclusiveness, Justice, Sustainability.***

**Curiosity:** we are committed to a life of learning, questioning, and exploring the mystery of God, Jesus, and the Bible.

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### **Welcome**

### **Call to Worship**

Creating God, we gather in your name to worship you.

We give thanks that there is a small spark of God within us.

**Kindle that small spark into a flame of love and service.**

Sustaining God, we gather in your name to worship you.

We celebrate the loving presence of God in our life.

**May God's loving presence be a strong influence in our life.**

Nurturing God, we gather in your name to worship you.

We rejoice that God teaches us about love and forgiveness.

**As we grow in faith, trust and love for God, may our worship, witness and service bring honour to God's Holy Name. Amen.**

### **Opening Prayer**

Awesome God, your creative power, your glory and holiness are beyond our imagining, yet, you chose to reveal yourself in the person of Jesus Christ, who graciously showed us the human face of your love. He stretched our imaginations once more over the lengths he was prepared go to demonstrate the depth of your love for us. And, as if that was not enough, you breathe new and everlasting life into our very beings, through the power of your Spirit. Triune God, Source of our lives, we worship and adore you Amen.

## Hymn – [Joyful, Joyful, we adore you](#)

Joyful, joyful we adore Thee  
God of glory Lord of love  
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before Thee  
Opening to the sun above  
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness  
Drive the dark of doubt away  
Giver of immortal gladness  
Fill us with the light of day

All Thy works with joy surround Thee  
Earth and heav'n reflect Thy rays  
Stars and angels sing around Thee  
Center of unbroken praise  
Field and forest vale and mountain  
Flowery meadow flashing sea  
Chanting bird and flowing fountain  
Call us to rejoice in Thee

Thou art giving and forgiving  
Ever blessing ever blest  
Wellspring of the joy of living  
Ocean depth of happy rest  
Thou our Father Christ our Brother  
All who live in love are Thine  
Teach us how to love each other  
Lift us to the joy divine

### **Prayer of Renewal**

Your Spirit guides and directs us, loving God.

**As our faith community searches for the faithful way, we find your Spirit.**

Your Spirit asks the difficult questions.

**As our faith community searches for answers, we find your Spirit.**

Your Spirit is there in times of challenge.

**As our faith community faces fear and adversity, we find your Spirit.**

Your Spirit is not restrained by anyone.

**As our faith community works with people who are marginalized, we find your Spirit.**

When we feel uncertain, loving God,

**your calm settles us and brings us peace of mind and spirit.** When we are troubled by happenings in our friendship and family circles, loving God,

**your calm settles us and encourages us to listen carefully.** When there is disagreement in the faith community, loving God, **your calm settles us and invites us to be peace emissaries.** When the leaders of our world cannot agree to help the starving and the lost, loving God, **your calm settles us and challenges us to protest with words and actions.** (time of silent reflection)  
Into our discord and conflict breathe your gentle, calming Spirit, O most loving God. **Amen.**

### **PSALM 139: 1-6, 13-18**

Loving God, you search through my life and you completely understand me. You know whenever I sit down or stand up, you read my thoughts from a distance.

You know the path I choose to take and the places where I lie down and rest. You fully comprehend me, you know all my peculiar ways.

**Even before a word gets to my tongue, you know what I am going to say. You are both ahead of me and behind me and rest your hand on me in blessing.**

**Such knowledge is too much for me! It is beyond me, I cannot grasp it!**

It was you who planned my growth from the first, you watched over me in my mother's womb.

That you should care so much fills me with wonder, I praise you for your loving deeds!

From conception you knew me completely, my life was never hidden from you. When as a fetus I grew in secrecy, you were there.

**It goes back even further, doesn't it?**

**Before I began you pictured me?**

**In your book you wrote down your hopes for me in the days when I was yet nothing?**

**O my God! How precious are your thoughts, how countless is the sum of them!**

**If I should try and count them, they would outnumber the sand.**

**When I come at last to my end, I will still be with you!**

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Hymn: [There's a wideness in God's Mercy](#)

Reading: Mark 2, 23 - 3, 6

**Reflection:** When I was growing up, Sundays meant church, family, the Sunday roast and taking a break from all the busy activities of the previous six days.

I'm guessing that your families had similar ways of spending Sundays, and that they involved church, family, and food, too. That was the norm then. Perhaps some of you came from households where frivolous activities were prohibited on Sundays. You could read the Bible on Sunday afternoons after church, maybe play quietly, and then perhaps it was time for evening services. Many of us can remember when all shops were closed on Sundays. Salespeople had a day off, and no business was transacted. I'm sure you can recall times and places, after some Sunday Trading was allowed, when it was impossible to buy alcohol on Sunday.

All of these customs originated from people's ideas about how to obey the Third Commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy." From the time this commandment was given by God to Moses, there has been disagreement about why we should honour the Sabbath and how we keep it holy. The book of Exodus links Sabbath observance to the creation: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it." In Deuteronomy a different reason is given: "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day." The Sabbath was meant to be a gift, a time of rest and restoration, a time to worship God. But quickly that gift turned into Jewish Law, and all sorts of rules grew up about what was work and what wasn't, what it was permissible to do on the Sabbath and what was not. Keeping the Sabbath holy also meant reserving that day for worship of God, and, as you might guess, people had various ideas about what constituted worship and, therefore, exactly what kept the Sabbath holy.

Jesus and his disciples were constantly getting into trouble with the religious authorities for not properly observing the Sabbath. Luke tells us four instances where Jesus broke the Sabbath laws and Mark, at least two.

When we turn back the pages of time, and of scripture, and read the first creation story in Genesis 1, we find the Lord God, after creating the heavens and the earth stepping back to survey the glorious work of creation and exclaiming, "This is very good " Having said that, he took the seventh day off, resting from the overwhelming work of creating. Apparently, the Lord God really enjoyed that day off, because He decided that humankind should reap the benefit of time away from the burdens of work. Daily work should be set aside on a regular basis by all of us so that when we must work, we can maintain higher levels of interest and productivity. Refreshment of both body and soul was so important to God that he called it Sabbath, and blessed such time by stamping it "holy." Rest is holy.

Renewal is essential and sacred for continued alertness and good attitude. We break God's law when we deprive ourselves of such opportunities for renewal and the healing power of time off. The ministry of Jesus is full of examples of how Sabbath time could benefit us all.

In today's reading, Jesus and his disciples were making their way through a grain field one day when the disciples decided to pluck some of the grain and eat it because it was the only food available to them at that moment. The ancient laws of the Old Testament were rigid concerning Sabbath observance. Food which would be eaten on that day was to have been prepared the day before. But Jesus had come to make life easier by fulfilling those old laws so that they no longer proved a burden to the people of God. So, in the custody of his protective grace, the disciples were permitted to pluck the heads of grain and eat them. The Pharisees in this encounter represent human resistance to God's grace by their unyielding determination to hold onto the strict observance of the letter of a law that required change. Its true meaning and holiness was buried beneath their human and legalistic interpretation of the laws of Sabbath rest and holiness. But Jesus knew that his followers were hungry and that hunger recognizes only the need for satisfaction, regardless of the day.

Later, in the synagogue during worship, Jesus knew that the man with the arthritic hand would not be permitted to stay there in his present state. He had already said that the Sabbath was made for humankind. Now, in the presence of the Pharisees, he proved it by curing the withered hand, knowing that this miracle that provided relief to a suffering individual, and other incidents like it would cost him his life because human nature resists grace and pardon and even healing.

I heard of a friend who returned from a vacation during which he and his family had travelled a long way to visit relatives. Somebody made the comment that my friend didn't appear to be very rested, despite the fact that he'd been gone for two weeks. "You wouldn't be too rested either," he said, "if all you did was drive for two weeks. I feel like I need another vacation."

I couldn't help but wonder how many of us spend just about all of whatever precious free time we have just driving, just catching up on the laundry, mowing the lawns that have suddenly grown a foot. Suddenly Sunday seems to have become just a day like any other,

In spite of the rapid pace of life as we experience today, God still extends to us the invitation to seek proper rest and holy reflection. That is why Jesus and his disciples went from grain field to synagogue, from feeding the body to feeding the spirit. Jesus created disturbance because he wanted life to change so that the people of God would not be smothered by laws, but embraced by grace and renewal. Surely, given

the old laws about uncleanness, the man with the arthritic hand must have created disruption on his own by entering the synagogue where, because of his broken state, he would be denied any participation in the worship. Instead of being hostile, the Pharisees should have rejoiced when Jesus healed the man, thus making him acceptable even to them. Jesus had come to fulfill the law by extending grace and mercy and nourishment. But in his day, as in ours, most people who cannot accept things they don't understand, often reject such things out of hand. Many do not accept pardoning grace and forgiveness and restful peace through Christ Jesus because it's too good and too impossible to be real. Yet there is no other name under heaven, and no other way to complete renewal and healing and hope except through the one who grants us permission to eat and to find healing and restoration, not only on Sabbath days, but on all days.

So how do we keep the Sabbath holy today? How do we worship God in the 21st century? The ways we used to keep the Sabbath are long gone. On Sundays now, we work, we shop, we play sports or watch them on television, we do everything that we do on any other day. With our busy schedules, our desire to spend time with the family, and our focus on having as much fun and free time as we can, we struggle with honouring the Sabbath and using the day to worship God.

Few of us would want to return to a world full of blue laws and strict rules about how to observe the Sabbath--even if we could. And, yes, it is often tempting to join the throngs of people for whom Sunday is no different from any day. Yet the very fact that we do come to worship says that we are looking for something more, that we are looking for ways to keep the Sabbath holy and to thank and praise God.

So we gather together to tell and to hear the story of God's love for us. We experience that love, given to us in the form of bread and wine when take Communion. It is a love which joins us to God and to each other, and to all Christians in every time and every place. We rejoice in God's graciousness and give thanks for these gifts. And we also give money for ministries here and around the globe that bring people freedom from poverty and illness and bondage. We donate food for the hungry. We share our time and talents on projects that demonstrate God's care for this world.

We praise God and we serve our neighbour. We thank God by loving our neighbour. As Jesus taught us, that's how we keep the Sabbath holy and that's how we worship God. Amen

**Hymn – [Seek, O seek the Lord](#)**

## Offering Dedication

**Because you know us, O God, you are aware of our reluctance to share what we have. You continue to call us, to challenge us, to use us in the work of your kingdom. So take these gifts, and continue to call us to faithful lives and generous giving, so that others might be blessed as we are. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.**

### **Prayer of Intercession** *(inspired by today's readings)*

Watching the news can be a frightening experience these days.

Images of violence, abuse, retaliation, hatred fill our screens.

We may have a strong urge to help, but often feel helpless.

One thing we can do is persevere in prayers of intercession, lifting up prayers on behalf of others, prayers which have arisen in our hearts.

Join me in our prayer of intercession.

Creator of Light, our world needs You.

Shine into the hearts of all people, that everyone might know Your magnificence.

Shine into the homes of the abused and controlled.

Bring to wholeness those whose lives have been shattered by physical and emotional abuse.

Fill their hearts and minds,

**With the light of Your love.**

Shine into the lives of those afflicted by mental or physical illness.

Bring to wholeness those who are perplexed and confused.

Grant compassion to the carers and families.

Fill their hearts and minds,

**With the light of Your love.**

Shine into communities bombed and terrorised.

Transform minds full of hatred that they may rather crave peace.

Heal the hurts of generations, past and future. Convict Your peoples with generous forgiveness.

Fill their hearts and minds,

**With the light of your Love. Amen.**

### **Hymn – [Spirit Divine, inspire our prayers](#)**

#### **Blessing**

Go into the world,

assured of the mercy and love of God,

embraced by the compassion and grace of Jesus Christ,

held together by the inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit.

**Sung Amen x3**