



## Preparing for Worship

This week the theme of Sunday worship relates to Anti-Poverty Week 2020. “Poverty puts pressure on people – it’s constant and strong. During these unprecedented times, the health and economic impact of COVID-19 is hitting marginalised people and communities the hardest. We know that for many people being sick can make you poor and being poor often makes you sick. Unemployment has doubled as a result of the COVID-19 induced shut-down, affecting many people who may never have needed support as well as those who were already out of work.”



While many are suffering from poverty, what does it mean to be Church and to follow Jesus Christ as disciples? In this time and space of worship, we may hold time to think deeply about the challenging question. And open your heart to ask God about it: How could we be one? One with each other, with neighbours, with the world, with God’s creation while they/we are suffering. May God answer for us.

## Acknowledgement for the First Peoples

I/We would like to begin by acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to their Elders past and emerging. I/We extend that respect to them with our faithful prayer in this worship.

## Gathering

God, open our eyes  
that we might see today with eyes of love.

Christ, open our hearts  
that we might respond today with your heart of compassion.

Spirit, open our lives  
that we might reach out today with hands of healing.

Creator, redeemer, sustainer, open us to your journey,  
that we might lead others into your shalom and wholeness.

*Adapted from Christine Sine*

## Opening Prayer

We dare to pray: that the world will be changed,  
**For we long to see the end of poverty;**

We dare to pray: that the rules will be changed,  
**For we long to see our economic structures  
bring justice to the poor;**

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We dare to pray: that our life will be changed,  
**For we long to bring hope  
where the Good News is needed.**

In the strength of God's spirit  
And inspired by the compassion of Jesus:  
**We commit to work for change,  
and wait confidently for the day  
when God makes all things new  
and those who weep will rejoice.**

### **Song: Jesus Shall Take the Highest Honour**

Jesus shall take the highest honour  
Jesus shall take the highest praise  
Let all earth join heaven in exalting  
The Name which is above all other names

Let's bow the knee in humble adoration  
For at His Name every knee must bow  
Let every tongue confess  
He is Christ God's only Son  
Sovereign Lord we give You glory now

For all honour and blessing and power  
Belongs to You belongs to You  
All honour and blessing and power  
Belongs to You belongs to You  
Lord Jesus Christ Son of the Living God

Chris Bowater  
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## Litany Prayer

*Let us pray:*

Among the poor,  
among the proud,  
among the persecuted,  
among the privileged,  
Christ is coming.  
**He is coming to make all things new.**

In the private house,  
in the market place,  
in the wedding feast,  
in the judgement hall,  
Christ is coming.  
**He is coming to make all things new.**

With a gentle touch,  
with an angry word,  
with a clear conscience,  
with burning love,  
Christ is coming.  
**He is coming to make all things new.**

That the kingdom might come,  
that the world might believe,  
that the powerful might stumble,  
that the humble might be raised,  
Christ is coming.  
**He is coming to make all things new.**

Within us,  
without us,  
among us,  
before us,  
in this place,  
in every place,  
for this time,  
for all time,  
Christ is coming.

**He is coming to make all things new.**

*Among the poor – Advent litany (Cloth For the Cradle)*

## **Bible Readings**

### **First Reading: Exodus 33:12-23 (English Standard Version)**

#### **Moses' Intercession**

<sup>12</sup> Moses said to the Lord, “See, you say to me, ‘Bring up this people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.’<sup>13</sup> Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.”<sup>14</sup> And he said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”<sup>15</sup> And he said to him, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here.<sup>16</sup> For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?”

<sup>17</sup> And the Lord said to Moses, “This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.”<sup>18</sup> Moses said, “Please show me your glory.”<sup>19</sup> And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.”<sup>20</sup> But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.”<sup>21</sup> And the Lord said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock,<sup>22</sup> and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.”<sup>23</sup> Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”

## **Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10 (ESV)**

### **The Thessalonians' Faith and Example**

<sup>2</sup> We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,<sup>3</sup> remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,<sup>5</sup> because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.<sup>6</sup> And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,<sup>7</sup> so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.<sup>8</sup> For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.<sup>9</sup> For they themselves report concerning us the kind

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of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,<sup>10</sup> and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Song: Psalm 23 (The Lord is my Shepherd)**

The Lord is my shepherd,  
and I want to follow  
wherever he leads me,  
wherever he goes.

Over the mountains,  
the waters and byways,  
valleys and highways  
he's waiting for us.

*I want to go to meet him there,  
to lay myself down in his love.  
The Lord is my shepherd  
and I want to follow  
wherever he leads me,  
wherever he goes.*

And while on the journey  
to where we are going  
he promised to be there  
to help us along,

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and over the mountains  
we'll walk on together,  
to know all the wonders  
he's given to us.

*I want to go to meet him there ...*

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## **Sermon: Can we be one?**

In October 2012, I was placed at Meal Plus, a part of missional organisations of Parramatta Mission. The placement was part of my formation which is three years training for ordained ministry. As a candidate, I worked for the organisation, learning how I as minister fully represent the gospel of Jesus Christ in God's mission. It was for me a period of challenging time in my entire life because I must be me, true me, Seung Jae. Not many of them know what Church is and who Jesus Christ is because of their non-Christian background as migrant or refugee. Also some people have a basic knowledge about Jesus and Church but their experiences with Church has not been nice. To be honest, negative.

My major task was to make connection with those who came to have two dollar lunch and free pre-displayed grocers at local supermarket. I joined the cue with them to get ticket, had lunch next them, drank coffee with them in a smoky space. Also there was a chance to have chat with them. Every encounter was required client's permission. For each encounter, I had to introduce myself who I am, where I am from, and why I am here. Then if client says yes, she or he and I were able to sit and talk with each other. Again, it was not easy for me at all, to be honest.



I still remember one of counters that I sat having the lunch with a homeless person. (I would call the person A here.) The reason was simple. No one sits next A. A was dirty, smelly and looked ugly. Whenever A came join the cue or eat in the dining area, other clients seemed to reject A. My heart was brought by God to A so I began my introduction. A nodded so our conversation began at lunch table. In my recalling, A was a long-term homeless person who from time to time to come get aids from Parramatta Mission. A was also walking around people during each day in the CBD of Parramatta. A looked like a dead log when A was surrounded by people walking down busy streets. While I was sitting next A over lunch, and after the encounter, I was not able to make any connection with the person. I struggled. What am I here? How would I demonstrate God's love to A? What I learned from the encounters with A was A and I are the same if each person is in the same circumstance. I would have been dirty, smelly and rejected by others if I was a homeless. Also I learned that A and I are the same in God's eye as his creature that is made by God's image. However, in reality, A and I were not able to connect with each other. I felt I failed. Yes, I failed there. Then I have been still struggling with the question in my heart: Can we be one? Like God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are One in holy mystery. Like Grace and I, as husband and wife are one in this married life. Like Boronia Park Uniting Church, all members, no matter who they are, are one in Jesus Christ. Can we, all God's people who might suffer from poverty, be one? It aches me again. Thus I come before God with this painful question and my weakest point in my faith toward Jesus Christ.

I imagine that Moses would have come before God with a similar question like mine. Moses and former Hebrew slaves in ancient Egypt wandered in wilderness, not knowing how long it would last. What they were desperately begging was that they wanted to be God's people in the glory of God. Moses believed that that title 'God's people' would be protected

and be distinct among other nations, which means that they were craving for becoming one with God and with each other. God took one step forward to the people receiving what Moses begged. He chose to live with them. Paul in Romans 9, witnesses that God shows mercy and blessing. It is because he has chosen to do so. God has his absolute willingness to show mercy and his presence among the people in order to be one. Also God promised them to provide his hands to cover their eyes not to see God's presence. They cannot see God but can feel God's warm hands hovering over them wherever they go among other nations. This passage was one of great stories where God and his people join with each other in company towards this life and the life beyond.

Paul in 1 Thessalonians 1, he has thanksgiving and encouragement towards the Christ's believers in Thessalonica. And Paul thanks God. He gives thanks to God that the Thessalonians are evidencing the essential marks of the Christian life – faith, love and hope. Also those virtues come always together in his prayer language, forming his belief in his risen Lord Jesus Christ. Then he gives thanks one more time to God because the Thessalonians added up their practical outworking in their conversion – work, labour and steadfastness. Paul's virtuous language was embodied by his fellow Christian in the city. The 'work' the Thessalonians do is a result or consequence of faith, their 'labour' flows from love, and their endurance or 'steadfastness' comes from hope. I am for sure that Paul was very happy for what the people of God in the city had done with the good news of Jesus Christ that he delivered. And he was super proud of them in his thanksgiving. Most of all, for him, work of faith, labour of love and steadfastness of hope were a great encouragement by the people. They both to each other nourish in faith, love and hope reciprocally. They increase the kingdom of God together. They become one with each other and with Jesus Christ in glorious fellowship. Their internal conversion was also well recognised by others in local communities. The Greek

report that the Thessalonians repented of their immature past and then committed themselves to serve God. Praise the Lord! And they were waiting for Jesus second coming which is the ultimate accomplishment of God' mission. Paul might feel that they become one with God, with each other, and with himself though he was staying in Corinth of Achaia. He wrote the letter far away from the city, but he felt that he would have been among them. He believed that the Thessalonians became God's people and God acknowledged them as His people.

These passages affirm us that God is glorified and acknowledged by his people becoming one with each other. Also, God only chooses to do his will among his people. And there are always some people like Moses and those who he led in wilderness, and Paul and the Thessalonians, who strive to demonstrate God's love and Christ's grace towards the world. You and I are called to follow them now. God was and is near us and will be forever dwelling among us. So what are we waiting for?

In the last winter season, we Boronia Park people had shown our support towards the work of Sydney Community Service by giving donations of food and goods. I always shared with you that SCS acknowledged how much people appreciated to our donations. We know this cannot stop poverty in our local area. But we believe that we are conscious of the extent of the problem. In giving we pray. In praying we ask God to provide them and call upon people to stop poverty on this planet. And we ask God that we can be one with each other and with God no matter what circumstances human beings would face. As Moses, Paul and their peoples did in the past, now God may call us to stand for becoming one with each other and with him. Because we are all made by God's image and have equal grace to be saved by Jesus Christ, the risen Lord.

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Every year we observe Anti-Poverty Week. This year, many of us have been challenged due to financial difficulties. If you are able, please hold them in your prayer and thought. Don't forget that God be with his people. Your prayer is acceptable to God who chooses to do so. The following intercession may be helpful for you to pray to God.

Thanks be to God.



### **Intercession: When the World was Dark**

This is a Christmas intercession but this prayer is edited for the theme of the week. It may be helpful for us in this prayer to reflect about how we might help the world who struggles with poverty.

*Let us pray:*

When the world was dark  
and the city was quiet,  
you came.

You crept in beside us.

And no-one knew.  
Only the few  
who dared to believe  
that God might do something different.

Will you do the same this moment, Lord?

Will you come into the darkness of today's world;  
not the friendly darkness  
as when sleep rescues us from tiredness,  
but the fearful darkness,  
in which people have stopped believing  
that war will end  
or that food will come  
or that a government will change  
or that the Church care?

Will you come into that darkness  
and do something different  
to save your people from despair of poverty?

Will you come into the quietness of this city,  
not the friendly quietness  
as when lovers hold hands,  
but the fearful silence

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when the electricity has been cut,  
the overdue bills have not been paid,  
the friendly voice no longer speaks,  
the neighbour's face says it all?

Will you come into the darkness,  
and do something different,  
not to distract, but to embrace your people?

And will you come into the dark corners  
and the quiet places of our lives?

We ask this not because we are guilt-ridden  
or want to be,  
but because the fullness our lives long for  
depends on us being as open and vulnerable to you  
as you were to us,  
when you came,  
wearing no more than a single cloth,  
and trusting human hands  
to hold their maker.

Will you come into our lives,  
if we open them to you  
and do something different?

When the world was dark  
and the city was quiet  
you came.

You crept in beside us.

Do the same this moment, Lord.  
Do the same this moment.

Amen.

*Among the poor – Christmas Intercessions 1 (Cloth For the Cradle)*

## **Prayers of the People      Jenny Keast**

Dear Heavenly Father.

In the midst of all the difficulties and uncertainties in the world at the moment we acknowledge that you are still God and ultimately in control of our lives. Please help us to accept the challenges and disappointments that come our way but also to be thankful for the blessings that living in Australia brings us compared to most other parts of the world.

We pray for world leaders that they will make reasoned and wise decisions following guidance that looks at the wellbeing of all. Thank you for all those people who step forward to look after the needs of others with innovative and creative ideas. Thank you for those in our church who are working to keep communication going among church members and also regular worship services that are accessible.

We keep in our prayers all students commencing the HSC after such a challenging year. We pray they will not be hindered in pursuing their future career paths by external circumstances. Help families to be supportive and understanding.

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Thank you Lord for prayers you have answered for us even in situations that have seemed unlikely.

We pray that we might learn lessons from political situations around us. God tells us to “do what is right” and not to be lured into situations where personal gain and profit become our goals. Help us to be strong in making “right” decisions.

We pray for all our local churches and Christian workers to serve you faithfully and to help others know of your love for them. We give thanks for the countries of the Caribbean, for the wonderful beauty of this place. We pray for the continued work of the Christian churches to overcome disasters and poverty. Help us to support them in their work.

Let each of us remember and pray for those known to us who have needs, perhaps health or financial or loneliness or difficult family situations.

Lord prompt us to serve you where we are able and appreciate those who continue to support us. We pray for Seungjae and Grace and their family and pray you will continue to inspire and lead them.

**Father, hear our prayers.**

**In Jesus name.**

**AMEN.**



## Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be Your name,  
your Kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in Heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom,  
the power and the glory are yours  
now and forever.

Amen.

## Song: May They Be One (Tune: Come as You Are)

May they be one,  
That's how I want them  
May they be one,  
together, at home  
Close to my heart,  
family forever  
May they be one,  
never alone.

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Draw all to me –  
I come with forgiveness  
Surely you see  
hands stretched in love  
Don't keep divisions  
hiding my goodness  
Trust in the grace  
that comes from above.

Twelve heard these words –  
send out proclaiming  
May you be one  
love here and now  
Church of the Son  
no matter the naming  
Trust in my spirit  
to show you how.

May they be one  
that's how I want them  
May they be one  
for all the world  
Hope for the day  
of difference united  
One at my table,  
one on the way.

**Offering**

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The offering will be used for the congregation's continuing mission and ministry including young people and youth ministry in these changing times. Please make your offering through a Bank Deposit or a personal cheque whichever is convenient to you.

**Account Name: Boronia Park Uniting Church**

**BSB: 634-634**

**Account: 100023784**

**Reference: Offering**

Please contact Robyn Harvey, Treasurer on 0418 783 290 or [robyn.49@bigpond.net.au](mailto:robyn.49@bigpond.net.au) for more information about how to make Direct Debit.

## **Blessing**

May God bless us with discomfort  
at easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships,  
so that we will live deeply in our hearts.

May God bless us with anger  
at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people and the earth,  
so that we will work for justice, equity and peace.

May God bless us with tears  
to shed for those who suffer,  
so that we will reach out our hands  
to comfort them and change their pain to joy.

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And may God bless us with the foolishness  
to think that we can make a difference in our world  
so that we will do the things which others say cannot be done.

*Prayer attributed to St Francis of Assisi*

The blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be upon us and remain with us always.

**Amen.**