

In the Grieving
A prayer vigil for those affected by fire.
Sunday 5th January 2020

Lighting of the Christ Candle.

Song: ‘We have been burnt’ by Linda Allen *sung by Jenny Batten*

We have been burnt

Burnt by the fire

And we are ashes and smoke

But we will rise higher and higher

On the wings of compassion, justice and hope

We have been burnt

Opening Sentences

As we gather here today in grieving,
our hearts cry out the hard questions for God.

“Why?” we ask into the heavens.

“Why would this happen to the people and the land?”

Our tears are joined in loss and pain,
as we look around us and see the ruins of life.

Our faith trembles in confusion,
as we try to hold onto certainties,
in the midst of the challenges to hope.

Where are you, loving God?

Come to us now and weep with us

as we face the harsh realities of this time.

A silence is kept

Our tears and the tears of all the people
are joined with the tears of God.

A bowl of water is lifted high and placed on the Communion Table

Prayers of confession

O God, who understands the deepest fears in our souls,
when tragedy strikes and the innocent suffer,
we cannot help but struggle.

What will others ask of us, who are your people?

Will we know what to say if they talk with us about you?

How can we interpret the universal upheavals before us
and the terrible despairs that spread abroad in our lives?

Silent reflection

Forgive us as our faith falters, O God.
May we honour what lies before us,
rather than trying to offer easy answers or trite responses.

***Stand beside us, Jesus Christ
and heal us, Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen***

Assurance of pardon

*The minister takes a branch, dips it into the bowl of water
and walks down the aisle sprinkling water on the people.*

We are never separated from the love of God.
Jesus Christ has walked our way, with all its realities.
The tears of God will become the water of life,
for us, and for the world.

Thanks be to God.

Threshold Choir ‘When the weight of the world’

*When the weight of the world gets heavy
and trouble rolls in like the tide
May we stand up and help each other
Find comfort where love abides*

Readings

Psalm 46.1 -5 *Rev. Heather Toms*

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.

Lamentations 3.21-23 *Rev. David Perryman*

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
God's mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
'God is my portion, 'says my soul,
'therefore I will hope in God.'

Psalm 71.1-3 *Rev. Lyn Williams*

In you, O Lord, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
incline your ear to me and save me.
Be to me a rock of refuge,
a strong fortress, to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.

Reflections

Reflections from Mallacoota by Rev Rowena Harris *read by Rev Sue Stott*

Reflection from Bishop Richard

Prayers of Intercession *led by Rev. Sue Stott and Rev. Peter Batten*

Loving God we pray for this world that you love so much
that you sent your Son Jesus to be born as the child of Bethlehem:
We pray for the safety of those sheltering from fires
and those fighting fires,
for livestock, native animals, paddocks, bushlands and sacred places.
We remember our own loved ones
and those who are dear to us facing this crisis.
We pray for those tending to the injured,
the frightened and the broken-hearted,
for emergency services, emergency broadcasters,
chaplains and counsellors.
We ask for your forgiveness for our own failures
in safeguarding your good creation,
and pray for political and community leaders,
and all those responding to the current crisis in our nation.
Above all, we pray the peace that passes all understanding,
in our nation and state, in our homes and in our hearts.
This we ask in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

Dorothy MrRae-McMahon

blessed are you – East Gippsland

blessed are you
who walk the scorching beaches
and shelter in the ocean
brushing burning embers
God beside you

blessed are you
who weep with grief and sorrow
and bear an ashen image
of a life of green and growing
God beside you

blessed are you
who face the firestorm's fury
and volunteer for danger
companions in the battle
God beside you

blessed are you
who work to bring together
the rallied deeds of angels
and shape a place of respite
God beside you

blessed are you
who set a bowl of water
in the wilderness of burning
to care for little creatures
God beside you

blessed are you
who wait with calm and coping
engage in patient listening
approach with wine and welcome
cook for crowds of strangers
clothe and house your neighbours
pray for rest and rainfall
God beside you

01/01/2020 Jennie Gordon

Let us lift our lives to God
and pray for all those
who long for those they have lost,
for treasures which they will never see again,
for homes which are nothing but smouldering ashes
and for the land itself as it mourns this day.
As we make our prayers,
let us place these flowers and leaves
in and around the bowl of tears,
as a sign of the renewing of the people and the earth
which is to come.

The people bring their prayers

*Sit silently in reflection then come forward to float petals in glass bowl,
or place flowers and leaves*

Closing Prayer

O God, in Christ Jesus,
as you experienced in your journey on earth,
there are times when it is hard to believe
that life will ever rise in strength again.

***Grant us the faith to believe that this will come, O God.
Make us your true witnesses to love and grace.
Amen.***

Memorial Hymn For Australian People In The Aftermath Of The Bushfires 2009

TUNE: Nun Danket Alle Gott © Shirley Erena Murray TiS 106

*Note: Shirley wrote this hymn on 12 February 2009, in response to the
Victorian bushfire disaster. She chose the theme and tune of “Now
thank we all our God” because Martin Rinkart wrote his much-loved
hymn after ministering to people dying from the plague in Saxony in the
17th century, and after conducting funerals for around 5000 plague
victims, including his wife. Shirley gives free permission for its use
throughout Australia.*

1. Now thank we all our God
for lives beloved and cherished,
the brave who faced the flames,
the young and old who perished,
for those who fight the fires
that sear our country's soul,
for all who give relief
to comfort and make whole.

2. No tears can stem this grief
through outback, town or city,
yet as disaster strikes,
we share a common pity,
where hearts and hands
can help to build or recreate,
our nation stands as one
to mourn our people's fate.

3. Our lives are held in trust,
O God of our believing,
and we who still are spared,
owe duty to the grieving,
for everyone is kin
when all can feel this pain,
as families are gone
and shattered ones remain.

4. Now thank we all our God
for courage meeting danger,
when selfless spirits fight
for mate or helpless stranger,
when wind and bushfire flare
and terror grips our faith,
compassion keeps us strong,
through tragedy and death.

Let us go from here

As the seeds are broken open by the fire
for the beginning of new life,
and as we bring together all that is among us
for the future in this place:

***Let us go from here,
stronger than when we came,
holding on to those who have lost the most,
ready for all that is to come
and walking firmly into a new day.***

Let us go in courage, hope and peace,
surrounded by the love of God.
And may the Holy God surprise us on the way,
Christ Jesus be our company
and the Spirit lift up our feet.

Amen.

Dorothy McRae-McMahon

Map of Australia and the area of Gippsland bushfires.

*You are invited to place rosemary
for remembrance, new growth and protection
on and around the map as you leave.
Also please take some rosemary home, to remember.
Then please join us for refreshments in the hall.*

As we do this, the **Threshold Choir** sings Metta Sutta
*May you dwell in the heart, may you be free from suffering
May you be healed may you be at peace.*

*Thank you all for being here, for your compassion, prayer and action as
we stand together and support those most in need.*

Blessing

From all that is broken, let there be beauty.
From what is torn, jagged, ripped, frayed,
let there be
not just mendings
but meetings unimagined.
May the god in whom nothing is wasted
gather up every scrap,
every shred and shard,
and make of them
new paths,
doorways,
worlds.

Jan Richardson

Mending Blessing

O my friend,
take heart.
The work of repair is aching
in its slowness
and beautiful in
the inches by which it will arrive.
Do not pray to be patient but to persist.
ask for the endurance that helps us learn
to breathe
in the midst of fear,
to love
in the presence
of sorrow,
to dream
within the rending
of the world that might be made.

Jan Richardson