

Time to Turn Around

Sustainable September 2022



Week 3 - The Politics of Sustainability

Worship Resources for 18 September 2022

READINGS

Jeremiah 8: 18 – 9: 1
Psalm 79: 1-9
1 Timothy 2: 1-8
Luke 16: 1-13

SONG SUGGESTIONS FROM *TOGETHER IN SONG*

TIS 679 God of Jeremiah grieving
TIS 634 All who love and serve your city
TIS 657 God of freedom, God of justice
TIS 630 The law of Christ alone can make us free
TIS 177 In suffering love
TIS 184 When trouble strikes

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FIRST PEOPLES

We gather in acknowledgement of the (name of local First Nations People), the traditional custodians of this land. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and to all of their ancestors who have cared for this place since creation

All: We gather attentive to their wisdom of living in harmony with the land and waters, and in commitment to the ongoing journey of reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

CALL TO WORSHIP

The God of all the Earth reigns,
even though many turn away from God's Way.

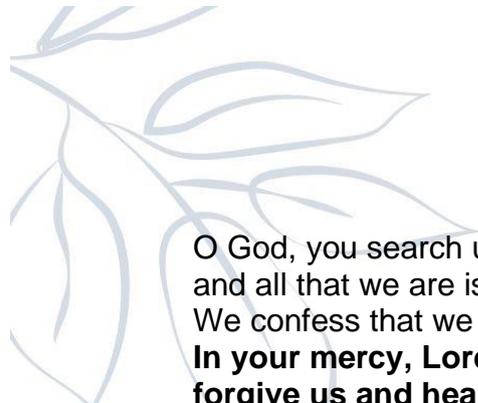
We will keep the faith,
even amidst war, climate change and destruction.

We are God's children
And we gather to worship
***in solidarity with all God's people
and with the Creation that God's loves.***

Let us worship together.

PRAYER





O God, you search us out and know us,
and all that we are is open to you.
We confess that we are entangled in sin.

**In your mercy, Lord,
forgive us and heal us.**

When we seize the land and its resources
as things to be conquered, possessed and exploited;

**In your mercy, Lord,
forgive us and heal us.**

When we ignore the wisdom of the First Peoples,
and trample their knowledge underfoot;

**In your mercy, Lord,
forgive us and heal us.**

When we care less for the health of our eco-systems
than for the feeding of our own selfish appetites;

**In your mercy, Lord,
forgive us and heal us.**

When we despair of changing the world
and neglect to change even ourselves:

**In your mercy, Lord,
forgive us and heal us.**

When we fail to integrate spirit and flesh
and forfeit the wholeness you intend for us:

**In your mercy, Lord,
forgive us and heal us.**

We turn to you,
O God of infinite mercy;

**We renounce evil;
We claim your love;
We choose to be made whole.**

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ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Hear the Good News. Our God of love forgives you. Open your hearts to receive that forgiveness and find wholeness that you may be a source of wholeness for others.

Amen.

Thanks be to God.

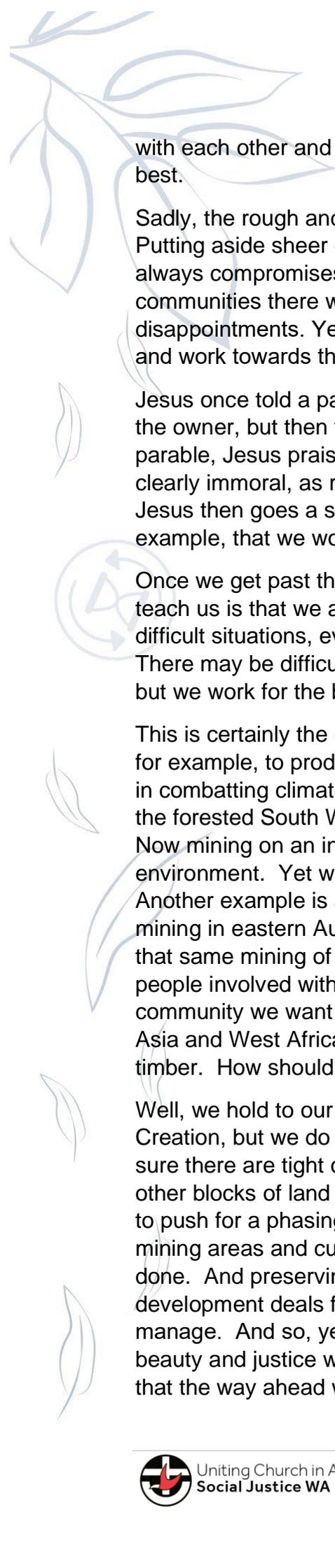
REFLECTION

The World we live in

1 Timothy 2: 1-8, Luke 16: 1-13

I like to think of myself as a person who holds to strong values and principles. Likely, most of you are the same. I genuinely hope that our governments will work ethically and compassionately, that our corporations will act responsibly with the environment and with their workers, and that the majority of people would be civil in their dealings





with each other and that they would care for the earth and its peoples. I hope for the best.

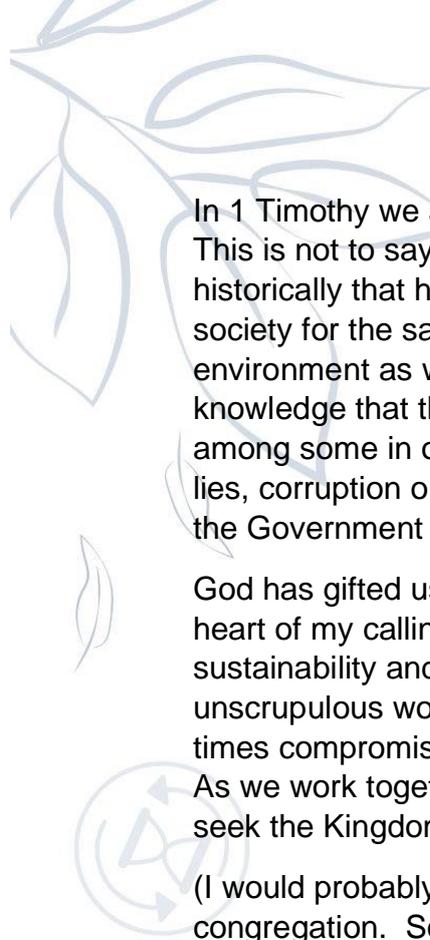
Sadly, the rough and tumble of the world in which we live does not meet this ideal. Putting aside sheer greed, intolerance or outright stupidity for a moment, there are always compromises and opposing interests in any society. Even in the best of communities there will be set-backs, half-measures, self-interests and disappointments. Yet, this is the world in which we are called to be Christ's disciples and work towards the coming of God's Kingdom.

Jesus once told a parable of a dishonest manager who not only has been swindling the owner, but then fiddles the books and cuts deals to save his own skin. And in the parable, Jesus praises this unscrupulous manager, not for his ethics, which are clearly immoral, as rather for his shrewdness in meeting the situation he faced. Jesus then goes a step further to say we should take this dishonest manager as our example, that we would be as shrewd and cunning as he was.

Once we get past the shock value of this parable, the message Jesus is wanting to teach us is that we always need to make the best decisions we can in the face of difficult situations, even if the means are not ideal. There will be compromises. There may be difficult political alliances to get good results. There may be pay-offs, but we work for the best we can.

This is certainly the case as we work for sustainability. We need the metal lithium, for example, to produce batteries for electric vehicles which are a cleaner technology in combatting climate change. Yet some of the richest lithium deposits are found in the forested South West of Western Australia with its natural beauty and diversity. Now mining on an industrial scale is inherently disruptive or even destructive of the environment. Yet we need the lithium, so what should be our Christian response? Another example is as we seek to stop the burning of fossil fuels and phase out coal mining in eastern Australia. Yet whole towns and regional economies are based on that same mining of coal. So, what should our Christian response be in meeting the people involved with justice and compassion? On a larger scale again, as a global community we want to protect our remaining rainforests. Yet in Brazil, South East Asia and West Africa people need land for agriculture and income from mining or timber. How should we balance such competing interests?

Well, we hold to our Gospel principles of justice, compassion and care for the Creation, but we do so shrewdly and seek the best outcomes we can. We make sure there are tight controls on mining, and accept there may be pay-offs such as other blocks of land being revegetated in lieu of the mining envelopes. We continue to push for a phasing out of fossil fuels, but we also promote new industries in former mining areas and cut deals with governments, unions and industry to get things done. And preserving the environment in other countries will often require aid or development deals from richer countries in order that less wealthy nations might manage. And so, yes. As Christ's disciples we continue to hold to values of life, beauty and justice with regards a sustainable world, but we do so in the knowledge that the way ahead will often be messy with compromises and deals and pay-offs.



In 1 Timothy we are urged to pray for the leaders and governments of our world. This is not to say the Church should support corrupt or harsh regimes (though historically that has happened), as rather that we would support a good and just society for the sake of all people, and ultimately for the sake of the natural environment as well. We realise however, that we make our prayers in the sure knowledge that there will nevertheless be failings, mistakes and arguably stupidity among some in our governments. We hold to our principles in speaking out against lies, corruption or injustice, for sure. Yet we also make the best of what we can with the Government the people have elected. That is the world in which we live.

God has gifted us with a beautiful and amazing world, and for me, its care lies at the heart of my calling to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Yet, I realise that we seek this sustainability and care in a broken world: a rough and tumble and often unscrupulous world. As such we need to practice our faith with political savvy, at times compromises, and yes, even cutting deals to get the best outcomes we can. As we work together let us also be blessed then with shrewdness and cunning as we seek the Kingdom of God.

(I would probably follow this reflection up with a brief discussion among the congregation. Some questions could be:

- *What are we prepared to do in order to bring about a sustainable society and world?*
- *In real terms, what do we need to do to manage the wealth or resources we are responsible for in the rough and tumble of the world in which we live – at a national level/ community level/ personal level?)*

(Gordon Scantlebury, Social Justice Commission)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

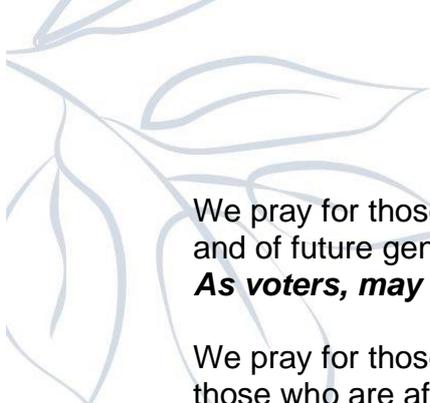
You may like to turn off the power during this prayer and light a candle after each part of the prayer.

Creator God,
We pray for your world,
That we will live in reverence of creation and in harmony with one another
You have given us a bountiful earth and ocean, that has become degraded by overuse, lack of understanding and greed.
Help us to understand our part in this, and to use resources more wisely and conservatively.

May we be part of the change and regeneration.

We pray for those who work tirelessly to create new ways of assisting us to live more sustainably as a people and a nation.

May we support them and be part of the change.



We pray for those in power who make decisions which affect the health of our planet and of future generations, animals, ocean creatures, plants.

As voters, may be part of the change.

We pray for those who have been adversely affected by global warming, those who are affected by rising ocean levels, floods, fires, cyclones, drought and food shortages.

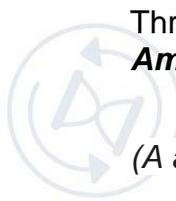
As neighbours and consumers, may we be part of the change.



In Christ you call us to a new way of life,
Loving our neighbours before ourselves.
Help us to treat with care and respect the world as it is
as we live in hope and anticipation of the world
as it will be.

Through Christ we pray,
Amen

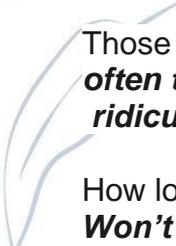
(Mary Elton, Social Justice Commission)



(A alternate Prayer of Intercession based on Psalm 79)



O God,
it seems that those who give you no thought
have taken over your world.
***spoiling the land, the air, and the sea
using up men, women and children for their own ends
and casting lives aside like waste material.***



Those who would honour you feel powerless
***often the scorn of the ungodly;
ridiculed, and the butt of their jokes.***

How long can this go on, O God?
***Won't you deal with those powers of death
who suffocate your creation?***



Do not remember the dark parts of our lives;
***quickly let your compassion meet us on our way,
because we are at the end of our tether.***
Help us, saving God,
for the glory of your name.
***Deliver us, and forgive us our sins,
for your name's sake.***



O God,
let the light of your Word, and the warmth of your Spirit
dry the eyes of the oppressed and grieving
strengthen the weak and the lonely,
and delight in those for whom life has begun anew

that they may know your peace,
to your honour and glory for ever and ever. **Amen**

(Jeff Shrowder, The Billabong)

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

Go now
and continue to offer prayers and thanksgiving for all.
Be shrewd in dealing with the world around you
but do not be seduced into serving wealth.
Weep for those who suffer, the earth and her people,
and share faith and truth with all.

And may God welcome you with love;
May Christ Jesus give you knowledge of the truth;
And may the Holy Spirit lead you into all godliness and dignity.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ. Amen.

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