



**St Ives Uniting Church  
October 10<sup>th</sup> 2021  
Pentecost 20  
“Hard Times”**

**Call to Worship**

The lockdowns continue and it is a trying time for everyone since we cannot come together, hug and support each other. The important thing to remember in this rather dismal time is that God has not forsaken us and is close by to strengthen us and give us hope.

**Prayer of Invocation**

Father God, in this holy hour, may we be able to put aside all our anxieties, pressures and deadlines and may we be still to know that you are our God and that you surround us now and for every moment of our lives. May we feel you very close this morning and we ask for your guidance and wisdom.

**We light the Christ Candle**

**Hymn**            224 All Hail the Power of Jesus Name  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmtxrFgrEA>

**Prayer of Adoration and Confession**

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
and his courts with praise.  
Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the Lord is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever,  
and his faithfulness to all generations.

(Psalm 100:4-5)

Let us pray:

We come together this morning, wherever we are, Lord, in your presence, and in awe of our glory.

Through you, all things were created, and all things are sustained.

David the psalmist reminds us that:

<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

<sup>2</sup> Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.

<sup>4</sup> Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

<sup>5</sup> It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,  
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

<sup>6</sup> It rises at one end of the heavens  
and makes its circuit to the other;  
nothing is deprived of its warmth.

(Psalm 19:1-6)

And so we gather, separated in body but together in spirit, Lord, in your presence, and in awe of our glory,

We give you praise and glory and honour, realising the never-ending love you have poured out on each one of us.

But before you, we know that we are fallen,  
that we have failed to live our lives in your ways,  
that we have spoken badly, and withheld good words,  
that we have acted in our own interests, and failed to help those in need,  
and that we have neglected you, so we could put ourselves first.

But despite all that we have done, and failed to do,  
we know that you have reached out to us in your Son:

he became one of us, walked as one of us, knew our lives, knew our fears and temptations,

but he remained obedient to you, even to his own death.

We know he gave himself as the perfect offering in our place, taking the burdens of our lives on his shoulders, even as his arms were stretched out on the cross at Calvary.

And so, with confidence in your love and grace, we claim the forgiveness that Jesus brings to each one of us and all of us together, and ask you to change us, so that we can truly live lives that reflect your glory to the world.

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lived and died and rose again, and who will come again in glory to reconcile all things to you.

Amen.

### **Assurance of Forgiveness**

The prophet Isaiah tells us:

He was wounded for our transgressions,

he was crushed for our iniquities;

the chastisement he bore made us whole,

and with his bruises we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have all turned to our own way;

and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

(Isaiah 53:5-6)

Friends, be assured that as far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our transgressions from us. Know that, in Christ, your sins are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God**

**Hymn 717** Give Thanks with a grateful heart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2inhx3kytGQ>

**Notices**

## **First Reading** Amos Chapter 5 Verses 6-7 and 10 – 15

<sup>6</sup>Seek the LORD and live, or he will sweep through the tribes of Joseph like a fire; it will devour them, and Bethel will have no one to quench it. <sup>7</sup>There are those who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground. <sup>8</sup>He who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns midnight into dawn and darkens day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land- the LORD is his name. <sup>9</sup>With a blinding flash he destroys the stronghold and brings the fortified city to ruin. <sup>10</sup>There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court and detest the one who tells the truth. <sup>11</sup>You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. <sup>12</sup>For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts. <sup>13</sup>Therefore the prudent keep quiet in such times, for the times are evil. <sup>14</sup>Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. <sup>15</sup>Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.

## **Second Reading** Hebrews Chapter 4 Verses 12 - 16

For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

## **Sermon** "Hard Times"

Poem

“Come What May:”

How do we pray when things are grim?  
And persevere when our faith is dim?  
When things go wrong  
And the nights are long?  
And we search for God – what’s happened to Him?

And how do we plan for the future ahead  
With so much that’s bad and so much we dread?  
What is God’s role?  
Has He lost all control?  
Is there something to hope for instead?

The Bible says clearly we need to believe  
Even as we stumble, even as we grieve.  
For in the long run  
When all’s said and done  
It’s a glorious design God will weave.

And let’s not forget all the joys that abound!  
How the sparkle and beauty of creation astound  
And people who care  
Are found everywhere.  
Love still makes the world go around!

And though things are marred in the world for a spell  
And there’s gloom all around that is hard to dispel;  
Yet be of good cheer  
God always is near  
His loved ones and all will be well!

“Grab onto me”, He says, when things turn out wrong  
“Grab onto me”, He says, “together we’re strong!”  
For then there is hope  
And then we can cope  
In His arms – that’s where we belong.

So let us give praise to our God – come what may!  
This is our hope and for this we pray.  
He is our light  
To shine through the night;  
Leading us all to the brightness of day.                      Lawrence Peak

Hymn 586

Abide with me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTT5HGSaO-Y>

## Prayers for Others

We have had good news this week, with NSW reaching the 70% fully vaccinated target, and we look forward to restrictions on our lives due to Covid 19 beginning to ease from tomorrow. We realise that there is still a long way to go before we have the freedoms that we knew prior to Covid and that we long for now.

But even with this good news, there is so much to be concerned for throughout our lives, our country, and the whole world, and so we bring those concerns to God know, trusting in his promises to us and to all people.

Let us pray.

God, we know you are a great and loving God, so we pray for your world and your people.

We give you thanks for the wonders of creation and the joys of human life, and we uphold in our prayer all those who do not share in the world's prosperity. We ask you to feed the hungry, free the oppressed, to give relief to those who suffer, and to raise people out of poverty. Keep us mindful of people in need throughout the world, and encourage us to help them whenever we can.

We pray for all of those struggling through this time of pandemic. For those who have Covid, whether at home or in hospital. We pray especially for those who are on ventilators, relying breath-to-breath on machines. We give thanks for those who care for those who suffer, nurses, doctors, cleaning staff, hospital managers and administrators. Give them your wisdom in their decisions, your compassion in their actions, and your encouragement always.

We pray for those manufacturing, distributing, and administering vaccines across the world, praising you for what they have been able to do in such a short time. As we watch vaccination rates rise steadily in Australia, giving us hope for the end of the pandemic, keep us mindful of others across the world whose wait for vaccines is so much longer and harder than our own.

We remember, too, those whose lives and livelihoods are affected by Covid. Especially for those who have lost loved ones, but also for those who have lost businesses and livelihoods. Help us to realise the effects of Covid are so much wider and deeper than those which many of us here at St Ives experience.

But while many others are having a worse time than us, we realise that the extended lockdown and isolation has been and remains a burden for us all: not least of which is that we cannot meet together on Sunday mornings to pray and praise and have fellowship with each other as your people.

And so we pray for your people at St Ives Uniting Church, giving you thanks for our families, for our networks of friends, for our congregation and for the technologies which allow us to maintain contact with each other and the wider world. As we look forward to the time that we can meet together again, help us to make, build and strengthen friendships, and inspire us to help one another when we're in need.

We pray too for your Church in all its forms and all in places, giving you thanks for our leaders and teachers through all the ages. Help us to live as your people, to be witnesses to Jesus, to reach out with love and share the good news with people in all places and situations, and grant that all people in all places will come to know you and love you.

We pray for the leaders of the world, our country and our state, especially upholding to you our premier, Dominic Perrottet as he begins to lead us in place of Gladys Berejiklian. Be with each of them at this time, and give them wisdom and strength for the tasks that lie ahead.

Our lives are so much affected by Covid at the moment, that we often forget the other needs of our lives and our world. But we know that you don't forget, Lord, you know the needs of people who we don't know, in places we have scarcely heard of, but we trust your love and concern for them is just as strong as your love and concern for each one of us.

Help us, though, to look beyond our own concerns, to the concerns of all people across the world. To the people of Afghanistan. To the people of Guinea. To all the troubled people of the world.

And in the silence now, Lord, we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit and bring before you our individual concerns, big and small, our needs, our hopes, our fears. Confident that you that you will hear.

We pray these things through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, and who taught us to pray:

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father,  
who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Hymn 28**      God is our strength and refuge  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SW5yAqx810&t=24s>

### **Blessing**

In these hard times, the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you – and give you wisdom, perseverance and peace.  
Amen

