

Our song to sing or to read: God gives us a future

God gives us a future, daring us to go
into dreams and dangers on a path unknown.

We will face tomorrow in the Spirit's power
we will let God change us, for new life starts now.

We must leave behind us sins of yesterday
for God's new beginning is a better way.
Fear and doubt and habit must not hold us back
God gives hope and insight, and the strength we lack.

Holy Spirit teach us how to read the signs
how to meet the challenge of our troubled times.
Love us into action, stir us into prayer
'til we choose God's life and find our future there.

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A Prayer

God, help us not to be afraid of stepping out of our comfort zone and to contemplate trying new things, knowing that we always have you with us. Help us to welcome all people, especially those who are different in any way, knowing that we do not like to be excluded. Help us to accept ourselves, knowing our limitations, but not being held back by them. For in accepting ourselves and trusting you, we can step out into an unknown future.

Amen

With thanks to Carolyn Sharp for preparing today's reflection



Church in a Bag

10 January 2021

Dubbo Uniting Church



Call to worship

Praise God and give thanks and honour.
Holy and beautiful is the Lord.
Worship joyfully and with spirit
for the Lord is powerful and mighty!

Today we remember that Jesus was baptised in the Jordan by John and that as Jesus came up out of the water, God's Spirit descended like a dove. God's voice was heard: "You are my Son, the one I love. I am very pleased with you".



God's blessing continues to shower upon us. God gives in abundance so that we can overflow to others and infect the world with grace, love and peace.

Preparation

In the beginning ... God was there and so was the Spirit.
From the very first ... God has always been and is in everything.
Throughout history ... God is still in the story, even when we cannot see how.
Jesus came ... and showed us what love looks like.
The Love Story ... is ours to tell.
The Creation Story ... continues through us.
I wonder how we will share the story ...



Readings: Genesis 1: 1–5
Mark 1: 4–11

Reflection

Can you imagine living in a world of chaos? A world where things are happening, but nothing really seems to make sense; and where things are not what we are used to?

At present we might be closer to understanding than we have been in the past. For a world with COVID-19 seems to have changed everything – and yet, in reality, it has not changed the important things in life. It may have changed the way we do things, but it hasn't changed the things we value.

In the Genesis reading where we begin the Creation Story, the Spirit of God is already there. Even though there is darkness and chaos, God is in the midst of it. And slowly, God begins the process of change - and we start to see things differently.

As we began our COVID-19 journey, it was very confronting and frightening. For some it has been life changing, especially when recovery from the virus was not possible or life-long disability resulted from the infection. And for some, losing work has pushed them into poverty, homelessness, hunger and physical danger. Many charities are saying they are experiencing unprecedented demand and for many people, this is the first time they have experienced real need.

For many, having their freedom taken away from them has been the most challenging aspect to deal with. Maybe this experience will give us a little more empathy for refugees, for those who are suffering following natural disasters, or those whose choices are limited by lack of power or resources.

What we have often overlooked is that God is still in the midst of the chaos. We may not have been able to meet God in the same ways and

places that we have been used to in the past, but God has still been with us, wherever we have been and whatever our circumstances.

As the process of change continues, we can look and see things differently, and the Spirit will continue to be with us whatever happens. We don't know what is coming, but hey, when have we known what the future holds?

Strange things were also happening in the time of John the Baptizer. He called to people to change their ways: to leave the old ways behind; and to live life in a new way. Does this sound familiar?

Even though John knew that his role was not the biggest and best, he knew that he had been called to do this particular job, and he faithfully carried it out.

- Do we sometimes think that the role we have isn't glamorous enough?
- Do we think that the life of another looks 'better/easier/more exciting/more rewarding'?
- Are we afraid to 'step out into the unknown in faith'?

After his baptism, the Spirit came to Jesus, but even he had to take the first step into new territory; and he had to do this alone.



We too, receive the Spirit in baptism, but we do not walk into the unknown future alone. Let us thankfully take the hand of God and invite the Spirit of Life to join us as we walk into new territory.