



Service: 24 May 2020

Rev. Jannet Mudavanhu

“They Showed Us Unusual Kindness (Acts 28:2)”



Watch the recorded service on our [YouTube channel](#)

Our order of service today – including the reflection - is adapted from resources sent to us for THE WEEK OF PRAYER by Secretary of National Dialogue for Christian Unity.

Different countries take part in preparing resources each year and for this this year it was prepared by the Christian churches in Malta, on behalf of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches. What a privilege it is, that we also get to connect with our brothers and sisters in Malta as we share in prayer today. On 10th February, Christians in Malta celebrate **the Feast of the Shipwreck of St Paul**, marking and giving thanks for the arrival of Christian faith on these islands. The reading from Acts which is used for this feast, is the text chosen for this year’s Week of Prayer.

Before we commence our worship, I encourage us to check on your world map and see if you can identify where this lovely country is located. For those of you who have been on holiday to Malta, perhaps call to mind the people of this country – the places you visited and bring them all before God in worship. Let us Pray:

INVOCATION OF THE SPIRIT: *Leah & Family*

Spirit of love come upon this assembly and dwell among us.

Haeremai, i te Wairua Tapu!

Spirit of unity show us the path towards Christian unity.

Haeremai, i te Wairua Tapu!

Spirit of hospitality teach us to be welcoming.

Haeremai, i te Wairua Tapu!

Spirit of compassion instil within us an attitude of respect to those whom we meet.

Haeremai, i te Wairua Tapu!

Spirit of hope help us to detach ourselves from all hindrances to our ecumenical journey.

Haeremai, i te Wairua Tapu!

PRAYER OF PARDON AND RECONCILIATION: *Leah & Family*

E te Ariki, tohungia rā mātou

Forgive us, Lord, for past mistakes, mistrust and misdeeds between Christians from different Churches and traditions;

For remaining in the darkness rather than seeking the path of Light; for our lack of faith and for our failure to be people of expectant hope and authentic charity;

E te Ariki, tohungia rā mātou

For having caused pain, hardship and anguish to others;

For isolating ourselves and remaining indifferent, instead of showing hospitality to all.

E te Ariki, tohungia rā mātou

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He forgives our transgressions. **Amen.**

SONG OF PRAISE

HOW GREAT THOU ART – *Sung by Leah/ Siu and family*

Whakaaria mai tou ripeka ki au;

Tiaho mai ra roto I te po:

Ki kona au titiro atu ai: Ora mate, hei a au koe noho ai (Repeat)

O Lord my God, when I'm in awesome wonder,

Consider all the works thy hands made.

I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder

Your power throughout the universe displayed.

Refrain

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze:

Refrain

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die – I scarce can take it in
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin:

Refrain

CHILDREN'S TIME

To ask children to make an oar and cardboard boat using whatever cardboard or material they can find at home – (youtube has interesting clips to help you do this – ask parents if they can help you out) or alternatively draw and colour one. To encourage children to bring their boats to show everyone during our Zoom Meeting at 11am. Children will be asked to share about their boats during the first session – probably first 15 minutes for this Sunday – we will all listen to their sharing.

BIBLE READING: *Acts 27:13 – 20 and then verse 39 to chapter 28 verse 2 and then verse 7-10*

REFLECTION

They showed us unusual kindness! The kind of kindness that leaves one jaw dropped – or lost for words or very humbled. I am sure most of us have heard that experience, myself included. Infact, this week on Monday, I hear a knock on my door as I responded to it, it was Peter Morrish's daughter asking if I could come and meet his father, Peter, who was waiting by the

gate! Ohhh, what a moment of joy it was! I felt extremely humbled that he thought of giving me a surprise visit. A blessing and “unusual kindness moment” indeed!!

The theme for this year’s Week of Prayer for Christian unity is “**THEY SHOWED US UNUSUAL KINDNESS**” (Acts 28.2), which refers to the reception given to Paul and companions when they were shipwrecked on the island of Malta.

The story begins with Paul being taken to Rome as a prisoner (Acts 27). The ship on which he was sailing got into trouble as the forces of the seas and the powerful tempest rages. These forces shipwrecked them to an unknown territory – the coast of Malta. An island they knew nothing about, couldn’t speak the language. They were wet, hungry, lost and probably hopeless. As strangers on strange land: Everything was new!

And there, in their desperate and vulnerable state, they experience something new! In contrast to the brute force of the stormy sea, they witness “**unusual kindness**” from the people of that island – **Malta!** These people, who were foreign to them, were very attentive to their needs. They **light a fire** so that they can warm up, they **offer them shelter** from the rain and the **fed them**. Even though the people of Malta had not yet received

the Good News of Christ, they manifest God's love with **PRACTICAL KIND ACTIONS**. Indeed, **SPONTANEOUS HOSPITALITY** and **THOUGHTFUL GESTURES** do communicate something of God's love.

The message for us from the Maltese community is an encouragement for us to perceive **hospitality as a virtue – in this case hospitality can be understood as a bridge between strangers - A bridge that creates a bond in which lies hidden the core of humanity and human fellowship**. Hospitality is not a one way act because it does benefit both the guest and the host.

Let's refer to our Bible reading for today: - While Paul and all the 276 shipwrecked people with him were warmed and fed; - Paul prayed and healed many Maltese people including the governor's father. So, in a way, hospitality is a two act. In other words, just as the Maltese ministered to Paul and his companions, the Maltese themselves were also ministered to.

Another element to share here is that: We can also note that, **AT TIMES, IT IS THE WEAKEST WHO BRING OR CARRY THE MOST IMPORTANT MESSAGE OF HOPE AND SALVATION**. I am thinking of Paul. He was the

weakest in the sense that he was; (1) Was Chained, (2) A Prisoner; but this did not deter him from sharing his faith – first, with all those who were on board the ship with him and secondly, **to the Maltese islanders whom he prayed for and some of them were healed, and many came to Christ. To this date the people of Malta celebrate this day when Paul brought the Good News of Christ to their land. Yes, it through him who was the weakest of them all.** As Pope Frances rightly puts it, “This is what pleases God: to save with the weakness of the cross (1Corinthians 1: 20-25). It is through the weakness of the cross that we were all saved.

Therefore, as disciples of Christ, let us make an effort to listen, even to those who might be deemed as having ‘shipwrecked’ life because at times, it is through such people that God send his message of hope to us.

In conclusion, in light of our experience of the last few weeks with covid 19 – a pandemic that has the equivalent of a shipwreck for many people:

People loosing their job

Companies shutting down

Travel Restrictions

Medical Treatments delayed

It is hard to comprehend the stress this is causing to people’s lives. In this regard then, we are encouraged to be just like the

people of Malta when Paul and companions landed on their shores; to show a little bit of that “**unusual kindness**” to those God chose to place in your way. May you please take time in this **WEEK OF PRAYER** to reflect on ways you can show this type of kindness. **Amen.**

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS – by Leah and family

During the prayers, eight oars (or oar-shaped models) are brought into the assembly by the children to represent different communities. Each oar bears the word – Reconciliation, Enlightenment, Hope, Trust, Strength, Hospitality, Conversion and Generosity. The presentation of an oar introduces each of the petitions. After the oar has been held high, it is placed near or in the boat and the children remain standing by the boat till the end of this prayer

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We cannot face the storms of life alone. A boat moves forward when all row together. In the face of difficulties, we recognise the need to pull together and to unite our efforts. Let us pray.

(The first oar RECONCILIATION is brought forward -held high and still holding it - is placed near or in the boat and remains standing holding the oar).

Gracious God heal the painful memories of the past which have wounded our churches and continue to keep us apart.

Hear our prayer for Reconciliation.

(The next oar ENLIGHTENMENT is brought forward and continues the same routine).

Gracious God teach us to fix our course on Christ, the True Light.

Hear our prayer for Enlightenment.

The next oar HOPE is brought forward and continues the same routine).

Gracious God strengthen our confidence in your providence when we feel overwhelmed by the storms of life.

Hear our prayer for Hope.

(The next oar TRUST is brought forward and continues the same routine).

Gracious God transform our many separations into harmony and our mistrust into mutual acceptance.

Hear our prayer for Trust.

(The next oar STRENGTH is brought forward and continues the same routine).

Gracious God give us the courage to speak the truth with justice in love.

Hear our prayer for Strength.

(The next oar HOSPITALITY is brought forward and continues the same routine).

Gracious God dismantle the barriers, visible and invisible, that prevent us from welcoming our sisters and brothers who are in peril or in need.

Hear our prayer for Hospitality.

(The next oar CONVERSION is brought forward and continues the same routine).

Gracious God change our hearts and the hearts of our Christian communities, that we may be agents of your healing.

Hear our prayer for Conversion.

(The next oar GENEROSITY is brought forward and continues the same routine).

Gracious God open our eyes to see the whole of creation as your gift, and our hands to share its fruit in solidarity.

Hear our prayer for Generosity.

Haeremai, i te Wairua Tapu! Amen!

CLOSING PRAYER

We are sent out to proclaim the Good News.

Let us, therefore, set out to show that “unusual kindness” to those God place in our paths.

Remain in his presence always, as we seek the Christ in the strangers on our shores.

Amen! Alleluia! Amen!

HYMN

HERE I AM LORD

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgLwH5RdtPk&t=81s>

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them?
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have born my peoples pain.
I have wept for love of them,
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak My word to them
Whom shall I send?

Refrain

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them,
My hand will save
Finest bread I will provide,

Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them,
Whom shall I send?

Refrain