

Southside Uniting Church

Online Worship 6 June 2021



Prepare yourself to worship, by spending a few minutes settling yourself into a comfortable space. Close your eyes. Slow your breathing. Become aware of what you can feel in and around your body – what you can hear, or feel, or smell. Acknowledge the distractions around and within you and bring them with you into worship. You may like to light a candle to help centre your thoughts toward the love and presence of the living God.

Call to worship

The Spirit of the Lord is with you:

and also with you.

Strengthening God, send forth your Spirit upon us:

may your breath give us life.

Loving God, send forth your Spirit upon us:

may we sing your love forever.

Song

Only a Holy God

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Loving God, we come before you bringing our own differences and hearts that long to belong. We praise you with our voices and we pray that you will send your Spirit upon us. Take away that which divides us and give us a sense of unity. Unite us in your will. Come, Lord, to our worship, to our hearts and to our lives, that we may praise and glorify your name forever.

Loving God, you created us and know everything we do:

we have turned away from you and ignored your commandments.

Help us to examine our hearts and to seek out our evil thoughts.

We pray for your mercy and grace.

Lead us, O Lord, through your everlasting way.

Amen.

Declaration of Forgiveness

“Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. Some men brought to him a paralysed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.” Matthew 9:1, 2. Reflect on what it means to have Jesus forgive your sins, and give thanks.

Bible Reading

1 Corinthians 12:1 - 12

Sermon

Prayers of intercession

Generous God,

thank you for all we have been given.

As we learn to recognise and value our own gifts, help us not to overlook the simple ones:

the smile for strangers,

the word of encouragement,

the get well card,

the listening ear,

the willingness to be patient

with the long winded, and

gentle with the people we find difficult.

Help us to embrace all we meet

with the generosity of your love.

For the sake of the one who embodied that love, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Offering Prayer

We bring our offering with an eager heart, as an act of worship to you. May we find the comfort we desire in you and the strength we need in your name. May your presence be with us every hour of the day. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Song

Oceans

Blessing

Flame-dancing Spirit, ,

sweep us off our feet and

dance us through our days.

Surprise us with your rhythms,

dare us to try new steps, explore

new patterns and new partnerships.

Release us from old routines,

to swing in abandoned joy

and fearful adventure.

And in the intervals,

rest us,

in your still centre.

Introduction to Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Through the use of our spiritual gifts. As Paul says in the first verse of our bible reading, "Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed." So over the next 4 weeks we're going to dive into looking at what spiritual gifts are and how they can be used to help us all find a place of life giving connection and service in our church.

So, let's go ahead and start off with a working definition of spiritual gifts, and then we will look at Scripture. What is a spiritual gift? We might automatically think that this is something like a gift that we might give some for their birthday or at Christmas. No, the Spiritual gifts are not physical things. They're not even intangibles. As Paul says, they are the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit of God comes to a believer, he makes himself known through the expression of the gifts. At the moment I have asthma. How do I know, well it's manifesting itself, making itself known through this persistent cough. I have the presence of God's Holy Spirit in me. How do I know, well one way is through the gifts of leadership, preaching and faith.

So what does this mean for followers of Jesus. 3 things.

First, notice that Paul makes the statement that every believer is gifted. "To each is given." The Holy Spirit confirms through Paul that each Spirit-born person is gifted. And it could be more. If we turn to 1 Peter 4:10 when Peter speaks of gifts the original Greek points to the fact that we have received at least one gift.

It's a bit like being on an Oprah Winfrey show. Remember, not that I ever watched it, she'd call out to the audience, "you get a prize and you get a prize and you get a prize". It was exciting. Everyone was a winner. And so people wanted to go on her show. But I wonder how many of us think that the gifts of the Spirit are like The Price is Right? There's a chance that we might get our name called out, then there's a chance that we might get the right price and then there's a chance that we might win something. But very few get anything.

Unfortunately, I think that's how too many people live. And that is a pity for us both as a church and as individuals. Because notice what Paul says about the giving of gifts. They are given "for the common good." There was a family sitting around one day talking about the gifts they'd received. One had received an ipod, another a ipad, another a iphone. And the mother says, well I received an iron. Which gift was for the benefit of the whole family?

Paul writes to the church in Rome. 'I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong.' He's not talking about bringing a souvenir from Corinth. It actually means that he wanted to use his own spiritual gifts to build up the church in Rome. Gifts are given not because we are owed them or deserve them. They're given because God loves us. but more than that because God graciously invites us to be part of his mission to the world. The reason God gives gifts of grace is so that they are used for the benefit of others. Peter says a good steward is one who in fact employs the gift they've received to serve others.

The whole point of you being gifted is for you to dispense the grace of God to those around you. I hope this exhilarates you! Remember, Paul calls the gifts of the Holy Spirit, "manifestations of the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:7). Think about that. Manifestations of the Spirit. When one faithfully uses their gift to serve others, dispensing God's grace, God the Holy Spirit is manifested - made visible! We see his works, the effects of the Spirit. In the final verse of our reading Paul pulls all of this together. "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ".

I was talking one morning after a worship service, in another congregation, to a paediatrician. We noticed one of the babies who was just starting to walk. And this doctor stopped and reflected and was amazed again at how difficult a task like walking was to master. He explained that for that little toddler he needed to coordinate his eyes, head, arms, body, hips, legs and feet.

All the while thinking ahead to what was coming. He said that we think of walking as just involving our feet and legs. Yet, every part of our body was involved.

So too is it the church. God has gifted and shaped and created this church to play a unique role in his mission for this world. This church is more than our worship on Sunday, it is more than our care for each other, it is more than our youth and children's groups and our groups that connect with the community. Our church is all this, together and so much more. It is the upfront that we see, and the things that happen behind the scenes. It is what we do when we are together and what we do when we are in our homes, workplaces, with friends and neighbours.

And all that we do as a church is directed toward the glory of God. Together as one congregation, in many places, we use our gifts in such a way that we point to God and show his beauty, reflect his kindness, reveal the wonder of his love, spreads the riches of his grace. In the use of the giftings God has given us, it should be our desire that whoever is the recipient would say, "Man God is so good! he is so loving and kind!"

So, if we want to be faithful to this statement "We will earnestly desire the gifts of the Holy Spirit, not quenching is work among us. We will strive to exercise the gifts in a way that emphasizes the way of love and builds up the church most", what should we do? We should **SOAR**.

Seek. With zeal we should seek the Holy Spirit and his gifts for the good of this body (Luke 11:9-13)

Openness. Be open to how the Spirit might empower you, enable you, gift you for the benefit of others. Don't quench the Spirit through unbelief and

Act - In faith, step out and act. Speak the word of encouragement. Serve; don't wait. ACT. You may say, "Yeah, but all I am doing is making a meal or writing a card or clearing a driveway or mowing a lawn. Are you serious! Don't diminish how God wants to spread grace through you! You have a gift to give away! The Holy Spirit wants his effects to be made visible in a thousand ways through his people, through you!"

Rely - Consciously ask and expect the help and blessing and strength of God.

Amen.