

## The Vine at Home

### 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time – Year B

#### Call to worship

We are the people of The Word,  
And we gather this day, to hear words, to pray in words,  
And to connect with The Word who is all around us.

In Jesus name we pray, Amen.<sup>1</sup>

#### Hymn: 28 STF Jesus calls us here to meet him

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwBGtFPd6TQ>

#### Opening Prayers

God of all wisdom, we give you thanks for the times in which we have experienced your wisdom in our lives.

Let us be still and gather ourselves in the space.

Let us seek to open ourselves out to connect with the Spirit of God who comes amongst us, by some mystery.

*[Pause]*

Forgive us for those times where we've failed to recognise your presence and give us the courage to walk away from situations that prevent us and others from receiving all that you have to offer us.

Open our eyes to new and exciting ways of being so that all who we encounter, will experience your wisdom and love.

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

#### Let us now say the Lord's Prayer

#### Readings: 2 Samuel 11:26 - 12:13a

**26** When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. **27** When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son.

#### Nathan Condemns David

But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord, **12 1** and the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. **2** The rich man had very many flocks and herds; **3** but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meagre fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. **4** Now there came a traveller to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had

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<sup>1</sup> Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Ramona Samuel

come to him.” **5** Then David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; **6** he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

**7** Nathan said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; **8** I gave you your master’s house, and your master’s wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. **9** Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. **10** Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. **11** Thus says the Lord: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbour, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. **12** For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.” **13** David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nathan said to David, “Now the Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die.

### **John 6:24-35**

**24** So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

**25** When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” **26** Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. **27** Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.” **28** Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?” **29** Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” **30** So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?” **31** Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” **32** Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. **33** For the bread of God is that which<sup>[a]</sup>comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” **34** They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

**35** Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

### **Reflections on the reading**

*[You might like to use the video version of this spoken word piece by Becki Stennett – <https://theworshipcloud.com/view/store/twelvebaskets-vine-video-putting-ourselves-in-the-story-becki-stennett-the-vine-video-1st-august-2021>].*

### **[Hold a Bible]**

When we pick up this book,  
Let it open in hands,  
Do we expect only to find ancient people in far off lands?  
Is it ancient wisdom, okay for a time long past,  
Quaint in prose and rhyme,

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Or does this book – this word –  
Live in ways we can't always know?  
Does it give to us new life, these words written long ago?

If these words are only ancient,  
Consigned to a past long dead,  
We ought perhaps leave them there,  
Or we could delve into it instead, and see that  
All humanity is written on these pages,  
The story of God at work throughout the ages  
And recognise there are no new stories really,  
But tales repeated often of God's glory,  
And our attempt to worship, follow,  
Sometimes successfully, and sometimes less so.

When we read the story of King David,  
The rich man, the poor man and the prophet named Nathan,  
Do we leave it there in history and declare ourselves  
By some mystery – far beyond, above,  
Such abuse of power and ignorance of the law of love?

Or are we prepared to see ourselves in the writing,  
As abusers of power, willing to let others suffer in the fighting,  
To sweep our ill behaviours under the rug.  
Or to see ourselves – or others – as the abused who becomes a mother,  
In the line of Jesus:  
Yes! But so vulnerable nonetheless.  
As we look into the story and consider it a mirror,  
Do we wonder how David treated her, how we treat others like her?

David couldn't see himself within the story,  
Only sat a while, basking in his kingly glory,  
Until his eyes were opened and he saw the truth in the allegory,  
Saw his behaviour was so terrible, awful  
Unlawful in the eyes of God, who surely gave David all his might  
And authority, and who amazingly  
Forgave him so that David might be the king from whose line the Saviour would come.

If we leave the holy tales to simply fade and pale,  
Into a history we've moved on from,  
Then we have forgotten that this work of ages,  
Is our story too, splashed across the pages.  
It's the story of a people trying to get things right  
And being reminded, sometimes, that they might  
Just have strayed, forgotten God, hurt others, not lived as sisters and brothers  
As they should.

And for us, who live by the Word of God, there is no new story  
There is us, and God, and world which needs to see God's glory,  
And just might see God's glory if  
When we pick up this book, let it open in our hands,

We begin to understand that we are in these stories  
We are on these pages  
Written in long-past ages.

Their story. Our story.  
Our past and future glory,  
In a Word which lives,  
And longs for conversation with us,  
Speaking to us today,  
If only we can let it.<sup>3</sup>

### **Prayers of intercession**

Let us pray.

God of all grace, we bring you ourselves.  
We bring you our lives, as they currently are, with all that is broken and wrong, but also  
much to be grateful for and to celebrate.  
Use us, O God, to build your kingdom, to seek peace in our world, to build communities of  
love.

May we follow in your way, O God.

God of all grace, we bring you our churches,  
Caught in this strange 'in between' time, as we reflect on the painful experiences of  
lockdown, and how we can best serve our communities and our world over this summer and  
into the year ahead.  
Show us how to create safe spaces, spaces where people can grieve, can find healing, can  
meet with you and be transformed by your grace.

May we follow in your way, O God.

God of all grace, we bring you our nation,  
We bring to you all who have been working overtime to see us through this time of crisis,  
and all who will need to work overtime as we seek to rebuild our communities, our economy,  
our relationships and our livelihoods.  
We bring you our leaders and all who must face difficult decisions or face up to inadequacies  
in our systems exposed by the process of lockdown and pandemic.  
Show us how to be a people of grace.

May we follow in your way, O God.

God of all grace, we pray for our world.  
As we look out on a global pandemic, and a world in which we have gone backwards in  
tackling poverty and reaching those most in need during this time of pandemic, which has  
affected the most vulnerable in our world more than many of us.  
As we rebuild, show us how to build a world in which every person's needs are provided for.  
A world where every person's potential is fulfilled.

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<sup>3</sup> Reflection written by Becki Stennett

May we follow in your way, O God.

May I follow in your way, O God.

Show me what is mine to do.

We bring this, and all our prayers, in Jesus' name, Amen.<sup>4</sup>

**Hymn: 239 STF – Sent by the Lord am I** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uN-oeDI7Aq>

## **Blessing**

Arise from this place and go out into the world.

A world of so much division and pain,

A world crying out for love,

You, each one of you, can be that bit of love for someone this week.

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

<sup>5</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker

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