

**Call to worship**(based on Psalm 14)
The foolish say, “There is no God!
We are alone, on our own.”
**We gather to declare**
**the glory of God in our lives**.
The foolish say, “It is your life;
you are accountable to no one.”
**We gather, strengthened by the Spirit,**
**trusting that Christ dwells in our hearts**.
The foolish say, “Everything I have is mine;
I owe nothing to any one.”
**We gather to praise the One**
**who calls us to serve others in love**.
(Source: Thom Shuman, [Lectionary Liturgies)](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.ca/)

**Welcome gathered and online + acknowledge land**

As we gather, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of this sacred land. I join worship on the land of the Kaurna people. We pay our respects to their elders, past, present and emerging. We acknowledge that the First Peoples of this land had already encountered the Creator God before the arrival of the colonisers, and that the Spirit was already in the land revealing God to the people through law, custom and ceremony.

**Song TIS 227 When morning guilds the sky**

**When morning gilds the skies,my heart awaking cries:May Jesus Christ be praised!Alike at work and prayerI know my Lord is there:May Jesus Christ be praised!2To God, the word on highthe hosts of angels cry:May Jesus Christ be praised!Let mortals, too, upraisetheir voice in hymns of praise:May Jesus Christ be praised!**

**3Let earth’s wide circle roundin joyful notes resound:May Jesus Christ be praised!Let air and sea and sky,from depth to height, reply:May Jesus Christ be praised!4Be this, when day is past,of all my thoughts the last,May Jesus Christ be praised!The night becomes as daywhen from the heart we say:May Jesus Christ be praised!**

**5Be this while life is minemy song of praise divine,May Jesus Christ be praised!Be this the eternal songthrough all the ages long,May Jesus Christ be praised!**

**Prayer**

Eternal God, whose spirit so many centuries ago brooded over the face of the waters, and from chaos brought calm, brood upon our hearts at the outset of this day.  Let the mists of our uncleanness, our selfishness, our pettiness, our pride, our fear, slink away before the sunshine of your love.

Pour on us your peace to calm our worries.

May all that is good and lovely awaken into glorious life within us.

Stir us to the depths of our being until deep answers deep until every part of our being thrills with your drawing near to us.

May your presence be with us all.  Through Jesus Christ we pray.

**Psalm 46**

**1**God is our refuge and strength,
    a very present[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalm+46&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-14616a)] help in trouble.
**2**Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
    though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
**3**though its waters roar and foam,
    though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

***4****There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
    the holy habitation of the Most High.****5****God is in the midst of the city;[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalm+46&version=NRSV" \l "fen-NRSV-14620b" \o "See footnote b)] it shall not be moved;
    God will help it when the morning dawns.****6****The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
    he utters his voice, the earth melts.****7****The Lord of hosts is with us;
    the God of Jacob is our refuge.[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalm+46&version=NRSV" \l "fen-NRSV-14622c" \o "See footnote c)*]

**8**Come, behold the works of the Lord;
    see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
**9**He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
    he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
    he burns the shields with fire.
**10**“*Be still, and know that I am God!
    I am exalted among the nations,
    I am exalted in the earth.”****11****The Lord of hosts is with us;
    the God of Jacob is our refuge.[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalm+46&version=NRSV" \l "fen-NRSV-14626d" \o "See footnote d)]*

**Prayer of Confession**
We confess, Living God,
that we too often live as though you had taken leave of your world and left us in charge. Such belief makes us feel not lonely, but empowered.
We do what we want, constantly push the boundaries towards our self-interest
and don’t think sufficiently about the needs of others.
We discover our planet polluted,
the weak exploited and justice which seeks profit more than truth.
We cannot rescue ourselves, nor our planet,
and our best hopes and plans are frustrated in a heap of good intentions never fulfilled.
Yet you come to us in Christ
not only to assure us of pardon and security,
but to encourage us to live in contentment, simplicity and generosity.
We turn from our grasping to accept what you give to us freely and without cost: forgive us our falling-short.
By your grace, may we turn to one another,
paying particular attention to those from whom we turn away most readily,
and know your presence among us as we strive to live as pleases you;
for the sake of the One who became poor, though rich
that we, though poor, might share his riches – Christ our Lord. Amen.
(Source: Rev Grant Barclay, [*Starters for Sunday*](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/50688/29_July_Grant_Barclay_10_after_Pentecost_formatted.pdf))

# Song TAIZÉ: Dans nos obscurités

# Within our darkest night,you kindle the firethat never dies away,that never dies away.Within our darkest night,you kindle the firethat never dies away,that never dies away.

### Reading John 6: 1-21

**6**After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+6&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26248a)] **2**A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. **3**Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. **4**Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. **5**When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” **6**He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. **7**Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+6&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26254b)] would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” **8**One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, **9**“There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” **10**Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+6&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26257c)] sat down, about five thousand in all. **11**Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. **12**When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” **13**So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. **14**When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

**15**When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

**Jesus Walks on the Water**

**16**When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, **17**got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. **18**The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. **19**When they had rowed about three or four miles,[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+6&version=NRSV" \l "fen-NRSV-26266d" \o "See footnote d)] they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. **20**But he said to them, “It is I;[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+6&version=NRSV" \l "fen-NRSV-26267e" \o "See footnote e)] do not be afraid.” **21**Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

**Sermon/reflection**

Today’s reading from John, chapt 6 talks about a moment in Jesus’ life focused on miracles. Firstly, the so called feeding of the 5000 and then Jesus walking on water, and then next week’s reading is a dialogue about Jesus being the bread of life.

I couldn’t help but wonder if it was a bit like two bits of bread that make up a sandwich and the filling in between. Today I want to focus on the meat of the sandwich or the filling, and that filling is the story of the storm on the lake and what that can teach us, what **assurance** can it give to us today, this day and in our troubled and stormy days ahead.

So the sandwich idea fits well and as I see it, the meat/filling is the storm on the lake event. In any good sandwich, it’s the filling that’s often the best or important, especially for a grieving community, in the middle of covid lockdown, the spread of the virus, isolation, stress, troubled and going through this again.

In times like these it is very easy and common to ask questions like, where is God?, why no healing? What is going on?

A tsunami of anxiety, fear, and frustration has hit again in the lockdown. Fear of the unknown, the what if’s, the fear of what we do know (from last time) being stuck in the house for a week (stuck in the boat on the lake), in the middle of a week of lockdown –in the middle of the lake and storm!

The reading is a timely word for today. Faith in God’s ways and God’s presence may sound naive and impractical, but, when we take the risk and live as faithful followers of Christ, we can discover that the principles of God’s Reign really are the best way to live. (love, faith, peace, compassion, kindness, other focused, forgiving – fruits of the Spirit – golden rule- Micha 6, be still and know psalm 46 – I am the way the truth and the life: the way of Jesus)

When I looked at the text I wondered what is good news in this story for today’s church, literally for this day and this time?

I wondered if this chapter challenges our understanding that God is only present in the good times, in the safe times, when all seems to be going well or smooth sailing, or that God is in the big event? That is the feeding of the 5000 where everyone is happy and filled.

But when we are faced, first hand with experiences of the opposite, natural questions arise, where is Jesus? Where is God?

In the middle of distress, pain and grief, we often think that God is not here, that Jesus is not present. However the text today begs to say differently.

That is the meat or filling of the sandwich, something that I hold very dear, very tightly, is that God is present in our human, daily lives and especially, especially in times of pain and loss, in times of life’s storms and dark nights.

Listen to the description of the story, evening, sea, dark waves, alone, sea rose, winds blew, strong rowing, fear and frightened. You can almost hear the disciples calling out – where is Jesus? In the storm!

John Van Dar Larr says When the disciples face a storm alone, their fear threatens to sink them, but when they realise that Jesus is with them, they find the way to land safely. These narratives may be interpreted miraculously or not, but either way the principle remains: the miracle of God’s Reign is that we begin to believe that we can feed crowds, we can navigate storms, and we can discover ways to live that liberate us from the prisons of our own self-interest, lust, and self-sufficiency.

The key thinking here then, is to risk believing in God’s Reign enough that we embrace its values as the primary driving force of our lives, and as the guiding principle for addressing the crises of our times.

The meat of the gospel message that we hear today is that God has not left us, God is not absent, that God’s grace filled, loving hands are not tied and we are not on our own. The whole basis of the Christian faith is that God is present, in and through Jesus Christ, present in the Spirit and manifested in the body of Christ – the church, Incarnate, resurrected and present in our lives, in all our life, in the good and in the bad.

Jesus comes to the struggling disciples and gets into their boat, as he does with us, in the midst of the raging storm. He bring his word to us, as he did to the disciples – It is I, do not be afraid.

Jesus makes a powerful self-identifying statement, obscured in our English translations, in verse 20: when he says, “It is I; don’t be afraid.”

Joel Dornam says Wanna know what He literally said—what they heard? He said, “I AM. Don’t fear”. They heard- “I Am” as in the One who appeared in the burning bush to Moses and gave that name.’ I Am’

This was God in the flesh. They knew it was Jesus the man, but now they were understanding this was Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, incarnate one, the one in who God is fully realised.

The boat wasn’t meandering on the shoreline when Jesus got on board—they were three or four miles out. They were in the middle of the lake and when Jesus gets on board, they “immediately…reached shore where they were heading.” Once again, the “I AM” brought God’s people through the troubled waters of a stormy sea into safety.

Our lives can sometimes feel like that: stretched and beaten, upset, tossed about, fear anxiety, by the storm, by the virus. Then Jesus shows up saying, “It’s me…the I Am. Don’t be afraid.” All the while, the storm is raging all around us.

We are not promised a life of ease and free of difficulties, but a promise to get us through the darkness, violence, and storms.

Sometimes the storms are stilled. More often than not, however, “I Am’ calms us.

In every life a choice must be made in which we decide the principles that will guide us and trust that following the ways of God’s Reign truly do lead us to life. The challenge is that we would love to believe that following Jesus guarantees prosperity, health and safety, but this is not what this text promises.

Van der Larr says One of the tragedies of the contemporary church is that we have failed to live the faith we proclaim. He says, Where we have spoken about forgiveness and grace, we have been vindictive and condemning. Where we have spoken about trust and generosity, we have been greedy and stingy. Where we have spoken about courage and integrity, we have been fearful and cowardly. If the world is to believe our message, we are going to have to manifest it in our lives and communities, and when we do, we may well discover that we contribute to wholeness and peace in our world.

Jesus says in John 14:27 **Peace** **I** leave with **you**; my **peace** **I** **give** **to** **you**. **I** do not **give** **to** **you** as the world **give**s. Do not let **you**r hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

It is St Paul who further writes in Rom 8 about the absolute assurance of the presence of God in Christ Jesus, no matter what. He writes…

38For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,[[b](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans%208:31-39;&version=31;" \l "fen-NIV-28140b#fen-NIV-28140b" \o "See footnote b)] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We might ask questions of God, where are you, why, why this, why not that. These are normal questions; they are questions we **need** to ask. It is ok to feel lost, angry, confused. It is ok and even right to feel like you are in a boat being tossed by strong wind and huge waves. But let us be reminded that it is often in the very storms that Jesus comes. And when Jesus comes, when the I Am comes, let us be ready and willing to take Jesus into our boat.

May the peace of our lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the counsel of the Holy Spirit be with each of us today and in the days to come.

Amen

Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)

You call me out upon the waters
The great unknown where feet may fail
And there I find You in the mystery
In oceans deep
My faith will stand

And I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine

Your grace abounds in deepest waters
Your sovereign hand
Will be my guide
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me
You've never failed and You won't start now

So I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine

Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders
Let me walk upon the waters
Wherever You would call me
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander
And my faith will be made stronger
In the presence of my Savior

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**Prayer** The worst storms, Jesus, are the ones caused

by our fear,

when we grow afraid of losing our power,

or we grow suspicious of the power of others,

when we refuse to acknowledge your mysterious authority;

Yet, it’s in the storm that we find our capacity to love.

In releasing our weak claim to power

and opening to your reign,

we discover a new way of seeing ourselves –

as called and useful and beloved –

and the other, whoever they may be –

as dignified and precious and beloved.

Here in the storm, Jesus, we need you, and we need each other,

and the love you give us to share,

leads us through sacrifice and self-giving

to peace and calm,

if only we will loose our hold on fear.

Amen.

**Song TIS 703 As a deer**

**As the deer pants for the water,**

**so my soul longs after you.**

**You alone are my heart’s desire**

**and I long to worship you.**

**You alone are my strength, my shield,**

**to you alone may my spirit yield.**

**You alone are my heart’s desire**

**and I long to worship you.**

**Prayer of Intercession**
I want it.
I can have it.
I will take it.
God whom we see in Jesus the Giver,
Your ways are constantly greater than ours.
The deep-rooted motivations which drive us
too often orbit around gaining, possessing, controlling.
And so we have crafted a world of sale and purchase,
price often detached from value,
ownership without responsibility.

Forgive us that, in this world of stuff,
we have made even human beings into commodities:
traded and trafficked, used and discarded,
fooled into imprisonment, and worse
as they are passed around people willing to pay the price.

Your ways, shown in Christ,
are to desire the good of others,
to develop a discipline of donation
recognising it is more blessed to give than to receive,
and to freely give that which we have freely received.

We pray for people whose names and situations
shall only ever be known to us in general terms:
as stories on the news, people grouped for convenience
but whose individual lives, hopes and needs
are each held in Your everlasting care.

We pray, too, for those groups whom we classify
with the definite article: the lonely, the weary, the sick, the grieving.
We remember that ‘they’ are just like us; and each one is loved by you.

Draw close in loving grace to
those who feel little sense of being loved, supported or accompanied in life;
people today who are at their wits’ end, tired, almost defeated;
individuals who struggle with ill-health of all types
and those who bear the pain of having loved by enduring grief.
Hear our quiet prayers for those whom we know,
and name now in your presence here;
and may your presence with them strengthen and uphold them.

The waves which rock our small boat of self-sufficiency are largely of our own making:
our anxiety, our lack of trust, or unwillingness to give giving a chance.
As you come to us in the midst of our struggle to share,
accept our invitation and come aboard our small, bobbing craft
to lead us closer to your ways, and to your peace.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen
(Source: Rev Grant Barclay, [*Starters for Sunday*](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/50688/29_July_Grant_Barclay_10_after_Pentecost_formatted.pdf))

**Song TIS 477 Jesus call us here to meet him**

**Jesus calls us here to meet him**

**as, through word and song and prayer,**

**we affirm God’s promised presence**

**where his people live and care.**

**Praise the God who keeps his promise;**

**praise the Son who calls us friends;**

**praise the Spirit who, among us,**

**to our hopes and fears attends.**

**2**

**Jesus calls us to confess him**

**Word of Life and Lord of All,**

**sharer of our flesh and frailness**

**saving all who fail or fall.**

**Tell his holy human story;**

**tell his tales that all may hear;**

**tell the world that Christ in glory**

**came to earth to meet us here.**

**3**

**Jesus calls us to each other:**

**found in him are no divides.**

**Race and class and sex and language**

**such are barriers he derides.**

**Join the hand of friend and stranger;**

**join the hands of age and youth;**

**join the faithful and the doubter**

**in their common search for truth.**

**St Columba’s blessing**

Peace of the ebbing tide to you,

Peace of the firmest ground to you,

Peace of the gently setting sun to you,

Peace of the smiling rising moon to you

Peace of the night sky to you,

Peace of the morning’s hope to you,

The peace of all peace be to you,

This day this night and evermore.  Amen

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