

## Unwelcome - Grace Feb 2017

### Take 1...

Unwelcome

God is here  
*His Spirit is with us*  
(But not with them)

We live in troubled times. Our enemies press in on every side. We need to stay true to our faith and our God and not be deceived by those who seem to be welcoming to all. We will be overrun and the purity of our faith will get watered down. This happened to the Israelites.

I have commissioned an icon for the God of our times which I'd like to unveil.  
listen to the word of the Lord.

Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance,  
the whole earth as your possession.  
You will break them with an iron rod  
and smash them like clay pots. Ps 2:8-9

Arise, O lord!  
Rescue me, my God!  
Slap all my enemies in the face! Ps 3:7

O my God, scatter them like tumbleweed,  
like chaff before the wind!  
As a fire burns a forest  
and as a flame sets mountains ablaze,  
chase them with your fierce storm;  
terrify them with your tempest.  
Utterly disgrace them  
until they submit to your name, O lord. Ps 83: 13-16

Light three candles in the name of  
God the protector, God the chief of heaven's armies and the defending spirit

Song:

Excluding God  
Excluding God  
You love me  
but not my neighbour  
Excluding god

Unwelcoming God  
Unwelcoming God  
Close the door  
Ring fence the table  
Unwelcoming god

Unwelcome everyone!

## Take 2...

God the Creator is a gracious, abundant and generous host  
You are invited to be guests at God's table  
Make yourself at home  
Relax  
God is here  
You are welcome

We live in troubled times. Originally the theme of tonight's Grace was planned to be love but it seemed that as God's people it would be dishonest not to name what is going on in our world at the moment. Many of us are troubled at the rise of nationalism, the building of walls literal and metaphorical between one human and another (no doubt because of fear), whether because of where they are from, their race, their skin colour, their religion, their sexuality, their beliefs.

What is particularly painful is that God's name is being invoked as in favour of this way of world making. We are after all made in the image of God. What God is that? The god of Unwelcome? The image of Unwelcome?

So tonight we aren't feeling particularly polite or neutral or that it is possible for our faith to not engage with all of life including the politics of unwelcome or the politics of embrace. Along with the God of unwelcome or the God of embrace. Tonight is a mix of prayers, readings, songs, space, conversation and sharing bread and wine at Christ's table. Which God do we serve and how I wonder? In whose image are we made?

We have another icon made by artist Meg Wroe which is simply stunning. Unveil the icon

Listen to the words of Jesus:  
'Who needs a doctor? The healthy or the sick?  
I'm here to invite outsiders not coddle insiders'

'The wretched of the earth learn that God is on their side'

'Are you tired? worn out? burned out on religion?  
come to me....'

And the words of Paul:  
'You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here'

Blow out the candles and then relight with these words...

Gracious God  
You have shared with us the gift of Creation  
*Open our hearts to receive you here*

Jesus Friend of Sinners  
You have shared with us the gift of your Incarnation  
*Open our hearts to receive you here*

Spirit of God  
You have shared with us the gift of life  
*Open our hearts to receive you here*

Song:

Welcoming God  
Welcoming God  
An open home  
and a holy table  
Welcoming God

Enfleshing God  
Enfleshing God  
Jesus Christ  
and his welcome  
Enfleshing god

Accepting God  
Accepting God  
Grace and care  
heal rejection  
Accepting god

Embracing God  
Embracing God  
In the poor  
and the stranger  
Embracing God

Welcoming God  
Welcoming God  
An open home  
and a holy table  
Welcoming God

Discussion in groups -

How are you feeling about the world's events - this country and USA in particular?

Where do you go in the bible to make sense of what's happening?

Do God's people worship a God of welcome to all or a God who looks after their tribe and nation?

Discuss... feedback...

Prayer and confession:

Invite you to pray for our world by lighting candles

Confession that there is an oppressor in each of us as well as a liberator

*God help us to change*

*To change ourselves and our world*

*To know the need for it*

*To deal with the pain of it*

*To feel the joy of it*

*To undertake the journey without understanding the destination*

*The art of gentle revolution*

Manifesto from Another world is possible:

Each human life is a gift from God

Each person has equal worth and value

We stand in solidarity against any relationships, practices or structures which deny or undermine this belief

The resources of the earth are God's gift to us

for which we are called to take responsibility and show care

We are called to live simply,

identify with the poor

and know that our possessions and wealth are gifts from God

to be shared for the common good.

We are of all genders, ethnicities backgrounds and dis/abilities

We stand together with Christians all over the world

We are called to love one another

and to be a healing community seeking the wholeness and liberation of all peoples...

Communion:

Play Table of Christ

Prayer of thanksgiving

God our Father and Mother thank you that you are a gracious, abundant and generous host. Creator of every thing, thank you that you became the guest of humanity. The heavenly host, the creator, became the guest of the animals in the stable, the villagers of Nazareth, the religious leaders in the temple, the prostitutes, drunkards, tax collectors. You let us play host, became one of us, dined at our table. You ate the same bread, drank the same wine - everybody having a good time. You shared stories, shared our story. When you left the table, you left bread and wine to remember you by.....

*Holy holy holy Lord  
God of all peoples  
Heaven and earth are full of your welcome  
Hosanna in the highest*

Your death on the cross has enabled us to be guests at God's table. Grant that by the power of the Holy Spirit these gifts of bread and wine may be for us his body and blood who on the night he was betrayed took bread, gave you thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples saying 'take eat, this is my body which is given for you'. After supper he took the cup, gave you thanks, and said to them: 'this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me'

*Christ has died  
Christ is risen  
Christ will come again*

#### Invitation

The table of Jesus is your place of gathering  
Here you are welcomed, wanted, loved  
Here there is a place set for you

So come all you who thirst,  
All you who hunger for the bread of life  
All you whose souls cry out for healing

Come all you who are excluded  
All you who see walls instead of welcome  
All you who see suspicion in the eyes of power

Come all you who are weary  
All you who are bowed down with worry  
All you who ache with the tiredness of living

Come all you poor  
All you who are without food or refuge  
All you who go hungry in a land of plenty

Come all you who are lost  
All you who search for meaning but cannot find it  
All you who have no place of belonging

Jesus invites you  
Draw near with faith  
Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you and his blood which he shed for you  
Eat and drink in remembrance that Christ died for you and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving

Share bread and wine

#### Blessing:

May God bless us with discomfort  
At easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships  
So that we may live from deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger  
At injustice, oppression, and exploitation of  
God's creations  
So that we may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless us with tears  
To shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger,  
and war,  
So that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and  
To turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with just enough foolishness  
To believe that we can make a difference in the world,  
So that we can do what others claim cannot be done:  
To bring justice and kindness to all our children and all our neighbours who are poor.  
Amen.