



**Door Handout as people come in:** String 50 cm long

**Call**

The day breaks

**And God does not let us go.**

The hour calls

**And God does not let us go.**

When evening falls

**God holds us fast.**

Let us turn to God in worship

**God, who never turns from us.**

**SONG:** SPG 4 # 372 Shake up the Morning

**Welcome and acknowledgement of land**

**Gathering Prayer**

Leader: God, you see us.

East: You see our struggles,

West: You see our difficulties.

East: You see our possibilities,

West: You see our promise.

East: Soften the hard spots with your blessing.

West: Call us in our wandering to hear you say our names.

**All: For you are a good God, a God present in the scramble,  
And in the end, you always, always have a blessing.**

Leader: For this and so much more, we give you thanks!

**Bible Reading** Genesis 32:22-31

**Early word**

In her book *Scarred By Struggle, Transformed By Hope*, the Benedictine nun and writer Joan Chittister uses the Jacob story as a paradigm for a "spirituality of struggle." In Jacob's story she identifies eight elements of our human struggle - change, isolation, darkness, fear, powerlessness, vulnerability, exhaustion, and scarring. But with each human struggle there is a corresponding divine gift - conversion, independence, faith, courage, surrender, limitations, endurance, and transformation. "Jacob does what all of us must do, if, in the end, we too are to become true. He

confronts in himself the things that are wounding him, admits his limitations, accepts his situation, rejoins the world, and moves on." The end result of the nocturnal struggle for Jacob, the cheater and liar, was God's blessing: "God blessed Jacob there" (32:29).

*The Spirituality of Struggle:*

Change..... Conversion  
Isolation.....Independence  
Darkness....Faith  
Fear.....Courage  
Powerlessness....Surrender  
Vulnerability....Limitations  
Exhaustion....Endurance  
Scarring.... Transformation

**Meditation on wrestling and blessing.**

Let us reflect on the story of Jacob's wrestling and the insights of Joan Chittister. As an aid to reflection, in a spirit of prayer, use the string to tie knots, representing points of struggle in our lives. And, where there is blessing, a little loop to represent the space blessing creates in our lives for new possibilities. Or use the music and the images to invite God into our hearts to wrestle and bless.

**Musical interlude**

**SONG:** SPG4 Will We Ever

**The prayers of who we are**

God is present to us, but we don't always feel it.  
God is good to us, but we don't always know it  
Fact is, there are things within and around us  
that attempt to step between us and our relationship to God's goodness.  
Sometimes our senses are dulled to the possibility of finding God  
in unexpected places and people.  
Sometimes there are things that we think, things that we do,  
that act to separate us from God.

*A time for silent reflection*

**Words of assurance**

God is present!  
**God is always present! Thanks be to God**

**SONG:** Faith Has Set Us On A Journey" (*Tune: Venture*) 14 FFS

Faith has set us on a journey  
past the landmarks that we know,  
taking risks with no insurance  
but the Word that tells us "Go!"  
Friend or job or home or lover  
we may need to leave behind,  
outworn truths and ways of thinking,  
baggage to the past consigned.

Some are swags of easy conscience  
who with others hitch a ride,  
some are tourist-package Christians,  
dollar-safe, with Book and guide.  
There are others on this journey -  
those who long and pray and search,  
heave the stones to free the structures,  
love the Christ and leave the Church.

We are this unlikely people  
in the Body knit as one,  
company of clowns and cripples -  
some are wise and some can run.  
Prophets are our travel agents,  
gospel-makers lay this road:  
to the place of peace and promise  
faith will take us into God.  
(Shirley E Murray)

**Witness** Geoff Boyce

### **Discussion**

**Paul Kelly:** Time and Tide (*from 'Spring and Fall' album*)

Time and tide wait for no-one  
And they won't wait for you or me  
You got to know  
When to stay and when to go  
When to do, when to be

Time and tide sometimes hurry  
Sometimes move so slow  
You got to be ready  
To jump or hold steady  
A-rocking and a-rolling with the flow

No matter what you think or do  
Sometimes it really isn't up to you  
You just got to get out of the way!  
And if you can't shift at all  
There's nothing you can do at all but pray

Time and tide keep on pushing and pulling  
Pushing and pulling on you and me  
Sometimes our flood runs high  
Sometimes we're both left bone dry  
Dreaming of the deep blue sea

**SONG:** SPG 4 # 39 Jesus Christ our living Lord

### **Offering**

*At this time, you may also choose to surrender the knot that may have troubled you. As you offer it with your gifts of money, be assured of the indwelling gift of blessing you will receive.*

Leader: In our offering, I invite you to bring forward your monetary offering to the front, and to remain standing, holding your piece of string, in a circle around the table. Please leave your Orders of Service in the pews. When we have all gathered, I invite you to share with a person alongside you, and that person respond by sharing with you, one insight that came to you during the reflection on wrestling and blessing. When you have each finished sharing, tie the ends of your strings together. Then repeat by turning to your neighbour on the other side, each share your insights, and tie the ends together. We should end up with a complete circle of string!

*The Paul Kelly music is played softly (on repeat) as people come forward and engage in the sharing and string-tying and until everyone has returned to their seats.*

*When the string-tying is complete, the liturgist proclaims:*

Leader: We are a people of God, tied together in our individual and communal struggles.

We are a pilgrim people, sharing a journey together toward a promised end.  
God, bless the monetary offerings we have made, the gift we are to each other as we connect together in the name of Christ, and the hope this church may be in this city.

Let us leave the circle of string on the floor around the table and return to our seats.

*The circle of string is left on the floor around the table and people move back to their seats. The music is faded out when everyone is back in their seats.*

### **Prayers for others**

*Let us join in prayer on this day of remembrance for Hiroshima, and all that Hiroshima represents, to recall the past, to be challenged in the present and to seek hope for the future.*

O God of power, gracious in love, you have given humankind responsibility to care for all the earth. But we have put our faith in military power, while you call us to build a community of trust and love.

**By our actions and by our inaction, and by our participation in the systems of society we often become agents of violence and destruction.**

O God of us all, let Hiroshima become for us a symbol of hope that nuclear weapons will never again be used to kill and destroy.

**Let us remember Hiroshima as a beacon to commit ourselves to find ways to live together in peace, that we may not be just peace lovers, but peacemakers.**

O God of infinite possibility, transform our hearts and minds and give us courage to use our skills and technology to transform weapons that destroy into all that upholds life.

Isaiah said: "It shall come to pass that the peoples shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

**We pray for the time when "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."**

*Hiroshima Litany – Susan Adams, Education for Justice*

We commit ourselves:

To being peacemakers in our own lives, families, and communities as well as nationally and internationally

**Blessed are the peacemakers**

To building relationships based on justice, equality and participation as the only true basis for a peaceful society

**Blessed are the peacemakers**

To forgiving others when they do wrong against us

**Blessed are the peacemakers**

To not ignoring the real sources of conflict and violence

**Blessed are the peacemakers**

To not retaliating when we are attacked or criticised

**Blessed are the peacemakers**

To resolving conflict constructively through dialogue

**Blessed are the peacemakers**

*Source: Roger Courtney, Progressive Christianity*

**SONG:** SFP 4 #39 Spirit of peace

### **Benediction**

God's peace: carry, keep and hold you.

God's love: nourish, bless and enfold you.

God's spirit: inspire, lift and mold you.

**Amen.**

### **Passing the peace**