

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



14th February

Transfiguration



Note: There will be no Worship Service at the Church this Sunday 14th February 2021 due to the latest government restrictions which requires a Stage 4 lockdown for the state of Victoria – this situation will be reviewed again after Wednesday 17th February 2021.

INVITATION TO WORSHIP

Jesus, Light of the world, calls us to be transfigured
into the people who also shine light into the world,
Come, let us follow him.

TIS 28 God is our strength and refuge

*God is our strength and refuge,
our present help in trouble;
and we therefore will not fear,
though the earth should change,
though mountains shake and tremble,
though swirling waters are raging;
God the Lord of Hosts is with us evermore.*

*There is a flowing river
within God's holy city;
God is in the midst of her,
she shall not be moved.
God's help is swiftly given,
thrones vanish at his presence
God the Lord of Hosts is with us evermore.*

*Come, see the works of our maker,
Learn of his deeds all-powerful:
wars will cease across the world
when he shatters the spear.
Be still and know your creator,
Uplift him in the nations;
God the Lord of Hosts is with us evermore.*

Richard Thomas Bewes 1934 -

PRAYERS

God of Creation, God of Love, God of Wisdom and Justice,
Scripture tells us of Jesus, shining, and his friends awed and stuttering at what they saw.
They saw him connected with the prophets from their past.
We come as your people, wanting to follow Jesus more closely,
ready to see the flaws in ourselves and in our society.

May we be ready to adopt the ways that are your ways.

God who calls us to listen deeply, to the earth, to others, to the Spirit

May our ears be open, may our hearts be attentive

God of Compassion, may we see more clearly,

May our eyes be open, may our minds be attentive.

Creator, Sustainer and Bringer of new life may we grow in the ways of Jesus. May we see pathways forward into a world where all are welcome, where all are loved. May we know that it is through passion that we are persuaded .

Gracious God, may we hear the stories of our land and see our stories reflected and enhanced by Your story and the see our lives grow closer to the self- giving love of Christ.

Amen

SCRIPTURE

Your word O Lord is a lamp to our feet

A light to our path

Psalm 50: 1-6

You, LORD, are the mighty God.

.....Wherever the sun shines, from horizon to horizon,

.....you call the earth to attention.

From the spectacular beauty of your holy mountain,

.....**you approach us in a blaze of glory.**

You come with the full fanfare;

.....flashes of fire in front of you;

.....thunder storming all around you.

You call the earth and sky to sit as a jury,

.....**and set out the charges against your people.**

You call the accused:

.....those who swore their faithfulness to you,

.....and signed themselves to a binding alliance.

The whole universe honours you as the judge,

.....**and affirms the honesty of your court.**

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2 Corinthians 4: 3-6

Are people saying that the message we preach is hidden behind some kind of mask? Well, I can assure you that the only people who can't see it clearly are those who will never escape the grip of death. Unable to believe and trust, they were easy prey for the ruling spirit of this present age who messed with their heads and left them blind to the truth. As a result they can't see the glorious light of the message of Christ, and it is when we see Christ in all his glory, that we see the spitting image of God. We are not preaching about ourselves. The message we preach is that Jesus the Christ is Lord of all. We ourselves are slaves at your service, for Jesus' sake. The very God who kicked off creation by calling for light to shine from darkness has now filled our hearts with the light that comes from seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus the Christ and knowing it for what it is.

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Mark 9: 2-9

Jesus took Peter, James and John and led them up a high mountain away from everyone else. Before their very eyes, the way Jesus looked was suddenly changed from the inside out. His clothing became so white that it was dazzling – an effect beyond anything soap powder could ever achieve. Suddenly they saw Moses and Elijah there too, in deep conversation with Jesus.

Peter said, “Boss, this is fantastic! What a moment! How about we knock up three huts, so that you, Moses and Elijah can all stay here longer.” He was just shooting his mouth off without thinking because they were quaking in their boots.

An awesome cloud engulfed them, and from deep within the cloud, a voice boomed forth: “This is my Son, the love of my life. Listen to him!”

Peter, James and John looked around and suddenly everything looked normal again and they saw no one there but Jesus.

As they were coming back down the mountain, Jesus gave them strict instructions not to breathe a word to anyone about about what they had seen, until after the New Human had risen from the dead.

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The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

TIS 675 Shine Jesus Shine

Lord, the light of your love is shining,
in the midst of the darkness, shining;
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us,
set us free by the truth you now bring us – shine on me, shine on me.

*Shine, Jesus, shine,
Fill this land with the Father's glory;
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
Flood the nations with grace and mercy;
Send forth your word, Lord, and let there be light.*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
from the shadows into your radiance;
by your blood I may enter your brightness;
search me, try me, consume all my darkness –
shine on me, shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine,

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
So our faces display your likeness,
Every changing from glory to glory;
Mirrored here, may our lives tell your story –
Shine on me, shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine,

Graeme Kendrick 1950 -

Early Word

Imagine...

Imagine you are a small child. You live happily with your family. You love your mother and you know she loves you.

One day some official looking people come with a police car and they grab you. They take you away.

Your mother tries to hold onto you and screams at these strong men who have hold of you.

They take no notice of her . You are shoved into the car and it drives away. You are sobbing.

You do not know where you are being taken.

You do not know when you will see your mother again.

How might you feel?

Or imagine you are that child's mother. Your child has been dragged away from you. You have no idea when you will see him or her again. What are you feeling?

This is the treatment suffered by thousands of children, most of whom had an Aboriginal mother and a father of a different nationality, often European. Most of these children never saw their families again. It was the Australian Government policy that these children be taken away from their culture and educated in ways to assimilate them in white society. They lost their language and their culture as well as their family. Many led very unhappy lives.

Story

The Burnt Stick by Anthony Hill

This is the story of a five year old John Jaggamarra, taken away from his people on a cattle station in Northern Australia, taken to live on a mission where he was taught a trade. Initially when his mother hears that the Welfare people are coming for him, because his skin is lighter than the other children's, she is able to trick them. She rubs ashes into his skin to darken it and pass him off as having no white ancestry. But the Welfare people soon wake up to the trick. They are incapable of realizing the love his mother has for him. They leave her crawling in the dust as they drive him away. At the emission he never sees his family again. It is far too far for them to visit. He is made to forget his language and his culture.

Eventually, when he is grown up and has a son of his own, John Jaggamarra returns to the cattle station, but any sign of his people is long gone.

Story of the Story

I bought this book a couple of years before the Stolen Generation Report was tabled in our Parliament. I was in my first ministry placement and had been asked to lead the service on Mothers' Day. All that week the Lectionary readings seemed to be drawing me to tell this story, a story of a mother and her child, cruelly separated. But I was anxious about my integrity as a white woman appropriating this story. Did I have any right to do so?

You might call this next part coincidence but I am certain it was the movement of the Holy Spirit. During that week when I was wrestling with the issue, a group who rented the church hall had a Koorie (Victorian Aboriginal) woman come to tell them about Bush Tucker. I went along and after her talk I asked her what she thought about my telling such a story. She was totally enthusiastic. "We want you all to know. Please speak about it," she said. And she told me how her grandmother who had lived near Healesville, had had 12 children taken from her, taken because they were eating bush tucker, the natural food of the area. They were taken away to be fed on basically flour and sugar!!

So I told the story on Mothers' Day. It is a harsh story, confronting and moving. The congregation were stunned. It was not what they had expected. I had a physical feeling in the pit of my abdomen, much stronger than butterflies but not a feeling of sickness. When I occasionally experience this I equate it with the closeness of the Holy Spirit. There was silence as people left, shaking my hand but saying nothing. One man did comment that it was all too hard and nothing we could do.

But one elderly man was excited and enthusiastic and that's all I needed. The Stolen Generation report came out and that congregation were open to learning more about our history. There were study groups and education and about 18 months later those people who initially felt there was nothing they could do, spent most of a worship service each preparing their own page to be placed in The Sorry Books that were being made throughout the country.

Our Story

So now the story of The Burnt Stick and the story of its impact on a congregation more than 20 years ago is part of the Ormond story. It is part of our thinking about how we may play a part in the Reconciliation between First and Second Peoples in Australia. It is part of the Truth Telling that must occur for us to fully understand Australia's history.

We know that children taken from their homes were traumatized and many suffered all their lives...There is more about this in our Lenten Resources.

When we think about Jesus shining whiter than white, dazzling before his awed friends there is for me a sense of how we might shine this light into our nation. As Jesus appeared in this radiance emanating from his relationship with the God the Father, seen fleetingly but irrevocably, so we too are touched by it. It is the light shining more brightly than all our mistakes, all our racial and cultural arrogance, all the sorrow that has been inflicted by some upon others, throughout history.

This is the light in which we can move forward. This is the hope that we can be better than who we were. This the light to which we can move forward.

The disciples came down from the mountain. They still made mistakes. They still didn't understand fully. But they did find new life. May we and all our land enter into a fulness of life lived in Christ's light.

TIS 416 Great God, Your Spirit like the wind

Great God, your Spirit, like the wind unseen
but shaking things we see
will never leave us undisturbed, fulfil our dreams or set us free
until we turn from faithless fear and prove the promise of your grace
In justice, peace and daily bread with joy for all the human race

Lord, shake us with the force of love, to rouse us from our dreadful sleep;
remove our hearts of stone, and give new hearts of flesh, to break and weep
for all your children in distress and dying for the wealth we keep.
help us prevent, while we have time, the blighted harvest greed must reap.

And then, in your compassion, give your Spirit like the gentle rain,
creating fertile ground from which your peace and justice spring like grain;
until your love is satisfied, with all creation freed from pain, and all your children live to
praise your will fulfilled, your presence plain.

Announcements

Prayers for Others

Prepared by Diane Richter

Let us bring to God our concern for others.

Let us pray.

Because your love is all-inclusive, because your wisdom can bring beauty out of chaos, we bring our intercessions to you, most holy Friend. Please receive our compassion for our sisters and brothers and transfigure it with your seamless glory.

We pray for the end of injustice and exploitation within society and among nations. We especially pray for the Stolen Generations, for the suffering and trauma that occurred and that continues today for children, families and communities. Lord, we also acknowledge and lament the New Stolen Generation, as children are still being removed from their families at staggering rates. Protect the children who are currently in the out of home care system. We pray that families will be restored, and that families and communities will be strengthened and supported.

We pray that as the truth is told and acknowledged, your healing waters will flood hearts and this nation.

We pray for peace and wellbeing among the peoples of the earth thinking especially of the ravages of COVID19. We thank you for the dedication and skills of healthcare workers and scientists. We pray for the transfiguring of what may seem to be hopeless situations.

We pray for the victims of drought, flood, earthquake, fire, cyclone, famine or pestilence. Bless your caring servants who work through agencies that limit sufferings and who attempt to offer emergency aid and provide long term transfiguring reconstruction. We pray for neighbours, workmates, friends, family, strangers and enemies, who are in the throes of hardship, suffering or grief today. Bless your representatives who reach out to them with transfiguring encouragement. And where appropriate, please recruit us among those who serve.

We pray for the church in many lands and under diverse conditions, especially where it lives under political or social intimidation. Bless your people wherever they gather in the name of Christ Jesus and enable them to persist and transfigure adverse conditions to your glory.

We pray for one another as we worship within the church or at home. Encourage us according to our need, equip us according to the challenges of this new week, and bless us with that grace which knows no bounds and transfigures all circumstances. Through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

TIS 414 There's a Spirit in the air

There's a spirit in the air,
Telling Christians everywhere;
'Praise the love that Christ revealed,
Living, working in our world.

Lose your shyness, find your tongue,
Tell the world what God has done,
God in Christ has come to stay,
Live tomorrow's life today.

When believer break the bread,
When a hungry child is fed,
Praise the love that Christ revealed,
Living, working in our world.

Still the Spirit give us light
Seeing wrong and setting right
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today

When a stranger's not alone
Where the homeless find a home
Praise the love that Christ revealed,
Living, working in our world.

May the Spirit fill our praise,
Guide our thoughts and change our ways;
God in Christ has come to stay
Live tomorrow's life today.

There's a Spirit in the air,
Calling people everywhere;
Praise the love that Christ revealed,
Living, working in our world.

Brian Arthur Wren 1936 -

Blessing

May the God of all wonder bless you with relentless unsettledness that drives you to seek the truth

May the God of all justice bless you with righteous anger that drives you to seek freedom for all

May the God of all love bless you with friendship

May the God of all comfort bless you with tears from shared pain and mourning that shows you hope.

Now with wonder, righteous anger, sacrifice and lament

Go in truth, justice, love and hope to change the heart of Australia

Benediction from the 2020 Change the Heart Service

The Burn Stick by ANTHONY HILL still appears to be available, Viking, Penguin Books 1994

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NEWS AND NOTICES

Our “Covid Different” PANCAKE DAY – Tuesday 16th February 6.00pm start

Please refer to the attached flyer for the Virtual Pancake Day being run this coming Tuesday 16th February. Zoom details included.

SUNDAY EVENING WALKS DURING LENT

As part of our Lenten observance this year you are invited to take part in a mediative walk each Sunday evening over the six weeks, commencing on Sunday 21st February (pending Government restrictions advice). We will gather at Allnutt Park on Wheatley Road at 6pm and be given a provocation and question to reflect on as we walk. As we reflect on issues of reconciliation between First and Second Peoples over Lent, this will be an opportunity to consider how we are each involved and how we can each, and together, move our nation toward healing. We will gather at the Wright Street Rotunda near the centre of the park. Enquiries to: Ron Townsend

ASH WEDNESDAY

Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return. These are not easy words which are said to us as ash is applied to our foreheads on Ash Wednesday. Our willingness to have ourselves marked with the sign of the cross and to hear these words is sign of our openness to healing and the lightening of our loads by the one who says to us: *my yoke is easy and my burden is light.* It seems counterintuitive to engage in this ritual as a way into the light of Christ but this is what it offers us.

This Ash Wednesday you will be emailed details for observing Ash Wednesday at home. It is an opportunity to begin the Lenten journey and to enter into our collective reflection on the relationship between First and Second Peoples of Australia.

UNITING CHURCH SYNOD

The Synod will be meeting virtually this year from Friday 26th to Sunday 28th February. Amongst a full program we will be electing a new moderator who will commence their 3-year term in 2022 (see the candidates' profiles in this month's Crosslight). Andrew will be participating.

ORMOND LEARNING HUB: AN OPEN AND CURIOUS FAITH LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

We are delighted that our plans to launch a full year of courses for the Learning HUB are well advanced. The team of Lisa Saffin, Lynley Moore, Brad Denniston and Andrew Boyle have been working together over January and are excited about our program for the year. This is our first course:

Believing in our Contemporary World -

As Christians, how do we reconcile tensions between being educated in a rational, secular context while drawing on ancient texts as the inspiration and guide to our faith. In three video sessions we will hear scholars and pastors unpack these issues.

Dates: Thursdays, 4th, 11th & 18th March

Time: 7.00 - 9.00pm

Format: Face-to-face

Location: Ormond Uniting Church, cnr North and Booran Roads

Cost: \$30

Facilitators: Andrew Boyle & Brad Denniston

More information on the church website

Enrolments to: learninghub@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

ANDREW ON LEAVE

Andrew will be on two weeks' leave from Monday 8th February. There will be no Church Service on Sunday 14th February due to Victoria statewide lockdown. The Uniting Church Synod meets 26th to 28th February and Andrew will be (virtually) attending this. Ron Townsend will lead the service of Sunday 28th.

ROSTER for Sunday 21 February 2021

We will advise rosters for next Sunday 21st Feb pending the latest news on the government restrictions.