

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

Pentecost 2

6 June



Jesus and the crowds

James Tissot 1886-1896

WORSHIP AT HOME

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

Carve out a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are.

Prepare a space in the house; find a comfortable chair, light a candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.

Our soul waits for the Lord;
he is our help and shield.
Our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.

Psalm 33

Prayer

We come to God, aware that we need God with every fibre of our being.
We want nothing to stand between us.
We draw near and as we are held,
we dare to slowly look into the face of the one who holds us
... and gradually our own faces and our lives begin to reflect his beauty.

Eternal Light, shine into our hearts;
Eternal Goodness, deliver us from evil;
Eternal Power, be our support;
Eternal Wisdom, scatter the darkness of our ignorance;
Eternal Pity, have mercy on us.

Grant that we may ever seek your face with all our heart, soul and strength. And in your infinite mercy bring us at last into the fulness of your eternal presence where we shall behold your glory and live your promised joys.

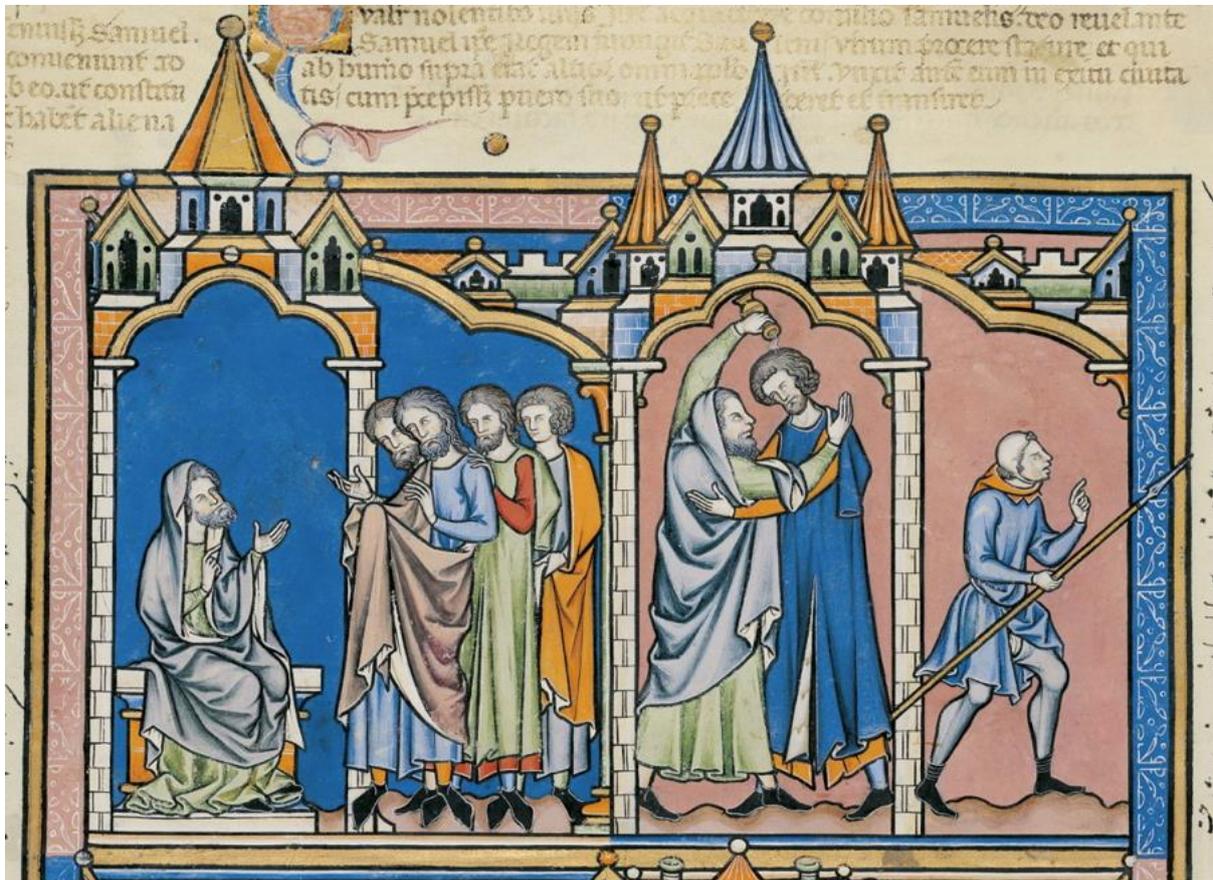
Amen. Amen. Amen

1 Samuel 8. 1-20

When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beer-sheba. Yet his sons did not follow in his ways, but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, 'You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations.' But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to govern us.' Samuel prayed to the Lord, and the Lord said to Samuel, 'Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king

over them. Just as they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so also they are doing to you. Now then, listen to their voice; only—you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.'



Samuel warns the elders of Israel of the dangers of kings

~ The Morgan Picture Bible (c 1250)

So Samuel reported all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, 'These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plough his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day.'

But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; they said, ‘No! but we are determined to have a king over us, so that we also may be like other nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles.’

Psalm 33. 11-21

The counsel of the Lord stands for ever,
the thoughts of his heart to all generations.
Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage.

The Lord looks down from heaven;
he sees all humankind.
From where he sits enthroned he watches
all the inhabitants of the earth—
he who fashions the hearts of them all,
and observes all their deeds.
A king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
The war horse is a vain hope for victory,
and by its great might it cannot save.



Truly the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,
to deliver their soul from death,
and to keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waits for the Lord;
he is our help and shield.
Our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.

The Gospel of Mark 3. 13-15, 19b- 35

He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons. and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Then he went home; and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, 'He has gone out of his mind.' And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.' And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

'Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin'— for they had said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'

Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, 'Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.' And he replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.'

Reflecting

*Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve,
... as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.'* Joshua to the leaders of Israel

Throughout both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures there is a challenge to choose. Choose the way toward life or the way toward death; choose the narrow path or the broad path. This challenge comes from the God who chooses Israel, makes covenant with them and calls them to be his people and for them to abide in his steadfast love. Jesus also calls us to choose. In today's Gospel he chooses a new kin, over his family of birth – a family who think he has lost his mind and eschewed 'family values'.

For the first few years of my primary schooling, we still marked Empire Day. Then this stopped, why I'm not sure. As a child, I wondered why, because it was reason be able to let off firecrackers. Maybe it was because the British stopped buying our butter. I have a sense that the world I was born into inhabited the tail end of the British Empire. The memorial tablets in our churches are testament to our citizenship of that vision – *Britons, never, ever shall be slaves!*

But the honour boards and memorial windows I sat under as a child, and on which my eyes rested in my church-induced boredom, are challenged by the words of Samuel to the elders of Israel:

... he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots;

and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plough his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots.

He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers.

He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers.

He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers.

He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work.

He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves.

This week we began a new study series in the Ormond Learning HUB. Together the thirteen of us will look at the New Testament over twelve weeks of classes. There were lots of engaging questions people brought to the first night – hoping to be able to engage these together. One of the things we thought about on this first night were the questions: how do we read scripture and from where do we read it? Over the past decades we have been encouraged in various ways to be a bit more conscious about how we read and consider what we are being told. An example of this shift would be the way we are being invited to re-read the history of the settlement of Australia. If Australia was not *terra nullius* when the British arrived what does that say about the 240-year long European presence here? It means the European presence here can be read as invasion, rather than as us simply occupying a land where no one happened to live. The history most of us were taught was a history which portrayed occupation of the Australian land mass as benign, rather than malign. We need to rethink our selves in light of this reading. This awareness is something we who are affluent, secure and middle class need to bring to the way we read scripture. It is helpful to bring this kind of curiousness to the reading from Samuel and the elders' desire to have a king, like the other nations.

As subjects of the British Empire, we seemed to think that kings (and Queens – *I did but see her passing by ...*) were, in the main, a good thing. Our peculiar unwillingness to become a republic is sign that we are, like the elders of Israel, quite attached to the idea of monarchy. Prince Phillip is reputed to have said about Australians when the 1999 Referendum to become a republic failed: *What is wrong with those people?*

The two world wars of the 20th century saw young Australian men and women go off to fight for God, King and Country. Tens of thousand were killed and countless more wounded and permanently disabled in body and soul by these wars. The prophet Samuel would not be surprised. And we enlisted God in these projects. Squabbling European cousins, George, Wilhelm and Nicholas, sending their young to the slaughter. Trouble was that each side enlisted God in their efforts and invoked the name of God over their “glorious dead”. This is what kings do, Samuel would say.

The church was, in the main, tame in this project. I do recall, though, stories of the victimisation of conscientious objectors during the wars, the disdain for Archbishop Daniel Mannix's vocal resistance to conscription in during WWI. But in the main we fell into line because, we thought, it was good to have a king. To look more honestly to the arc of both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, and to God's objection to the kind of carnage that all kinds of human leadership leads to, requires us to read with our eyes open.

As Jesus ministry begins in Mark, we find him proclaiming the kingdom to the crowds and healing them. These are the people considered to be the discards of society, the ones who can fall through the cracks, the canon-fodder of the 20th century. Jesus shows God's heart to these people and calls them kin. Confrontingly, for those who think that church is about family, he asks: who is my mother, who are my brothers and sisters. This is no tame Messiah but one who challenges us to the core about our systems of power and identity and belonging, from family all the way to nation.

The German-American theologian Paul Tillich describes faith as the matter of our ultimate concern. It takes time for us to work out what is the matter of ultimate concern in our lives – what gives life to us and what keeps life restricted. Only as the vagaries of life impose themselves on us are we cajoled or forced to work this out. While we might like to think it is God, often when we find ourselves under stress, we find that some matter of secondary importance actually holds our primary focus. If we are shaken out of our slumber to wakefulness, we may have the presence of mind to choose, to make a choice. Maybe we were unaware because someone else had given us our system of loyalty: family, job, institution of which we were a part, nation. But we find ourselves at a crossroads, left with the question to choose this day whom you will serve.

As God says to Samuel, don't worry, they haven't rejected you but me. Most often as humans we are a bit slow on the uptake on these things, especially when it comes to us collectively. But God is patient and infinitely merciful and holds to the divine side of the covenant – until we are ready. The psalmist knew this:

Truly the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,
to deliver their soul from death,

So, we go on in humility and trust, knowing that God holds the key to life for us and will allow us to open the treasures of his love and mercy, time and again.

Our soul waits for the Lord;
he is our help and shield.
Our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.

Creed

We believe in a God
Who is never confined to our imagining,
Is never in bondage to our understanding
And never kept within our dwelling places.

Our God is the mystery
Of divine and human bound together,
Of power and vulnerability,
Of crucifixion and resurrection.

Our God is the wonder
of truth and compassion,
of liberation and responsibility,
of eternal wisdom and amazing grace.

We celebrate this God
Who leaps free of all our boundaries in love,
Stretching out beyond any barricades
And in mercy bonding deep
Into fragile human hearts.

Prayers – prepared by Marg Davis

As we worship today on the first Sunday in June and the second Sunday of the current lockdown, it is easy to think, and say, negative things about what is occurring in our community, in our country and around the world. Let us try to focus on gratitude and on saying thank you for all our blessings.

Dear Lord we give you thanks for each new day and for your steadfast love for us. Help us to do your will and to always be mindful of the needs of others, especially those less fortunate. Thank you for drawing us together as members of one body- the universal church. We pray for world church leaders and for ecumenical dialogue and for those who minister and worship in our own church.

We pray for all who suffer from the dangers of war, for the dispossessed and refugees. We give thanks for all who have risked, or lost, their lives and those who continue to do so, in the hope of peace and a better world, especially members of the Australian Defence Forces.

Our prayers are with the many people who are vulnerable and in special need of care and love – and this includes, but is not limited to, those who are marginalized, the sick, sad, lonely, frail, undervalued, the homeless, the hungry, those in pain of body or anguish of mind, the dying and those who mourn. We thank you for the many people who dedicate their lives to caring for others and we pray for these people as they face so many challenges.

We pray for those who face uncertainty and challenges due to the current COVID situation – people without work, families struggling with remote schooling, people separated from family and friends and those experiencing the virus.

We give you thanks for the many charity workers and volunteers, who are struggling to provide support for the diverse needs of so many people - even in our own community and we hope that the outreach, and support, that is provided by our Ormond congregation continues to contribute to the care of others.

Lord we pray for our own families and friends, our neighbours and ourselves. Help us to love, and care for one another as you have loved us.

Jesus, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen

Blessing

Lord may your glory be seen in us,
that with all your creation we may reach farther up and farther in
to all the goodness You have prepared for us in love.

In the sacred name of the Father,
And of the Son,
And of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

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NEWS AND NOTICES

CHURCH EVENTS - updates

There have been a few updates with regards to upcoming events:

- Ormond Uniting Church AGM has been postponed until a date to be fixed. More information to follow on this later.
- Adelphi Players theatre have decided to postpone their play “The Christian Brothers” until later in September 2021 due to the recent delays of lockdown. More to follow on this later.
- The bike ride organised by Ormond members scheduled for 5th June, is now postponed until Sat 19th June (see details included with these notices)

Little Free Pantry – Volunteer required



You may have noticed the Little Free Pantry, located at the front of our church. The pantry has now been operating successfully for about 18 months.

The pantry serves several purposes; it provides food for people in need, it provides a means whereby the community and the congregation can demonstrate their generosity by donating food and it shows the public that the church is involved with the community in a practical sense.

The pantry requires some maintenance. We currently have a team of three maintenance volunteers but would like one additional volunteer to spread the workload.

Each volunteer attends the pantry once a fortnight.

What is required?

1. Collect donated bread from Bakers Patisserie (at Extra Fresh) in Centre Road, Bentleigh on Monday or Thursday afternoons at 5.45pm. Helen will usually give you two large bags of bread. Some modicum of strength is needed, the bags weigh about 10kg.
2. Take the bread home and package it into Cole's freezer bags.
3. On Tuesday or Friday (am or pm) put the bread in the pantry.
4. Sweep the pantry shelves and floor.
5. Remove any degraded food such as mouldy bread or opened packages.

Little Free Pantry Volunteer required (cont.)

If you can't attend on that day, please ask one of the team to swap days.

If you are able to volunteer, please give me a ring (David 0488 204 049) or Dennis (0408 457 009).

Bike Ride: Saturday 19th June (this is the revised date)

- Meet at Ormond Station about 10:30 AM
- Train to Mordialloc, arrive about 11 AM
- Ride from Mordialloc Station along Mordialloc Creek to Waterways Café
- Coffee at Waterways Café beside the lake.
- Ride to the north side of Braeside Park for lunch
- Return to Mordialloc Station by a slightly different route.

It's completely flat, distance 8 km one way, about 40 minutes at a leisurely pace plus coffee and lunch breaks. Toilets on the route. Total trip including bike and train travel and breaks will be about 3 to 4 hours.

If you don't have a bike we can lend you one. Look forward to seeing you there, David & Liz

Enquiries to David Northwood or the Church Office on 9578 1553

ROSTER for Sunday 13 June 2021

READING	Kristina Parish	
PRAYERS	David Northwood	
DOOR DUTY	Warwick Barry	Russell Hoffman
SOUND	Neville Parker	
COUNTING	Hans Tilstra	Jan Davenport
MORNING TEA	Lorraine Denniston	Elizabeth Northwood
MUSIC	Peter Hurley	
RESOURCES DELIVERY 11 Jun '21.	Warwick Barry	