

# ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

Pentecost 3

13<sup>th</sup> June



... he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion.

# 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.*

*Today in our worship at Ormond Uniting we are welcoming Ted and Katie Beaurepaire who are bringing Haiden (4) and Maicie (10 months) for baptism.*

All you who are thirsty,  
come drink from the waters of life!  
All you who are weary, come bathe,  
be refreshed in the living waters!  
All you who long for peace,  
come rest in the clear, silent pools of God's love!

## Prayer

O God,  
all your children are written on your hands:  
you are a mother who neither forgets nor forsakes her own.  
All creation is held within your very self.

Isaiah 49:15, 16

Before we were born, you knew us.  
In our mothers' wombs, you formed us.  
All creation is held within your very self.

Psalms 139:13

Before all beginnings, you called us by name.  
Beyond all endings, you will remember us in your heart.  
All creation is held within your very self.

Psalms 139:13-16

You, O Wisdom, do not forget your children:  
like a hen, you gather your chicks.  
All creation is held within your very self.

Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34

We praise you, O God:

In your humility,	you seek us.
In your mercy,	you keep us.
In your humiliation,	you glorify us.
In your generosity,	you provide for us.
In your wisdom,	you place us.
In your might,	you shield us.

In your governance, you make us holy.  
In your communion, you teach us.  
In your love, you lift us up.

Based on 'The Nine Choirs: How They Sing'  
by Mechtild of Magdeburg (1210–1285)

Abba, Father,  
loving God,  
source of all life,  
answer our call,  
as a mother responds  
to the cry of a child in the night.

Jesus Christ,  
brother and friend,  
incarnate redeemer,  
stand beside us  
as bearer of our humanity,  
and sharer of God's glory.

Spirit of God,  
giver of new life,  
persistent guest,  
prod us to praise,  
calling us to be a people  
of hope and faith in Christ Jesus.  
Amen.

## 1 Samuel 15. 34 – 16. 13

We read a story which may be familiar to us all: the anointing of the young boy David as king of Israel, the youngest of Jesse's eight sons. I was told, as the story tells us, that the Lord does not see as mortals see – as reason why God didn't choose the eldest or the strongest, rather the young, handsome David. Biblical scholars still proclaim that this is the nature of God and that's that. But there is a more problematic conundrum that this story throws up for us which lies just outside this story.

You see, immediately prior to these events God has ordered the genocide of the Amalekites; all of their men, women and children, all of their cattle and their sheep. God had requested King Saul, through Samuel, to entirely exterminate the entire tribe and all their assets. But Saul's soldiers had saved the king and the best of the cattle and sheep. God was displeased, we are told. And this is the reason the text tells us that God has rejected Saul and seeks another King through Samuel. We might well ask some questions, then, about what is going on here.

Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the Lord was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel.

The Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.' Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.' And the Lord said, 'Take a heifer with you, and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the Lord." Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.' Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?' He said, 'Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.' And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.



The anointing of David – fresco, Dura Europos synagogue, Syria

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord.' But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.' Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, 'The Lord has not chosen any of these.' Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.' He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, 'Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.' Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

## 1 Corinthians 5. 6-17

As long as we remain living out our daily lives here in our bodies, we are not able to go and be with the Lord. All the same, we remain full of confidence, because it is what we put our trust in that keeps us on track, not what our eyes tell us. So we are confident all right — you bet we are — and if we could have our way we would rather pull up stumps, leave our bodies behind us, and go home to be with the Lord. But in truth, nothing really hangs on whether we are here or there. The only thing that really matters is that we set our sights on pleasing the Lord. At the end of the day, every one of us will have to front up before Christ when he sits down at the pay desk to judge our work. We will be paid what we deserve for the way we have lived our daily lives here in our bodies, whether we have done right, or done wrong.

... Therefore, knowing our place before the Lord, we do our best to get the message through to others. But of course, God already knows us inside out, and I hope that in your heart of hearts you have got the full picture on us too. We are not trying to blow our own trumpet here. Instead we want to give you the chance to boast about us so that you can set the record straight with those who are always gloating about how good they are, when all they are doing is putting on a good face and hiding what is really going on inside. When we seem to be off our heads, we are just letting it all hang out for God. When we seem to have our heads on straight, we are taking care for your sakes. Indeed, it is the love of Christ that drives us on; because we are inspired by his example of one laying down his life for everybody else. When he died, we all died. He died for everybody, so that those who live might be set free from living as slaves to their own selfish desires, and might instead live for him who died for them and was raised to life for them.

... Because of all this, nowadays we are careful not to assume that people are nothing more than what our eyes and ears tell us about them. In the past we made that mistake with Christ, but we now know a lot more of him than our eyes or ears alone could detect. Whenever anyone unites themselves to Christ, something new is created. What that person was becomes a thing of the past; they get a whole new start in life!

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## The Gospel of Mark 4. 35-41

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side.' And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'



Storm on the Sea of Galilee - icon

## Reflecting

The story of the anointing of the boy David as king is so familiar to me. I took it at face value, as it had been given to me as a child. But, preparing for this Sunday, I thought, I had better do as I do each week and read either side of the set reading. Here I find an explicit, divine command for genocide.

Samuel said to Saul, 'The Lord sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen to the words of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts, "I will punish the Amalekites for what they did in opposing the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'" 1 Samuel 15. 1-3

Kings Saul's armies do as they are instructed but Saul preserves the life of the king of the Amalekites and his armies take their best sheep and cattle as plunder. God, we are told is displeased about this. The chapter ends in this way:

Then Samuel in the presence of Saul said, 'Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me.' And Agag came to him haltingly. Agag said, 'Surely this is the bitterness of death.' But Samuel said,

‘As your sword has made women childless,  
so your mother shall be childless among women.’  
And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.

This is spine-chilling in its deliberate intention to genocide. So, we might ask some questions here. Is this the God who says: thou shall not kill? Or is this another God, as some theologians were inclined to suggest, not being able to reconcile conflicting images of God? Or is something else happening here? I suppose I was raised to believe that every image of God that is presented to us in the scriptures is a right and true understanding of God, the God of Israel and the God of Jesus Christ. Or do we have to be a bit discriminating here, ask some probing questions. Is Samuel really channelling God? Or is this powerful prophet running his own religious agenda – invoking God and doing anything necessary to get his way; to see that his favourite candidate for king prevails? We need to be a bit fierce here about how we read. Because this is life and death stuff. Not just then, but in our own time.

The ultimate outcome of this story is that David becomes king and the nation of Israel expands to the largest it will be – either before this time or after. But David’s reign is also far from pure. There is much bloodshed during his reign and his behaviour is far from commendable at times. And the lives of his children are marred by violence and betrayal and discord, good sign that the parents are probably ratbags. This is not a happy family. But the memory of his reign prevails. Even today for Jews, David’s reign is icon of the ancient nation of Israel, a figure of unity at the heart of their identity.

But this memory for Jews of the reign of King David and the land over which he ruled is problematic in our own time and we have seen Jews’ desire for a homeland to the exclusion of others flare up once again in the last weeks, as it has from time to time over the course of most of our lives. The Zionism movement which began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and led to the formation of the modern state of Israel in 1948 has been the driver behind Jewish assertiveness for decades now. Zionism arose substantially as a result of anti-Semitism in Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Over centuries Jews were treated very cruelly, all the way from local villages to royal courts. Christians have to accept that much of the motivation for this arose from our readings of scripture. The gospels of Matthew and John are both explicit in antagonism against Jews and simplistic and hostile readings justified pogroms against Jews in Europe for centuries. The way we read these scriptures without them becoming fuel for anti-Semitism is, no question, a challenge – but that’s a subject for another time.

The imperative for Zionists for a Jewish homeland became supercharged in light of the holocaust during the 1930s in Germany and then WWII. This persecuted people needed to find somewhere they could live confident that they could live without fear of persecution. They no longer wanted to be victims. Much of the logic for the establishment of the modern State of Israel was a scriptural one. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century driven also by British evangelicals and now by American evangelicals. Throughout the Hebrew scriptures there is a longing for mount Zion and the temple at the heart of Jewish life and worship. When the leaders of Israel were in exile in Babylon much of the literature is filled with longing for a return. We read these passages as we prepare for and mark Christmas. [Isaiah 40]

Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.

<sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins.

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries out:

'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

This is a longing to return to Jerusalem – a divine longing in the human heart. A divine mandate for return.

As Christians hold that scripture contains eternal truths for us, so also do Jews. But, as we read, do we suspend our brains and our scepticism when wrong things are being done. As we know history is too often written by the victors we need to ask, was the replacement of King Saul by David a kind of religio-political coup and the tale we have heard a kind of polemic, where God is used to order genocide and regicide.

Israel is like a great gaping sore on the world. It seems an irreconcilable issue and it has become increasingly fraught to even express a view about Israel's treatment of Palestinians without being accused of anti-Semitism. The Queensland Branch of the Australian Labor party tried to discuss the issue at their recent conference and any questions about the action of Israel in the recent conflict seems to have been met with charges of anti-Semitism. If we don't meet Palestinian attacks with disproportionate force, are you saying you don't want the State of Israel to exist, goes the logic?

There is no question that the holocaust was one of the greatest tragedies of the modern era – a calculated and violent vision for genocide. But the world cannot continue to ignore the imbalance in power between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Israelis, along with those Palestinians who live in Gaza and the West Bank which are occupied by Israel. It is as though the victimised have become the victimisers now. This is a recognisable pattern of human behaviour: where the bullied becomes bullies; where the sexually abused become abusers themselves; where victim become victimisers. The State of Israel is repeating what has been done to Jews.

In an act of provocation at the end of Ramadan Israeli forces entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque and excluded Moslems from entering one of their most holy shrines. Two days later they then cut the wiring to PA systems for services to mark the end of Ramadan. All of this is on top of an escalating eviction of Palestinians from ancestral farms land and homes – at the muzzle of a rifle and the threat of bulldozers. They are being displaced systematically and wilfully. This is government policy; this occupation is not being undertaken by bandits, but by people backed up by the law.

The United Nations describes genocide in this way in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

## Article II

*In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:*

1. A mental element: the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such"; and
2. A physical element, which includes the following five acts, enumerated exhaustively
  - a. Killing members of the group;
  - b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
  - c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
  - d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
  - e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

We have read one of a number of accounts of Jesus and the disciples crossing a stormy Sea of Galilee. Some scholars suggest that this stormy crossing is emblematic of the life of the early church; crossing from one side to the other side, as it is referred to. It is suggested that this is followers of Jesus' way crossing over from being embedded in the synagogue to being independent. A stormy journey. Jesus asks: why are you afraid. Have you still no faith?

The French philosopher Renè Girard suggests that the Hebrew and Christian scriptures are a long project – over more than a thousand years - in working out the nature of God, all the while asking the question, is God involved in our victimisation of each other, or not? The story of Samuel and Saul and David would suggest that God is. But we need to ask the question, when we are victimised are we justified in victimising others, or retaliating against the other. Samuel wreaks retribution against King Agag because generations before the Amelkites had resisted the tribes of Israel's invasion of their country. Setting of a cycle of violence.

The theologian James Alison refers to Jesus as the Forgiving Victim; the one who have been victimised and who returned to the disciples as forgiveness, not seeking retribution, not condemning, not annihilating but offering himself as a new way of being. Love one another as I have loved you.

Paul is writing to the Colossians says: He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

This is our hope. This is the heart of what we believe and hold to. He is the one who shows us the face of God and calls us brothers and sisters. This is our joy. This is our faith.

## Prayer – prepared by David Northwood

Lord we pray hear our prayer today  
As we pray for others and for ourselves

In our prayers today pause to consider the situation of the Sri Lankan family who has come to be known as the Biloela family.

The Murugappan family with their Australian-born daughters Kopika and Tharnicaa had been detained on Christmas Island after earlier detention on the mainland. This came after the family had initially settled in the Queensland town of Biloela. Residents welcomed the family and have been actively campaigning for them to return to Biloela.

Former High Court Judge Sir Gerard Brennan said last Friday “the cruelty suffered by Tharnicaa, Australian-born and now in a Perth Hospital is not an unintended consequence of a general policy. It is cruelty inflicted on a child deliberately, as a warning to others not to come to Australia by boat without a visa.”

Help us and our leaders to understand that cruelty is not strength, cruelty is weakness.

Weak people do not survive well, and weak governments do not survive.

Cruelty is not strength, cruelty is weakness. Weakness can come from our fear of others even if they are incapable of harming us.

Strength comes from compassion; strength comes from nobility.

A three-year-old girl with pneumonia who wants to remain with her family in Australia should not strike fear into the heart of our government. Fear is weakness and we need strong leaders not weak leaders.

Teach us and our leaders to be noble and compassionate. Strength comes from nobility and weakness comes from fear. And fear can lead to irrational actions.

Hush Prime Minister, hush Minister for Home Affairs. Do not be afraid, these children will not harm you. Show the nobility that is befitting of your high office.

Add to this the absurdity of pretending to show our resolve by settling this family in New Zealand or the US, as a logic defying means of discouraging others.

“But we will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come” said former Prime Minister John Howard. These are not the words of a strong man, these are the words of a fearful man.

Help our leaders to be less fearful, more compassionate more noble.

Lord we pray for strength to meet these challenges. Amen

## Blessing

In the power of the Spirit;  
in all things, at all times,  
remember that Christ dwells in you;  
make your life your worship  
to the praise and glory of God.

Amen

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## NEWS AND NOTICES

### CHURCH EVENTS - updates

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

- Adelphi Players theatre have decided to postpone their play “The Christian Brothers” until **September 2021** due to the recent restrictions. More to follow on this later.
- The bike ride organised by Ormond members has been rescheduled until Sat 19<sup>th</sup> June (see details included with these notices)

### Annual General Meeting

This was postponed due to the recent COVID lockdown. It is now scheduled for next **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June** following worship.

### Glen Eira Winter Shelter

This winter (1<sup>st</sup> July – 24 September 2021), Compass Community Care is launching the **Glen Eira Winter Shelter**, in affiliation with Stable One. There is an opportunity, through a number of churches in the local community to give shelter to the homeless during this winter. More information is available by visiting the website below and there are a number of opportunities if individuals wish to volunteer time for various roles within this program. If unable to provide time, there are also opportunities to donate in any way you can. Please see the link below for more information and you are invited to make contact with Warwick Barry if interested in participating.

[Glen Eira Winter Shelter](#)

## 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, Benteigh 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.

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 (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 20 June 2021**

READING	Marg Davis	
PRAYERS	Dianne Richter	
DOOR DUTY	Marg Davis	Mardie Townsend
SOUND	Gary Richter	
COUNTING	Graeme Davenport	TBA
MORNING TEA	Elizabeth Inglis	Ruth McLeod
MUSIC	Karen Roberts	
RESOURCES DELIVERY 18 Jun '21.	Heather Baxter	