

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



JULY 25

PENTECOST 9



Wherever we are, sitting in our homes to worship God, we can acknowledge that we are on land that was held in trust and cared for by the First Peoples. We pay tribute to their elders, past, present and emerging and we have committed to working towards true reconciliation.

This is a contemplative type of service, due to covid 19 restrictions. You are invited to take your time to consider the words, to add your own prayers, to perhaps return to a phrase or ponder an idea throughout the coming week.

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8oTxmY0MfU>

Be still for the presence of the Lord

In the Letter to the Ephesians 3:18-19, Paul prays that his readers, now us, may have the power to comprehend what is the breadth, and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Sit with that thought for a moment: God's love is presented as something we can grasp, something almost tangible, with its infinite measurements of height and depth, length and width. Or rather than something to grasp, it is of a size that we can fit into. It can encompass us. Feel yourself surrounded by this love.

PRAYERS

God of infinite Love, unmeasurable in all its dimensions, encompassing, embracing, upholding but not constraining, may we know this love more and more. May we consciously live within it. May we bring to it all who we are, our hunger, our yearnings, our achievements, our mistakes, our misuse of our power. As we live within this Divine love, as we know it more and more, live it more, share it more, may we grow to be more your people. Amen

You may like to sit with the words of TIS 230 It passes knowledge. There are renditions on You tube but they are sung very laboriously. You probably know the tune.

*It passes knowledge that dear love of thine
my Saviour Jesus, yet this soul of mine
would of thy love, in all its breadth and length,
its height and depth and everlasting strength
know more and more.*

*It passes knowledge, that dear love of thine,
my Saviour Jesus, yet these lips of mine*

would fain proclaim to sinners far and near
a love which can remove all guilty fear
and love beget.

It passes knowledge, that dear love of thine,
my Saviour Jesus, yet this heart of mine
would sing that love, so full, so rich, so free,
which brings a rebel sinner, such as me,
nigh unto God.

At last when Jesus face to face I see,
when at his lofty throne I bow the knee,
then of his love, in all its depth and length,
its height and depth, its everlasting strength
my soul shall sing.

SCRIPTURE

2 Samuel 11: 1-15

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, 'This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.' So David sent messengers to fetch her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, 'I am pregnant.' So David sent word to Joab, 'Send me Uriah the Hittite.' And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, 'Go down to your house, and wash your feet.' Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house.

When they told David, 'Uriah did not go down to his house', David said to Uriah, 'You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?' Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing.' Then David said to Uriah, 'Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.' So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and

made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

David Has Uriah Killed

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, 'Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die.'

REFLECTION AND WONDERING

Who are your heroes at the moment?

Movie stars? Royals? Sporting people? Politicians?

Do you follow their lives and achievements in the media? Would you line up to see them? Or have you found them to have feet of clay?

The Hebrew people wanted to have a King despite God warning them of how onerous a King could become, would become, with taxes of all kinds, wars, depredations. David, handsome, young, gallant, brave, successful, already having seven wives, David seems to be the ideal. He was for a while.

And then his power took over. He could have anything he wanted, even another man's wife. The Book we know as 2 Samuel is blunt, it tells of this rape and attempted cover up and murder by David, unlike other Books, 1 Chronicles 20:1-3 which omits it or 1 Samuel 13:14 which glosses over it. Those books silence Bathsheba, rob her of her voice, not that she has much to say here. Women have suffered this silencing over the ages. It is only now, since movements like #Me Too, that women are finding their voices and gathering in numbers strong and supportive enough to make themselves heard. We have seen the ugly stories emanating from our Federal seat of power recently. It is always ugly.

Women who have been sexually assaulted still report their rapes in low numbers because the prospect of facing their assailants with their often misogynist lawyers only has them relive the original trauma. Even the prospect of reporting to the police can seem like everything is against them. David however has to face God, via his adviser Nathan. God is most displeased and David, along with Bathsheba, suffers the death of the baby. (*You may like to read a few more verses to remind yourself of the rest of the story*)

We cannot have as a hero someone who abducts and rapes a woman, a sexual predator. We cannot have as a hero someone who so abuses his power, who considers himself above the law, who can arrange for a good and honourable man to be killed in order to have the predator's sin covered up. We have recently seen flagrant examples of such misuse of power in the USA and the mess it causes, just as we have had other leaders whose morals have ridden rough-shod over others.

But let's pause and consider our own power. Do we have any power? Compared with David and many others, maybe not much. But of the little we have, do we use it well? Do we use it for the good of others?

Think about your family situations or your work place or your neighbourhood or even the church.

Do we use our voice to outshout an opponent?

Or do we ignore someone's suggestion or idea only to present it a little later as our own?

Do we put down or belittle others because they have dared make a suggestion different from our own?

Are we able to listen to the voices of our children when they try to tell us what they are feeling or experiencing?

Are we able to read between the lines when someone is not sufficiently comfortable to tell us their version?

(Let's pause and ponder some of those questions as they apply to us. If we see ourselves or our ways in any of them, how might we be more loving?)

In these covid times we have seen people who think they are above the law and who flout the isolation rules and thus spread the virus. This is a misuse of our individual power to make choices and it certainly does not work towards the good of all.

We have seen people, so called Shock Jocks, whose voices have a power, spread misinformation across the media. We can only wonder at their motivation. Is their hubris so great that they think they know better than the medical experts? Do they really think they are helping the rest of us?

They remind me of the Taliban in Afghanistan with their threats to reintroduce Sharia law whereby women are kept undereducated and subjected. Their purported motivation is to save them from hell. It is hard to recognize any love in their methods at all.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZ8tpLIJoTQ>

SOME MORE SCRIPTURE AND PONDERING

John 6:1-21

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near.

When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, 'Six

months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.'

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, got into a boat, and started across the lake to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The lake became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the lake and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.' Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land towards which they were going.

For the next few weeks we leave Mark's Gospel and sit with John's. The passages we contemplate have to do with Jesus being the bread of life.

Here we see Jesus as a very popular figure, unable to get away even for a little while with his friends. The crowds follow him. Jesus presents a very different power from that of King David and he resists attempts to make him king.

David began as a shepherd boy; Jesus proves himself a shepherd of people. We will come to know him as the Good Shepherd. His lineage might be traced to the House of David but he proves to be much greater as the one we name our king.

We are familiar with the narrative of Jesus feeding the great crowd, from the meagre offerings of a boy's picnic. The first time I remember hearing this story was as a 9 year old at Sunday school. In the telling the boy played a vital role in the workings of Jesus and even as a child I think there was a connection for me, that a child could approach Jesus and could have a part in all that he meant.

Ponder, for a moment, the most striking aspects of this story for you?

Facetiously we may remark on all those meals, people fed, and no dishes to wash! But we enter into a mystery.

If we read it literally it falls into the realms of magic. Or we see in it the miraculous, along with the healing touch Jesus brings, and his walking across the waves ___singularly satisfying but nevertheless mystifying.

Metaphorically it shows us the generosity and abundance of God's gifts. Food enough for everyone and much more to spare. All are fed... not just the men, not just important people. There is no distinction between those who deserve and any whom some might think could be left out. All are hungry so all are fed.

If you read *With Love to the World*, this week you will see reference to American woman Sara Miles. Sara had never been a woman of faith, did not attend any church, but one Sunday morning she walked into St Gregory's church in San Francisco and took communion. This is how she describes the experience:

" And then we gathered around that table. And there was singing and standing, and someone was putting a piece of crumbly bread in my hands, saying "the body of Christ," and handing me a goblet of sweet wine, saying, "the blood of Christ", and then something outrageous and terrifying happened. Jesus happened to me."

Sara still cannot explain her tears or her feeling of being physically unbalanced or the disconnect between the piece of bread and her realization that this was indeed God. She could not reconcile the experience with anything she knew but she wanted it again and again. 'It was a sensation as urgent as physical hunger pulling me back to the table at St Gregory's through my fear and confusion.

Do you remember when you first partook of Holy Communion? What effect did it have on you?

At today's reading from John's Gospel we have Jesus supplying the food that is necessary to physically sustain people. He starts with only a little but makes it more than sufficient. This has been likened to our ability to do good things in his name. We offer our humble selves, much like the boy with his loaves and fish and somehow we can do more than we imagined we might.

Sara Miles discovered this too when, after a time at St Gregory's she started distributing surplus food to people in need. It was brought to the church, sorted on the Communion table and taken to the people who were hungry, not as a charitable gesture but as an act of Communion. Often crowds of people ate around the communion table at St Gregory's. It grew into a major feeding effort and was an expression of God's love. By implication we might see that all, poor nations perhaps even more than wealthy ones, need to vaccinations against corona virus.

In our Ormond services we are blessed to have bread home baked by Elizabeth Inglis. For me this makes the act of Communion even more significant than shop bought bread or Eucharistic wafers.

Do you have a preference? Does the type of bread matter to you?

When I stayed with the Anglican nuns at Cheltenham as part of my studies they started the day with a Communion service. A good shot of port first thing in the morning is quite a shock to the system after our usual grape juice. *Do you have a preference?*

I err on the side of juice after experiences with people who worry that alcohol might affect their medication or even play havoc with their efforts towards sobriety.

Perhaps you remember a tv program from the 1980's Tenko. It was about the lives of mostly British women taken prisoner and interred on an island by the Japanese in World War 2. I remember how they longed for communion. They struggled with whether they could celebrate this themselves, in the absence of anyone ordained and with neither bread nor wine available.

Perhaps purists could mount arguments against them but they went ahead, using what was at hand and praying as much of the service as they could remember themselves.

Surely their longing for some physical, symbolic presence of Jesus in their lives far outweighed any ecclesial rules. For them, in this moment they did receive the body and blood of Christ and they found themselves sustained.

There is a connection between our spiritual and our physical nurture. The church can offer the conduit for these, along with even our social nurture. In the days when "everyone" belonged to a church this may well have happened. Sporting and social clubs abounded, catering to all ages. Much of this has been lost as other avenues have opened up. But even the way we are missing being able to have morning tea together on Sundays is an example of how we are socially connected, how we care about each other. Being in lockdown highlights our need for companionship. Our Little Pantry and our food collections for Asylum seekers acknowledge our desire to help feed hungry people. As with Sara Miles' food program, we want this to be more than simple charity. At its best we can make connections with people and at the least the hungry people can know that other people, even strangers, care about them. It is our way of being the boy with the five barley loaves and two fish.

Perhaps you would like to offer thanks for all the nourishment in your life... spiritual, physical and social. And you might make a commitment to how further you might share these with others ... Amen

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

prepared by David Baxter

Loving God,

In a world of friction and uncertainty we pray for people who are feeling today that life is a burden, anxious for their future in these difficult times. We pray for people who are feeling lost and lonely today as their familiar routines are broken.

We pray for those people who are certain that you are irrelevant to their lives. For those who look earnestly, but fruitlessly, for solutions in other ways with good intentions but with a sense that something still is missing. We pray that they might find the way to a new beginning in the message of salvation.

We pray for our local community, especially for those in need struggling with limited resources in these challenging times.

We pray for the church wherever it is found, that the message of hope and new life, will continue to be made known. You have called us to be your people, reaching out to those around us who are in need at this time.

We pray for nations today where there is significant conflict, for places where people are not safe. Help our leaders to find a way forward with whatever interventions will aid the cause of peace and goodwill. We think particularly of Afghanistan, South Sudan, Yemen and Nigeria.

We pray for the Olympic Games as countries come together in Tokyo. May this event aid the cause of peace, of fellowship, as the days unfold.

TIS 534 Love is his word

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FB0lj7Wbs>

BLESSING AND GOING FORTH

May we always know God's presence and love with us
May we always find our fill in Jesus the Christ
May we be partnered by the Holy Spirit in all that we do.
May our small ventures be strengthened and our offerings increased
as they are multiplied by God's love
until all that we do be sufficient, even with some left over.

We go out to love and serve the Lord in Christ's name, Amen

You can find a copy of today's Order of Service along with other congregational information on the church website.

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NEWS AND NOTICES

Morning Tea

For this week, 25 July 2021, there is no worship service at the Church due to the Victorian government restrictions. The requirements are changing so fast the COVID team will continue to monitor and you will be kept advised of the latest updates.

The COVID team have discussed the difficulties of providing morning tea for the time being, during the current restrictions. To serve morning tea we need a large enough space for people to sit, not move around, mask, be served and physically distance. Masks can only be removed to eat and drink.

Adelphi Players Theatre Company

Adelphi Players Theatre have decided to postpone their play “The Christian Brothers” until September 2021. Revised performance dates are 1st – 5th September 2021. Tickets available by phoning 9690 1593 or 9578 0952.

* Bookings essential.

Pathfinder

The July edition of Pathfinder is now available. A reminder that contributions for the **August edition** can be sent to Dianne or Gary Richter **by Monday 26th July 2021 6.00pm.**

A thank you from Asylum Seeker Resource Centre for recent food donations

A note from Karen Quist and the Foodbank team.

“Thank you for your generous donation to the ASRC Foodbank.

Our Foodbank operates as a free grocery store for people seeking asylum who live in our community. The ASRC Foodbank's unique model enables people to choose their own items, providing access with dignity to food they can't afford to buy. With your support, we provide food to approximately 700 people each week, most of whom rely on us as their sole source of food. Many of these people are denied the right to work and earn an income, while others receive insufficient income to cover their basic needs.

Giving food is the most immediate and tangible way to support people seeking asylum, and your generosity inspires us. The majority of all groceries and material aid is donated by generous supporters just like you. We can't operate our programs without your compassionate contribution.

Thank you once again for your support and generosity. It truly is invaluable.”

Important Change to Church Office contact details

Effective immediately, in order to ensure effective communication going forward, we have a new Church contact phone number. It would be helpful if you could please note this change and update in your records and contacts. If the phone number is not answered, there will be the option to leave a voice message. There is also now a new contact email address for our Minister, Rev. Andrew Boyle– see details below.

Church Office Phone: [0411 958 127](tel:0411958127)

Minister – new work email contact (Rev. Andrew Boyle): ajmboyle@outlook.com

Note: Any general queries can still be directed to the office email which remains the same: office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

New website for Port Phillip East Presbytery

For those who may not yet have taken a look, you are encouraged to check out the new, Port Phillip East Presbytery website - still at the same address www.ucappeg.org

ROSTER for Sunday 1 August 2021

(pending Victorian situation and whether worship service can go ahead).

READING	David Northwood	
PRAYERS	Heather Baxter	
COMMUNION	Warwick Barry	Marg Davis
DOOR DUTY	Graeme Davenport	Russell Hoffman
SOUND	Nev Parker	
COUNTING	Gary Richter	TBA
FLOWERS	Heather Baxter	Michelle Kirwood
MUSIC	Peter Hurley	
RESOURCES DELIVERY (Fri 30 July).	Heather Baxter	