

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

Pentecost 12

15th August



Wisdom

WORSHIP AT HOME

As if we need any more opportunity to be still this is one to be still in prayer, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within. By all accounts everyone is finding this sixth lockdown very difficult and so we pause seeking God's mercy for ourselves, our families and those we love and for our community and world. So many lives are in suspense with a kind of question mark hanging over them, especially for those who have contracted the virus and whose lives hang between life and death. We seek the God of mercy and compassion and allow our grief and anxiety to be enfolded in the Arms of Divine Love.

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.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practise it have a good understanding.

Psalm 111

All my hope on God is founded — a setting by John Rutter

All my hope on God is founded;
all my trust he will renew,
through all change and chance he guides me,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray our trust;
all he build with care and labour,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power,
hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness last for ever,
deep his wisdom, passing thought;
splendour, light and life attend him,
beauty springing out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.

Daily the almighty giver
will his bounteous gifts bestow;

in his will our souls find pleasure,
leading us where're we go.
Love will stand
at his hand,
joy shall wait for his command.

Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Hear Christ call
one and all:
those who follow shall not fall.

Robert Bridges 1844-1930 *alt.*
after Joachim Neander 1650-80

Prayer

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)

Holy God, we seek your wisdom for our lives,
That wisdom which makes the first last and the last first,
That wisdom embodied in the foolishness of the cross.

Without your redeeming grace,
And left to our own devices, we are lost.
Break us and remake us,
That we may discover your life-giving wisdom
And so be nourished by your Christ,
Our Living Bread. Amen

1 Kings 2. 10-12, 3. 3-14

We have finished reading the saga of King Saul and then David. Today, we begin to hear of his son Solomon and his desire for wisdom.

Then David slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David. The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned for seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established.

Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt-offerings on that altar. At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, 'Ask what I should give you.' And Solomon said, 'You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart towards you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?'



The anointing of King Solomon – Marc Chagall

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, 'Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honour all your life; no other king shall compare with you. If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life.'

Ephesians 5. 15-20

Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel According to John 6. 51-58

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So, Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.'

Reflecting

There is a story about King Solomon. Two women come to him to settle an irreconcilable dispute between them. They are both prostitutes who share a house together. They both become pregnant and give birth at the same time. They continue to share the house together. One night one of them rolls on top of her baby in her sleep and the baby dies. The mother wakes to find her child dead and in a fit of mad grief swaps her dead child for the other woman's living child. When they wake in the morning there is terrible grief and angst. The mother of the stolen child recognises the living child as hers, while the other mother lays claim to it.

They take their argument to Solomon who is flummoxed by the predicament. Chapter 3 of 1 Kings tells the story: the king said, 'One says, "This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead"; while the other says, "Not so! Your son is dead, and my son is the living one."' So the king said, 'Bring me a sword', and they brought a sword before the king. The king said, 'Divide the living boy in two; then give half to one, and half to the other.' But the woman whose son was alive said to the king—because compassion for her son burned within her—'Please, my lord, give her the living boy; certainly do not kill him!' The other said, 'It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it.' Then

the king responded: 'Give the first woman the living boy; do not kill him. She is his mother.' All Israel heard of the judgement that the king had rendered; and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to execute justice.

Marcus Borg says that there are two kinds of wisdom in the world – conventional wisdom and the alternative wisdom of the God of Israel and Jesus Christ – which upsets our usual ways of doing things. The Apostle Paul talks about the foolishness of God confounding the wisdom of the world.

The psalmist in Psalm 4 asks:

There are many who say, 'O that we might see some good!

How long, you people, shall my honour suffer shame?

How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies?

One of the women in the story, maybe understandably in her grief and dismay at the death of her child, is lying. Solomon's wisdom manages to cut through the lie.

As if struggling to cope with COVID is not enough for us at present, this week we have received the searing analysis of the condition of the world's climate in the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 6th Report. And as the report has been released it is as if mother earth has wanted to ensure we are paying attention to what we are being told. In the past few weeks heatwaves have unleashed unprecedented wildfires in all sorts of places which have never seen such conflagrations. We are somehow resigned to immense bushfires in Australia – we tell ourselves it's part of the life-cycle of the Australian environment - but these fires are happening in places which have not seen such catastrophes before.

Like the two women arguing over the single live baby in front of King Solomon, I hope we are paying attention. Regrettably our federal politicians are not. *O that we might see some good!*

This is life and death stuff and we seem lacking in the wisdom necessary to solve this global predicament. The expression, Rome burned while Nero fiddled, comes to mind. While the world burns, we are still being subjected to squabbles about technical fixes – as if these may be the solution to the catastrophe - while most seem incapable of grasping the magnitude of the situation. We – but most especially our children and grandchildren - have every right to be livid.

Our trouble in Australia is that we have become inured to a prosperous lifestyle, the likes of which has probably never been seen in history before. And we have been led over recent decades to believe this is our right. Our political circus appeals to aspirational voters who are inspired to believe that they can have it all – and that party x or party y will deliver every whim of prosperity we might long for. Seven billion people can have it all? The earth is saying: No!

King Solomon says no to the two mothers in a particular way. It's not that he says no to one mother and yes to the other. He says no to both of them in such a way that the lie is disclosed. Our usual way of doing things is that someone will miss out. This is the basis of the facile arguments which are trotted out in order to justify political inaction. And at some level in Australia our politicians are saying we can have it all, and that they will ensure that all our prosperity will not be taken away from us - and bugger the consequences for everyone else. It is a lie.

What COVID has displayed for all of us to see are weaknesses in the system of Federation in this country when there is a crisis at hand. The current party-political impasse of petulance that we witness too often lays out in stark relief the trouble we are in when a crisis is afoot. O that we might see some good!

I never cease to be confronted by the image Jesus gives us of himself in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel when he says: Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me. We are compelled to read this as metaphor, as symbol of something else. Literally we cannot make sense of it. As we have touched on the theme of Jesus, the Living Bread over the last weeks, and his injunction to feed on him, I have wondered about our human tendency to devour, to consume each other. We devour the dignity of the poor when our lifestyle keeps them in poverty, we devour our children when they are subjected to a life-ethic of getting ahead at all costs, we have devoured the indigenous people of Australia as we have ridden roughshod to prosperity, we continue to devour the earth as our wisdom is insufficient to the task of pulling back from the brink. So, when Jesus says *Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life*, he is not asking us to engage in some bizarre cannibalistic ritual but to feed on him and receive the life of God. In taking in his life and his way we are called to stop feeding on our neighbour, to stop devouring the earth, to stop consuming the poor and their dignity and to feed on him the humble, broken one who has given his life for the life of the world.

This is the strange, heavenly wisdom which confronts the wisdom of the world. O that we might see some good!

The letter to the Ephesians reads: Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.

This is not a time to retreat behind closed doors but is a time for action; a time for Christians to re-enter the fray, to call for wisdom, for humility, for repentance, for repentant action. No question this will not be easy. We would rather a technical fix than to have our prosperity challenged.

This calls for wise hearts who have fed on the living bread and who are sustained by the mysterious life of God. May it be so.

[Eternal Light, shine in my heart](#) — West Side Presbyterian Church, New Jersey

Eternal light, shine in my heart;
eternal hope, lift up my eyes;
eternal power, be my support;
eternal wisdom, make me wise.

Eternal life, raise me from death;
eternal brightness, help me see;
eternal Spirit, give me breath;
eternal Saviour, come to me;

until by your most costly grace,
invited by your holy word,

at last I come before your face
to know you, my eternal God.

Christopher Martin Idle 1938-
from a prayer by [St Alcuin 735-804](#)

Prayer – prepared by David Baxter

Loving God,

In these difficult times, we give you thanks for all that makes life something to be treasured and enjoyed, bringing light to dark corners, hope to life's journey, for so many people.

We know that there are also many people who do not share such a joy of life at this time.

We pray for people in our community for whom life is a difficult struggle through loss of employment, facing eviction from the place they call home, suffering with long term illness in physical and mental health.

We pray for people who at this time are in difficult relationships, relationships that bring fear, uncertainty, a deep sense of sadness. We pray for people in these situations who are longing to make things better, but who are unable to find the way.

In these difficult, uncertain times, we pray for people who never imagined that they would need help with employment and housing, who feel helpless now, vulnerable, lost.

We pray for the services that seek to support community needs with welfare services, emotional support. We pray for church communities who use their resources to help people in need of support in a variety of ways. May they be resourced to enable such services to bring hope to struggling lives.

We pray especially for people we know who need special support at this time to cope with the issues and problems that confront them at this time.

Amen

Our Father, in heaven ...

[Your words are Spirit and Life, O Lord – Psalm 19](#)

Krishna Blackwell

*Your words are spirit and life, O Lord:
richer than gold, stronger than death.
Your words are spirit and life, O Lord;
Life everlasting.*

God's law is perfect, refreshing the soul,
reviving the weary spirit.
God's rule can be trusted: bringing us wisdom,
bringing God's wisdom to birth.

God's precepts keep us; their purpose is right.
They gladden the hearts of people.
God's command is so clear it brings us new vision;

bringing God's light to our eyes.

Living by God's truth is holy and sure;
God's presence is everlasting.
God's truth is eternal, bringing us justice;
bringing God's justice to earth.

God's word is precious, desired more than gold;
worth more than we dare imagine
and, sweeter than honey, this word will feed us,
bringing fulfillment and joy.

Bernadette Farrell · Craig Kingsbury

Blessing

May you carry God's Wisdom,
speak forth God's Word,
and embody God's Presence
wherever you are,

and the blessing of the Holy Trinity of Love
be upon you,
this day and always. Amen

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NEWS AND NOTICES

GENEROUS GIFT TOWARDS SUPERMARKET VOUCHER SCHEME

Over the past couple of months, Aston Comms contractors have been changing over the phone tower equipment, both on the tower above the church and on the ground. This has been in preparation for demolition of the North Road Hall. To date the TELSTRA equipment has been located under the hall. There have been many contractors coming and going and while the work has at times been disruptive, they have been a pleasure to work with.

This week, as a sign of appreciation for the work the congregation does through the Little Free Pantry and with Asylum Seekers, they gave us supermarket vouchers to the value of \$1,000. We were wowed by their generosity and this vote of thanks for the work the congregation does in these two areas.

ADELPHI PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY - SAVE THE DATE!

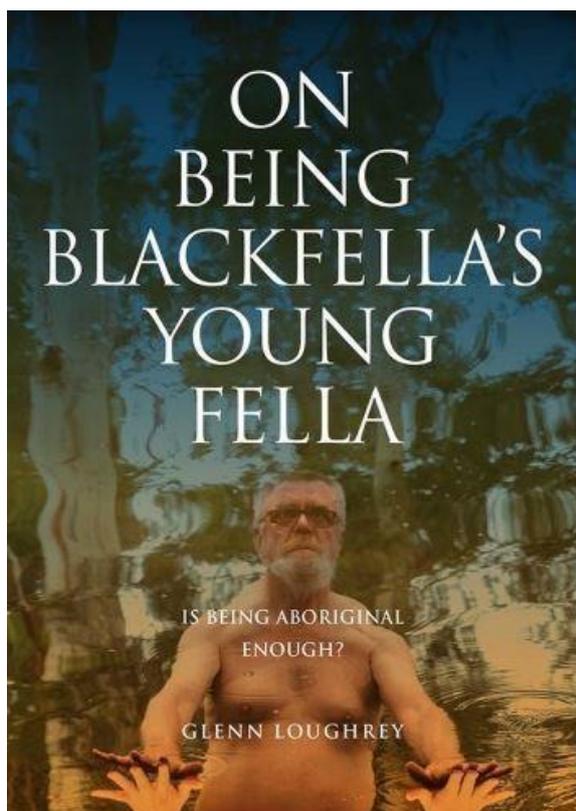
The revised performance dates for the play – “The Christian Brothers” are 1st – 5th September, 2021. More information regarding performance times to follow.

In the meantime, Michael Mace, Director of the Adelphi Players Theatre Company, has very generously offered to put on an extra performance on **SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 5TH at 4.30PM** with all proceeds going to support the ASRC. The performance runs for about 1 ½ hours and will be followed by afternoon tea. It would be great to see some of our OUC members, family and friends supporting this event. We may be able to provide some transport.

Venue: Booran Road Hall

Tickets: \$10 each.

Enquiries – Brenda Grootendorst 0433494600 (please leave a message and will get back to you!)



Please refer Invitation below which was highlighted by our Ormond Indigenous Action Group.

Glenn (pictured in the image to the left), is the Anglican Priest at St. Oswald's Church, Glen Iris.

Event details below:

If you'd like to attend this event (which may end up being online), we have other interest already from Heather & David, Lorraine, Anne & Warwick if you'd like to chat further about the event.

Warwick

YOU ARE ALL INVITED TO THIS FREE EVENT

SUNDAY, AUGUST 22

A COMMUNITY FORUM 'LISTENING TO FIRST AUSTRALIANS'

(WHIN-NGA-RRA ... LISTEN, HEAR AND THINK)

LET'S TAKE THE FIRST STEPS ON OUR JOURNEY TO UNDERSTANDING

THE PROGRAM INCLUDES:

- WELCOME TO COUNTRY/ SMOKING CEREMONY
- TALK BY INSPIRING WRITER AND ARTIST, WIRADJURI MAN, GLENN LOUGHREY
- OPEN FORUM/Q&A, WITH AN INDIGENOUS PANEL ON MATTERS IMPORTANT TO THEIR COMMUNITY
- GLENN'S ARTWORK ON DISPLAY

AT HIGH STREET ROAD UNITING CHURCH* 482 HIGH STREET ROAD, MOUNT WAVERLEY 2:15PM TO 4:15PM

PLEASE NOTE: PLACES AT THE VENUE MAY BE LIMITED, IF COVID RESTRICTIONS ARE IN FORCE

BOOKING ESSENTIAL: 0416 007 496 or mbkennett@bigpond.com

*ACCESS TO LIVE STREAM ... ZOOM LINK: <https://tinyurl.com/2jm7629n>

AFTER WORSHIP CHAT – ZOOM LINK emailed

For those wishing to catch up after this Sunday's worship service, there will be an opportunity to stay online to chat afterwards on **Sunday 15th August 11.00am to 12.00pm**. Zoom Link is being emailed to the congregation today (Friday).

ROSTER for Sunday 22 August 2021

READING	Gary Richter	
PRAYERS	Dianne Richter	
EARLY WORD	Ron Townsend	
DOOR DUTY	Jan Davenport	David Northwood
SOUND	Graeme Davenport	
COUNTING	Dennis Taylor	Jan Davenport
MUSIC	Karen Roberts	
RESOURCES DELIVERY (Fri 20 August)	Brenda Grootendoorst	

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