

A dramatic sky with a crescent moon and large, illuminated clouds. The sky is dark blue and black, with a bright crescent moon in the upper right. Large, white and yellowish clouds are illuminated from below, creating a strong contrast with the dark sky. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

SEASON OF CREATION 1

5TH SEPTEMBER

When he established the heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep.

WORSHIP AT HOME

Today we commence the Season of Creation, which we mark until 4th October, St Francis Assisi Day. In this time of climate crisis, we seek to connect with Francis' humility, in awe of the Creation. Our complicated and fast-paced world is challenged by his vision.

Over this time, we will be invited to contemplate the beauty and wonder of the world and allow its wonder to realign our hearts and the way we shape and order our lives. As we enter into this time we pray for ourselves and the whole human race: Lord have mercy.

In this service you are invited to share the Lord's Supper at home. We will be celebrating this online but you are welcome to join us in spirit.

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.

O virtus Sapientie

O Wisdom's energy!
Whirling, you encircle
and everything embrace
in the single way of life.
Three wings you have:
one soars above into the heights,
one from the earth exudes,
and all about now flies the third.
Praise be to you, as is your due, O Wisdom.

Hildegard of Bingen

Prayer

God of all creation,
At the beginning of time
You placed a single charge on humankind -
To till the earth and keep it,
To be stewards of creation
To replenish and nurture
through all generations
What you have made.

We kneel today
amid that same creation -

A world that is, in many ways,
more splendid than ever
But, in too many ways,
maybe scarred beyond recognition.

Turn us from our un-mindfulness,
Help our touch again to be light,
Inspire us to renew the world that supports us
So, we may once more know creation
As it was in the beginning

Amen

The Book of Proverbs 8

Does not wisdom call,
and does not understanding raise her voice?
On the heights, beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her stand;
beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she cries out:
'To you, O people, I call,
and my cry is to all that live.
O simple ones, learn prudence;
acquire intelligence, you who lack it.
Hear, for I will speak noble things,
and from my lips will come what is right;
for my mouth will utter truth;
wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
All the words of my mouth are righteous;
there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.

The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.
Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth—
when he had not yet made earth and fields,
or the world's first bits of soil.
When he established the heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
when he made firm the skies above,



when he established the fountains of the deep,
when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
then I was beside him, like a master worker;
and I was daily his delight,
rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.

'And now, my children, listen to me:
happy are those who keep my ways.

Epistle of James 2. 14-17

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill', and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.



Crumbs of Love, Michael Cook, 2009

The Gospel according to Mark 7. 24-37

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened.' And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, 'He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'

Reflecting

We are all familiar with the poetic beauty of the language which begins the Gospel of John: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.* It is language which invites us to imagine the world and an eternal meaning which lies behind all that we see. The truth is that the prologue to John echoes the much earlier writings of what we have read from the Book of Proverbs: *The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.* Both of these texts stand in the Hebrew wisdom tradition, are deeply poetic and invite us to imagine a world infused with the very life of God.

While this tradition is part of our own Christian heritage most of us were raised with another image of God; God located somewhere on a cloud in another realm, one to which we would pass after this life. The image of Creation was as though God had set a clock going, wound it up and walked away. Creation was disenchanted, stripped of meaning and wonder. We are reaping the consequence of this disenchantment in our own time.

The Church is concerned with questions of ultimate meaning and as people of faith we plumb our scriptures to wonder together with our ancestors about these questions. It is human to wonder about these things, even as we recognise our own mortality. One of these questions is: where did we come from, how did all that we inhabit come into being? The Book of Proverbs affirms that the Creation is infused with the wisdom of God – and it imagines Wisdom as a helper, there by God's side.

We live in the consumer age – maybe this is coming to an end because we are coming to recognise how our voracious consumption is ravaging the earth. Our trouble is that we were raised to understand ourselves as consumers, that getting ahead and consuming was the

meaning of our lives. Generation after generation has been inducted into this self-understanding. The earth is saying stop!

But, how do we stop or change course? How do we find another source of meaning for ourselves? How do we model a way of being for our children and grandchildren which is counter to the meaning-stripped world they have been inducted into? And how do we talk with others about the changes that need to take place?

My understanding is that we need to reconnect with the natural world in ways that give meaning to our being in the world. This is not easy or straightforward when we live in a big city of five million people. The sunrise and the sunset, the night sky, the immensity of the Australian horizon, the coming and going of the seasons are not readily available to us, as they are in the country. Nevertheless, we can reconnect with the small elements of the natural world that are around us. Flowers, plants, birds, the wind, the sun, the bursting forth of Spring that we are in the midst of now.

During the Season of Creation, I am inviting us to undertake a daily contemplation of the world immediately around us and seek the presence of the Creator in what we see and touch and sense. This contemplation is called an Examen and is in the pattern of a process of inner reflection developed by St Ignatius. In this contemplation I pray the world we experience with our senses will enter into us. Maybe this will bring us joy. Maybe the brokenness of what we see will cause us sadness. Out of our joy our souls becoming bigger. And out of our sadness we can consider what needs changing, what we need to turn away from, how we need to act differently.

Pope Francis, in his 2015 Encyclical *Laudato Si* writes:

If we approach nature and the environment without openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. The poverty and austerity of Saint Francis were no mere veneer of asceticism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled.

It trust that by undertaking the Examen our way of being in the world will be transformed and that a new way of being will well up in us, changing the way we live, the choices we make and impacting on those with whom we share our lives. May it be so.

Prayers for the World, Ourselves and Others:

prepared by Dianne Richter

Creator of All,

We are grateful that from your communion of love
you created our planet to be a home for all.
By your Holy Wisdom you made the Earth
to bring forth a diversity of living beings
that filled the soil, water and air.
Each part of creation praises you in their being,
and cares for one another from our place in the web of life.

We recognise that changes in climate have damaged
and continue to damage the ecosystems which sustain life.
Our consumption is out of harmony and rhythm
with Earth's capacity to heal and is pushing the planet beyond its limits.
We remember how in the days of Noah and the flood
you gave the rainbow as a sign of your care for earth
and everything that lives in it.
We ask that you help us as we grapple with this problem.

We pray for scientists seeking to understand the complexity
of what is happening and identify solutions,
for politicians confronted with the need for courageous decisions
and for your wisdom for all who are seeking
to reduce the impacts of climate change to this and future generations.

Father, we bring before you in our prayers areas of the world
that suffer great environmental problems,
including flooding, storms, drought, rising sea levels and uncertain weather patterns.
We pray for all in those parts of the world
which are already feeling
the impacts of climate change
including South Pacific Islands, New Orleans, Greece and Iceland.

We pray for your blessing on those who work
to alleviate the impacts of climate change
and to provide for those made destitute in poor countries.

We pray for the work of all those charities and campaigning organisations
which seek to educate and bring pressure to bear on governments
so that problems will be addressed. Help them to operate effectively and with integrity.
May their voices may be heeded.

Lord, we know that it is not only climate change that is hurting our world.
Coronavirus is wreaking havoc on communities worldwide,
including our own.
Be with the sick and those caring for them,
the lonely, people experiencing mental health challenges,
families with young children and the decision makers
responsible for implementing strategies to protect us.

We pray for families, displaced by insecurity and conflict,
who are migrating in search of peace.
This week we pray especially for the people of Afghanistan,
those leaving the country in haste and those unable to leave
- all facing uncertain and potentially terrifying futures.

In this Season of Creation, we pray that the breath of your creative Word
would move our hearts, as in the waters of our birth and baptism.
Give us faith to follow Christ to our just place in the beloved community.
Enlighten us with the grace to respond to your covenant
and call to care for all common home.
In our tilling and keeping, gladden our hearts

to know that we participate with your Holy Spirit
to renew the face of your Earth, and safeguard a home for all.

In the name of the One who came to proclaim good news to all creation, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Supper

Thanksgiving in a Time of Communal Lament

We will be sharing the Lord's Supper online today, using this prayer. If you are not able to join us, you should feel free to gather gifts of bread and wine and pray this prayer yourself. God's spirit is with you in your joy and in your need.

God of infinite mystery, God of everlasting promise,
we gather at this table in sorrow.
We are faced with disaster,
and we grieve for all who suffer.
God our fortress, God our shield, God our healer,
receive our lament,
and listen to our silent prayers.

Weep with us, merciful God:
Weep with us, merciful God.

And yet God of endless compassion, God of eternal mercy,
always we gather at this table in thanksgiving.
Your majestic creation knew conflict from its very beginnings,
yet in all things you overcome death with life.
God our source and our end,
God our guardian, God our nurse,
you freed the slaves, you vanquished the enemy,
you fed the starving, you cured the sick,
and you filled the sky with the rainbow of hope.

Rescue us, mighty God:
Rescue us, mighty God.

With angels and archangels,
With all the host of heaven,
With those who gone ahead of us
We join in the eternal hymn:

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of Power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We give you thanks for your Son,
who himself knew evil and pain.
He wept over the city, he mourned the death of his friend,

yet he sought healing for the whole world.

On the night before he died, our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks,
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

We remember his life with the poor and his death with the outcast,
and we rejoice in his resurrection,
which promises the world release from agony and destruction.

Remember us, faithful God:
Remember us, faithful God.

Make this meal into your body and blood of forgiveness.
Strengthen us to wait in faith and hope for your peace and justice,
Embolden us to act with grace and peace, seeking for your health and joy,
until that day when your creation is born anew
to live without heartache and affliction.

Preserve us, compassionate God:
Preserve us, compassionate God.

To you, God of ceaseless consolation, God of unending goodness,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
we offer here our laments and our thanksgivings,
for your hands hold our tears
and your ears receive our praises,
now and always.

Amen.

In the words of him who assures us of your love and that you see the suffering of the world we
pray:

Our Father ...

Agnus dei

Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.
Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.
Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us your peace.

We take the elements of bread and wine to sustain our souls.

The body of Christ broken for a broken world

The life of Christ poured out for a world dying of thirst for the life of God

Prayer

Loving God,
In Christ you join the suffering of the world,
invite us to abide in your love
And be made whole.
Heal us, remake us,
Call us back from our sin
into your eternal embrace
that we may know ourselves at one with you
our source and our end. Amen.

Blessing

The blessing of the God of love
Be upon us;
This day, this night
All our days and all our nights.
Amen

Prayers of the People: Adapted from “Season of Creation 2021 Prayer” and Pilgrim Uniting Church resources <https://pilgrimwr.unitingchurch.org.au/?p=566>

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Rev. Andrew Boyle

Office: 0411 958 127; Mobile 0409 869 009; Email: ajmboyle@outlook.com

Rev. Deacon Pam White

Mobile 0434 378 099; Email: pamdwhite@optusnet.com.au

Music Director: Mr Peter Hurley

Administrator: Mrs Cathy O’Connor

Tuesdays & Fridays, 9am-3.30pm – 0411 958 127
office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

Website: www.ormondunitingchurch.org

NEWS AND NOTICES

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 5th September 11.00am to 12.00pm**. Zoom Link is being emailed to the congregation and you can phone in on:

Phone: 7018 2005

Meeting ID: 830 8631 7308

Password: 602701

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.

Recently, 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.



AFGHANISTAN EMERGENCY (ACT FOR PEACE)

By now, you will have seen the heartbreaking scenes unfolding in Afghanistan.

In the recent days and weeks, Taliban forces have taken control of all Afghanistan's major cities, including Kabul, after rapid advances. Almost 390,000 people have been displaced, and tens of thousands now need urgent humanitarian assistance. They are in crisis.

Families hurriedly left their homes, without time to bring essential items with them. They're now in cramped, unsanitary camps that lack even the most basic medical and water facilities.

Click here for [Donation page if wishing to help](#) (Ctrl key plus click link)

Dear Ormond Friends,

We are definitely in for the long haul in this covid battle. It seems like this devious enemy which seeks out the weakest points is here to stay. It is good to realise that even though eradication may not be possible, all our efforts over the last 18 months have stopped it from being any worse. Our isolation, hygiene and mask wearing and now our vaccinations are all helping. Our hospitals have not been completely overwhelmed and our death rates have been relatively low. If we have to live with it as we do live with the flu then at least we are equipped .

It is much like anything evil in our community. We have strategies to keep away from it, to try our best to not let it into our beings, to shun it where we can and to minimise it as much as possible and to always be alert. We do all these not just for ourselves but for all our community as well.

Other shortcomings in our world are highlighted during this time. We see the overcrowding in some First Nations communities . We see violence within homes escalate. We see issues of blatant unfairness in some employment areas. Rather than feel overwhelmed we can have clearer ideas of how to overcome such challenges. These topics are out in the open now and we can find ways to address them.

I had a " blast from the past" during the week. An unexpected email arrived from a woman in Finland whom I had not heard from in around 10 years. She is actually the friend of a friend and visited me on her trip to Australia about 12 years ago. She belongs to the Finnish Orthodox Church where she has had filled some important lay roles and has been involved in the Ecumenical movements. It was interesting to catch up on her activities these past years.

I remember when she came to Australia she wanted us to take her to where she could get some idea of what we Australians are like .

We went by tram from Vermont to the city. This gave her a taste of suburban architecture and living . She was impressed by the banners on the Richmond Town Hall and St Paul's Cathedral welcoming refugees. We were able to explain to her some of the division in the community around this.

Then we went to the Ian Potter Gallery at Federation Square to see some of the Indigenous art . Also hung there at that time was a painting of John Howard which when it was examined closely was made of myriad blue lines of writing saying "not sorry" . This depiction expresses both a government policy as well as our freedom to rally against it. We do well to cherish our freedom of thought and expression. It gave this visitor an insight into our life here.

Apart from catching up with her news it was so nice to be remembered fondly and I quickly wrote back to her. It was a reminder of the smallness of our world as we are brought closer by electronic communications. My daughter in Cairo tells me she has had the Johnston covid vaccination. That was something of a relief for me to learn as I was not sure that as a foreigner she would be eligible.

Our tastes of warmer and lighter Spring weather seem to have a cheering effect upon most of us. Being Aussies it won't be long before we are complaining of being too hot! This of course spurs us on in our individual efforts to mitigate against global warming.

I read a comment on prayer which said that if the only prayer we make is to give thanks it is sufficient. We have so much to be thankful for. Let's celebrate this as we work on ways to share our well being.

With love, Pam