

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

Pentecost 21

October 17



Are you able to ... be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

The Crucifixion - Graham Sutherland

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.

O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

Bless the Lord, O my soul.
Praise the Lord!

Prayer

Holy and eternal God

we arise to the certainty of this day.
Another day in the wonder of our existence.
Where the certainties of all that is sustains us:
Our very breath which enables our being;
food and water which nourish us;
the knowledge of the love of others to buoy us up;
the richness of all we inherit which places us within community
and the surety of your love found in Jesus Christ.
In all these certainties we know that you,
holy, wise God are for us, therefore who can be against us.

Yet sometimes the uncertainties of our lives threaten to overwhelm us:
as health fails,
as we are separated from those whom we love by death,
as close relationships break down,
as disaster strikes,
as the certainties upon which we base our lives collapse
and we find ourselves unsure of what it means plan our lives
and we feel we have lost all control.

Gracious God, before us has gone Jesus;
through life, through death,
abandoning all to love of you,
and shedding light on the path we walk.

Sometimes we think we know
and so fail to see, O God;
sometimes we struggle to hear clearly

and we become fearful
and lose our way
or want to turn back.

But we know that he has the words of life grounded in you, O God.
So we continue on our way; knowing that it is your way,
The way of life found in you.

Grant us grace, O God, grace and courage
to continue on the way,
in the certainties of our existence
but most especially in the uncertainties,
so that we can come to know the height and depth and breadth of your love
and know ourselves as your joy-filled vessels.

In the name of him who is the bread of life for us, Jesus, your Christ.

Amen.

Job 38. 1-7, 34-41

There are very passages in the Bible where the writer imagines God speaking. This section we read today from the Book of Job is possibly the longest in all of scripture. Job and his friends have been arguing for many days about the nature of God. Job speaks out of his extreme suffering, anguish, despair and then out of anger, accusing God of much. He wants to drag God into a law court and put God on trial for the presence of meaningless suffering in the world. His sanctimonious friends speak out of a misguided certainty. Finally now, we hear God speak. "Where were you ...?"

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:
'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?
Gird up your loins like a man,
I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.
Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone
when the morning stars sang together
and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

'Can you lift up your voice to the clouds,
so that a flood of waters may cover you?
Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go
and say to you, "Here we are"?
Who has put wisdom in the inward parts,
or given understanding to the mind?

Who has the wisdom to number the clouds?
Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens,
when the dust runs into a mass
and the clods cling together?



Job in despair, Marc Chagall 1960

'Can you hunt the prey for the lion,
or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,
when they crouch in their dens,

or lie in wait in their covert?
Who provides for the raven its prey,
when its young ones cry to God,
and wander about for lack of food?

Psalm 104

Bless the Lord, O my soul.
O Lord my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honour and majesty,
wrapped in light as with a garment.
You stretch out the heavens like a tent,
you set the beams of your chambers on the waters,
you make the clouds your chariot,
you ride on the wings of the wind,
you make the winds your messengers,
fire and flame your ministers.

You set the earth on its foundations,
so that it shall never be shaken.
You cover it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.
At your rebuke they flee;
at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.
They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys
to the place that you appointed for them.
You set a boundary that they may not pass,
so that they might not again cover the earth.

O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

Bless the Lord, O my soul.
Praise the Lord!

The letter to the Hebrews 4. 7-10

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

The Gospel according to Mark 10. 35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to Jesus and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' And he said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They replied, 'We are

able.' Then Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.'



Jesus washes the disciples' feet – Ethiopian Orthodox icon

When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So, Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

Reflecting

In the Gospel of John, the notion of glory is a major theme. The word is used many times throughout, but glory for John is, in the world's way of seeing things, a kind of anti-glory. The glory of Christ comes through the cross, the servanthood and suffering of the cross.

Today we read in Mark that the brothers James and John want to share in Jesus' glory by being seated at his right and left, like worldly rulers. *You have no idea what you are asking for, says Jesus. I must first undergo the baptism of the cross as the means of entry into my glory.* This notion of coming to glory through the suffering of the cross is, here in Mark, the kernel of the idea which John's Gospel, written maybe 30-50 years after Mark, develops more completely, an anti-glory.

If James and John want to rule, they must become like servants – even slaves, says Jesus to them. The journey to the cross will show them what this looks like. As Paul writes in the letter to the Philippians:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,

We have come to understand baptism as a nice ritual that the church performs on children. But, here in Mark, baptism is used as indicator of a form of suffering and trial which leads to resurrection, new life. This is the pattern Jesus calls us to follow.

The Book of Job is in many ways an account of a long, horrific baptism that Job undergoes. He is remade by it and in the end comes to new life. His understanding of himself is transformed, his understanding and experience of God is transformed, he wrestles with God and prevails and receives a blessing. In many ways I feel the story of Job is mirrored in the life and trials of Jesus. It is in Mark's Gospel that Jesus cries from the cross: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* It is an echo of Job's cry of despair and abandonment. Yet glory comes.

In a similar way Paul undergoes a baptism which transforms him. He prosecutes terrible persecution upon the flowers of The Way, as Jesus' early followers were known, but he is transformed in what we know as the Damascus Road experience.

The stories of Job, of Jesus and of Paul affirm for us that the way into the life of God is through our sufferings. This is something the world does not want to hear, as Job's friends were so completely convinced. Suffering is punishment is their view and is something which is doled out by a punishing God. But if this is the theology we ascribe to, we will never be reconciled with the crosses we bear, the difficult and inexplicable sufferings of our lives. The call to the cross is a call to be reconciled with our suffering and to savour the quiet assurance that comes from knowing that God is present in them, even though at the time we may not believe it to be so. Job cries why have you forsaken me. Jesus cries, why have you forsaken me. We may too. It is alright to do this, to feel the full depth of human emotion. To swear and abuse and rail against God. God will not break.

So many of us come to these places of abandonment. In them we are overcome with a complete sense of being abandoned, that no one is holding us. No question, these places are a living hell. Yet, ones from which we may be redeemed. We are lost in these places. We lose ourselves in these places. And then we may be remade, resurrected. Glorified!

The call to be disciples of Christ is to know in our bones and be joyful in the pattern of this path. We know it is difficult, we don't deny the utter degradation of this path and we hold each other as we undergo these trials. We are not ashamed of them because we know they are the path to glory. And we are remade in ways that mean we don't seek human glory but we know that the path to life is through servanthood and self-giving.

The story of Job is full of a heck of a lot of complaining. One of the things we do in nice society is we say: Oh, I mustn't complain, sweeping our trials under the carpet, keeping them hidden from others, a bit embarrassed about what is happening to us; our family. But maybe complaining is a actually a form of prayer, a form of plea: where is God in this? Where is life in this? Certainly, the Psalms are full of complaining: where are you God? Our experience of God will only be as deep as our willingness to abandon trivial theology, abandon our attachment to niceness and inoffensiveness and notions of God as punishing us or someone else.

We place ourselves in the hands of the God who makes and sustains all things. Our lives are sometimes a mystery to us but we can be sure as we are faithful as Jesus was faithful that we tread the path that leads to life and glory. Thanks be to God.

Prayer

God of compassion,
You hear the cries of all people.
In your kindness,
watch over refugees and victims of war,
those who have lost family members,
families who have been left homeless,
and children who have lost the joy of simply being kids.
Lord God,
Comfort all those who suffer.
Console all those who mourn.

For those who bring healing and peace,
Lord, hear our prayer

For those who respond in crises, placing themselves at risk,
Lord hear our prayer

For wisdom, to choose paths of peace,
Lord, hear our prayer

For leaders trying to build reconciliation,
Lord, hear our prayer

For solidarity with those experiencing loss or hunger,
Lord, hear our prayer

For generosity to share fairly the world's resources.
Lord, hear our prayer

For steadfast disciples, responding generously, to the needs of suffering people,
Lord, hear our prayer

For mothers, fathers and children who are traumatised from witnessing acts of violence,
Lord, hear our prayer

For families who have lost all they own or want to return home but cannot,
Lord, hear our prayer

For those hoping to hear from missing family members,
Lord, hear our prayer

For aid agencies and workers,
Lord, hear our prayer.

May the hearts of warring people be turned towards peace.
May they seek reconciliation with their enemies,
and a future built on justice.

Open our eyes, that we may see injustice,
Open our ears, that we may hear a stranger's cry.
Open our mouths, that we may speak words of welcome.
Bless the work of our hands so that together we may act.

We ask this through Jesus Christ,
the one who suffers so we may see the path to God.
Amen

Blessing

May the God who makes and sustains all things
Hold us and lead us
For our valleys of the shadow of death
Into the joy of his presence.

The blessing of the holy-one
The holy-three
Be with you
And sustain you,
In the name of Christ. Amen

The Crucifixion, 1946 (oil on hardboard) by Sutherland, Graham; Saint Matthew's Church,
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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 17th October 11.00am to 12.00pm**. Zoom Link is being emailed to the congregation and you can phone in by dialling 7018 2005 (Melbourne) using Meeting ID: 837 5294 0315 and Passcode: 240726

Remembering and Celebrating our Halls.....

Dotted through the latest October edition of Pathfinder you'll find people's memories of how our halls have been used. Thank you to everyone who has contributed articles (Warwick, Heather, David, Elizabeth, Dot, Jan) and to Lorraine for several of the photos– we hope you enjoy them. May they inspire you to reflect on your own memories and perhaps send something for next month – written articles and photos welcome. We will also be including material on the website.

If you'd prefer to tell someone your story so we can write it down for you, please contact Dianne Richter (0413 750 089).

We have also set up an online option "Ormond Uniting Video Memories" where you can record your memories so we can create a video record. Here is the link:

<https://app.memento.com/ormond-uniting-video-memories/bo5dlK8Ap/record>

If you require assistance to record your memory, please contact Gary (0411116415) or garyrichter@yahoo.com.au. You don't need sophisticated recording equipment, just a smart phone or laptop with camera.

Provisional Notice of Congregational Meeting

The usual pattern of our congregational life is to hold a congregational meeting in October where we elect or re-elect members of the Church Council. Of course, all of our usual routines are thrown up in the air this year, but we plan to hold a congregational meeting on either **7th or 14th November**, the final date dependent on COVID restrictions and the situation regarding the demolition of our halls. We will give formal notice of the meeting date once these things are clearer.

Among the matters on the agenda for the meeting will be the election of Church Councillors. There are 8 positions available for Church Councillors. The current membership is: Andrew Boyle (Minister); Ron Townsend (Minister-in-Association); Mardie Townsend; Brian Moore; Dennis Taylor; Heather Baxter; Marg Davis; Robyn Mulder.

Andrew Boyle, as Minister, is automatically a member of Church Council. Robyn Mulder's term of appointment does not expire until the end of 2023. Ron Townsend has submitted his resignation from Church Council and will not accept re-nomination. Dennis Taylor has also indicated that he will not be continuing as Treasurer in 2022 and will not be standing for Church Council. The current terms of Heather Baxter, Marg Davis, Brian Moore and Mardie Townsend (all of whom can be re-elected) expire on 31st December 2021.

Please give prayerful consideration to who might fill the 6 vacancies on Church Council for 2022 and beyond. And then act by speaking to people who you consider might be suitable Church Councillors. Written nominations (either in hard copy or via email), including the written agreement of the nominee, need to be received by Cathy O'Connor, our Church Administrator. WE will advise the date these need to be submitted by once we have set the meeting date. Nomination forms can be obtained from Cathy by emailing: office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

THE ORMOND LEARNING HUB

THE BIG STORIES OF OUR FAITH



Sometimes reading the scriptures can be strange and confusing. When a story seems a bit strange to us, we can rightly ask: Why this story? Where does it fit? Across the ark of both the Old and New Testaments there are some big stories into which much of the scriptures fit. Understanding these important stories and themes can make sense of particular passage's meaning.

In this third course for 2021 we will explore the big themes of the scriptures. Some of these will include:

- Bondage and Liberation, Exile and Return and Sin and Forgiveness.
- We will explore the question: Does the violence of the crucifixion really redeem us?
- What does the event of the resurrection mean?

We will draw our material from the series *Living the Questions* and allow generous time for small group conversation.

When: Thursdays 21st, 28th October & 4th November, 7.30pm.

Where: Online by Zoom (if we are able to meet face to face, we will advise at the time)

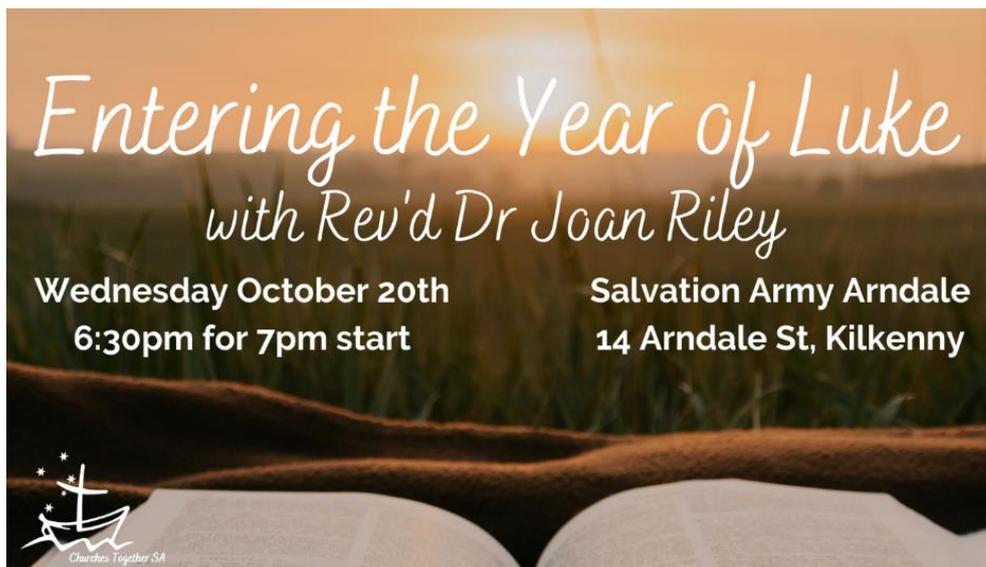
Cost: \$30 for the course

Who: led by Rev. Andrew Boyle

Enquiries and booking to: learninghub@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

ROSTER for Sunday 24 October 2021

READING	Robyn Mulder	
PRAYERS	Mardie Townsend	
EARLY WORD	Heather Baxter	
RESOURCES DELIVERY	Heather Baxter (TBA)	



ENTERING THE YEAR OF LUKE with Rev'd Dr Joan Riley

Wed 20th October 6.30pm for 7pm start

Joan's research includes the multicultural, multiethnic communities of the Early Church, as well as women's role in the Early Church communities. As our Churches grow into diverse and rich communities, Joan will share her reflections on Luke and its message to us, in our diversity and communion together, as one body in Christ.

Luke brings to us a very different perspective, and a cosmopolitan voice, where Jesus' Way brought a new togetherness and engagement as God's people.

This event will be in person as well as streamed. [Register here](#)