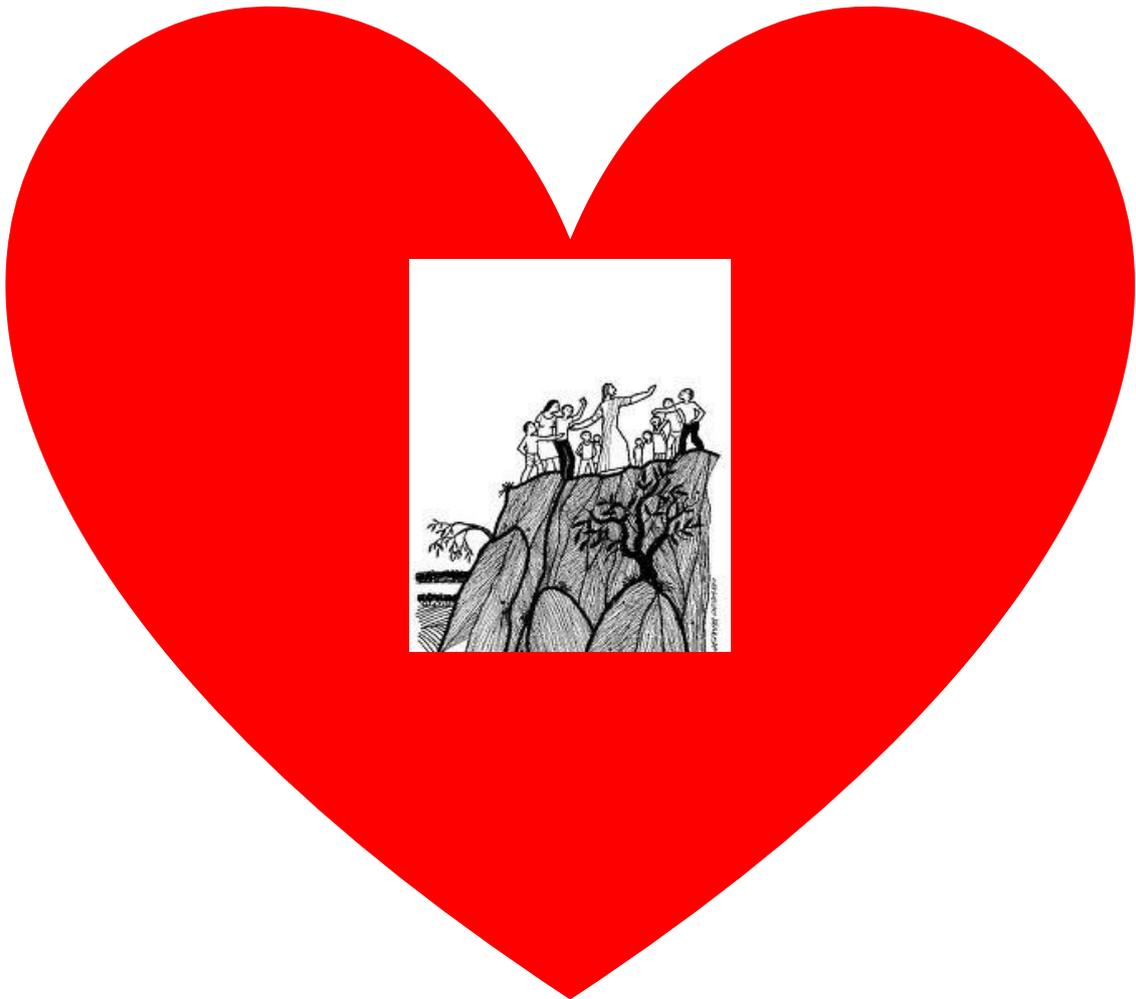


# ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

Epiphany 4

January 30, 2022



# 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.*

## Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all

**And also with you**

## Call to worship

Love! Just love!

Above all other gifts, there is love.

**The source and goal of Christ's worship and ours.**

Love. The ground and guide for our dealings with one another.

**The heritage and hope of all races and nations.**

Love. The delight and destiny of those filled with the Holy Spirit.

**Above all else there is love.**

Let us worship God, the fountain of love.

*Bruce Prewer*

## Acknowledgement of First Peoples

From before recorded time, the First Peoples cared for this Land. We praise the Creator for the beauty of this Land and honour those who have offered themselves in tending it.

We acknowledge the Elders and communities who have told the sacred stories and nurtured faithfulness to the Creator.

**We ask God's blessing on those who continue to work for the healing and restoration of this Land and Her Communities.**

# Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the first of our ZOOM services (5 or 6 weeks) while the demolition of the halls takes place. In reality, the demolition of the halls begins a new phase in our life together. Namely, God is doing a new thing among us and offers our congregation an opportunity to listen for God's Word about where our journey might go. In faithfulness to the God who loves us unconditionally, we will live out our calling.

Each of the readings set for today frame particular responses we can take up in pursuing the road ahead: Jeremiah calls us to respond to God's call to serve despite our sense of inadequacy; Luke asks us to move out of our cultural bunkers and lay ourselves open to God's leading and in the letter of St Paul to the Corinthians the richness and depth of God's extraordinary love must be the key shaping element in our mission.

## Prayers of Adoration/Confession/Forgiveness

### ADORATION

God our Father, you have made the light shine out of darkness;  
You have made the sun rise on the good and on the evil;  
You have given Jesus Christ to be the light of the world.  
Today you have awakened us and brought us here to praise your goodness and ask for your blessing.

We turn our thoughts towards you;  
we lift our minds to think of you and though we cannot see you,  
yet we know that you are present in power and especially in love,  
to receive our praises and to us your help and your strength.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is pure love!

### CONFESSION

Gracious God,  
How often does selfishness wash through our good intentions?  
How often do we speak bold, sophisticated words to impress others?  
How often do we forget that we are what we are because of you?  
Remind us that our abilities are your gifts to us.  
Remind us that that you loaned us some possessions in the hope that we would help others with them.

If we are guilty of living only to impress others  
– **forgive and transform us.**  
If we gain status only by putting someone else down  
– **forgive and transform us**  
If we do things only for applause  
– **forgive and transform us**  
If all we do sounds like clanging cymbals and noisy gongs to you  
– **call us to repent, forgive us and transform us.**

Lord,  
**Humble us enough to serve.**

**Humble us enough to pray.**

**Humble us enough to love you and people who may never say thank you to us.**

In Jesus' name we pray

**Amen**

*Kwasi Kena, The Africana Worship Book for Year C, (Discipleship Resources, 2008), 144.*

## Assurance of Pardon

We do not deserve forgiveness, Lord, yet your love is so great, so unutterably immense, that your forgiveness and renewal is ours for the asking.

So, we ask

Lord have mercy

**Lord have mercy**

God of mercy, make all your children people of integrity, so that, discerning the true from the false, we may hold on to the Truth, revealed to us in all its fullness in Jesus Christ.

Release us into the freedom of God's children such that we honour Christ before all.

We pray in his name.

**Amen**

## Scripture

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet

**A light to our path**

Jeremiah 1:4-10

<sup>4</sup>Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, <sup>5</sup>"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." <sup>6</sup>Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." <sup>7</sup>But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you, <sup>8</sup>Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD." <sup>9</sup>Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, "Now I have put my words in your mouth. <sup>10</sup>See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup>If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup>or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup>it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup>It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup>Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. <sup>9</sup>For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; <sup>10</sup>but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. <sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. <sup>12</sup>For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. <sup>13</sup>And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Luke 4:14-30

<sup>14</sup>Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup>He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. <sup>16</sup>When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup>and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: <sup>18</sup>“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” <sup>20</sup>And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” <sup>22</sup>All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” <sup>23</sup>He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’” <sup>24</sup>And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown. <sup>25</sup>But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; <sup>26</sup>yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. <sup>27</sup>There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” <sup>28</sup>When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. <sup>29</sup>They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. <sup>30</sup>But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

The Word of the Lord

**All praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

## Sermon

In the sermon I have used some of Bruce Prewer’s thoughts on the passage, including a poem entitled ‘UNTIL,’ with which I begin:

‘And all spoke well of him  
and of his gracious words  
    until he called their bluff  
    and demanded much more  
    for the outcaste and poor;  
then they got rough.

And all spoke well of him,  
“A nice bloke, Joseph’s son;”  
    until he stepped outside  
    their polite comfort zone  
    where brave souls walk alone;  
then they deride.

And all spoke well of him,  
an honour to their town;  
    until he made it clear  
    that those of alien race

also received God's grace;  
then they showed fear.

And all speak well of him,  
from Broome to Airlie Beach,  
until he invites the sad  
pros and junkies to share  
in his house of prayer;  
then they get mad.'

© B.D. Prewer 2000

According to Luke, at the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus was rejected and threatened with murder, by being hurled from a cliff top.

Why? Why was Jesus rejected by his own people, in his own hometown, where he had been raised since a child? Why did they get angry enough to want to kill him?

In the Gospel passage we see that after Jesus made his announcement,

*Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing,*

they were all excited and proud of him.

*All commented favourably, and marvelled at the gracious words which flowed from his mouth; and they said: "Isn't this our Joseph's son?"*

At this stage in the encounter, Jesus was popular, yet a few minutes later he was rejected!

What made the difference?

Try this!

He broke open their worship of other 'gods' - he broke open a community steeped in racism - frighteningly blind to their sin of exclusion - seeing themselves, rather, as the preservers of the 'pure' race!

Jesus confronts their false "worship;" their worship of the small 'g' god of exclusivity! He talks of God's grace towards despised Gentiles, those non-Jews who were regarded as unclean and hardly human; despised and unfit for the company of decent citizens of Israel, 'like in our lovely town of Nazareth!'

Jesus spoke of the legendary prophet Elijah, who in a time of famine did not trigger a food miracle for Israel, but rather did so for an alien widow in the Phoenician province of Sidon. Jesus then emphasized his message by reminding them of the prophet Elisha, who although there were many lepers in Israel, Elisha was used by God to heal a leper called Naaman; a man from hated Syria.

We have just celebrated Australia day and last week our service commemorated the Day of Mourning concerning the relationship between our First and Second peoples in this land! The Nazarenes rejection of Jesus cuts uncomfortably close to the way in which our European colonising forebears treated and cast aside the indigenous people of this continent. So, instead of the old English fox hunts, they indulged in what they called "boong" hunts." In this context, the question Jesus' encounter with his hometown crowd poses to us, right now, is: Has this racist attitude really changed? Have we in Australia truly been converted to the inclusive understanding of God's love for ALL – First Peoples included!?

Jesus' declaration that God loved Gentiles as much as he loved the people of Israel, enraged the people of his hometown. He had uncovered and stirred up the bile of racism, amongst his very

own. This was the crunch for them. 'HE HAD TO GO!' A cry, heard, in similar circumstances, later in Jerusalem and on that occasion, there was no escape for Jesus from their murderous intent!

The Nazarenes had no time for his inclusive message of love – 'who dared to challenge the presumption of God's favouritism towards them!'

Yet Jesus' mission remained (remains!) a universal, inclusive one, and he clearly showed this by including in his outreach the hated Roman and the mongrel Samaritan, the Greek and the Phoenician. As well as this, he made sure he included all those disgraced souls, the outsiders who, for one reason or another, would no longer have been welcome at the synagogue.

Jesus, then and now, refused to classify people on racist, cultural, or any other lines. He did not categorise folk as either pure or impure, righteous or unrighteous, worthy churchgoers or the unworthy outsiders, Israelites and pagan Gentiles, God's people or the unwashed mob. His love was radically inclusive.

And why this may all sound very negative, there is to be understood in this encounter the central truth of the Gospel which lies within the mindset of Jesus, namely, Jesus was driven; powered by THE ONE THING THAT MATTERED: Faith and Trust in God his Father, whose eternal love was/is for ALL!

Inclusive love, when it moves beyond mere religious sentiment into nitty gritty truth and action, remains a scandal. It will offend some. Those who once spoke well of us, can quickly turn on us and reject us when the truth of Christ starts to bite in our behaviours and lives.

To love and follow Jesus is a risky way to go. Yet it is the only way that leads to abundant, transformed life and holy joy.

This is the only way, the way of love!

But note, please, please, note, NOT the type of love portrayed in reality TV show, such as – 'Married at First Sight!' They make a mockery of love. Their understanding of love is a betrayal of the power of real love just as Jesus demonstrated betrayal of real love, in his Nazarene encounter.

REAL LOVE!?

Real love – what is that?

Jesus chooses the way of real love when he confronts a murderous lynch mob in his own hometown. He chooses real love as he exposes their so-called love, as nothing more than community bunkered discrimination against those around them who are different. He exposes their tight community spirit as nothing other than racist hatred of those 'others!' – masquerading, of course, as community solidarity or National Security!

The true love of God confronts and challenges such 'loves!' And if those who horde and cherish such loves are confronted by this extra-ordinary love of God, then only a radical transformation and conversion will change them. And if they/we will not accept this radical transformation/conversion then they/we will 'kill' to protect their/our own 'loves!'

The beautiful hymn of love we heard in 1Corinthians 13 this morning constitutes something of what God's love looks like.

You know, this is a passage often used at weddings (I often used it at weddings!) and it is a passage that is popular in the community at large, but this depiction of love by St Paul must be seen against the background of the divided and broken Corinthian Church.

Paul writes to a deeply divided community where decadence, corruption and division is rife in the church community. He says to the Corinthians, 'You claim to be the holders of God's love and yet

you are a terribly, oppressive, divided community. The strong laud it over the weak. The 'haves' deprive and take from the 'have nots.' The powerful use their power to 'feather their own nest,' at the expense of the vulnerable in their community.' Paul's hymn of love would have been a huge wakeup call (I hope) to all the members of the Corinthian church. A wakeup call to be open to genuine transformation and conversion by and to the love of God and thus, to use all their God-given gifts to build up the body of Christ in love – the supreme gift.

*'The Nazarenes' initial approval of Jesus was a superficial attitude involving no real conversion. The salvation Jesus brings cannot rest simply on the surface, leaving the depth of human beings untouched, unexplored and unhealed'* Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God* pg 52

When Jesus walks into our midst, into our congregations and into our lives, and exposes our very own self-indulgent faithlessness - I pray we will not throw him over the cliff - but, rather, open ourselves to the transformative Love of God, which he revealed, once and for all, in his willingness to die for us!

Let us pray

## Prayers of the People

prepared by David Northwood

Dear Lord, we pray hear our pray today

These are our prayers for the week after Australia Day.

We are called to relieve suffering and to bring hope as we lament the past wrongful claiming of this land.

We lament the denial of the birth right of the original owners of this land and we celebrate their presence among us

Elders of this land, hear our voice

Let our words be mingled with yours, for the wisdom of the Dreaming lives in you.

Seasons come and pass, the winds of time have worn the mountains low while we journey on.

We have become masters of survival. Survival is a complex thing, and it is the fruit of courtesy.

If we kill to just to kill, then all the spirit world will cry out in pain and hostility.

But if our tracks are gentle through the valley with every cautious step conceived in courtesy

Then we will truly live in the strength of the deep Dreaming

As deathless as the tribes of companion stars.

And we will surely survive until the last moon dips into the final sea.

As we gather past Australia Day, we come before a God who forgives,

O God, hear us; hear our prayer for peace and reconciliation among all the nations of the world.

For true justice for the rights of all people, including the indigenous peoples of our nation.

For a sense of deep listening and reverence for the beautiful land that has been given to us.

For a deepening of appreciation for all cultures, and especially for the different tribes of our indigenous people.

For a greater sense of community, and a bonding of all the people of this land.

For recognition of land rights of indigenous peoples by all political parties.

For an all embracing attitude to the oppressed peoples who come to Australia from all war-torn and impoverished nations

For the needs of this time  
May we always stand tall as a mountain ash  
As strong as the rock of Uluru,  
As gentle and still as the morning mist  
Hold the warmth of the campfire in our hearts  
And may the Creator spirit always walk with us.

Amen

## Dismissal

Go now to all to whom God sends you,  
and speak whatever words God gives you.  
Rejoice in the truth and do not be afraid.  
Let all that you do and all that you say  
be filled with love, for love never ends.

## Blessing

And may God be with you always, to deliver you;  
May Christ Jesus put his gracious words in your mouth;  
And may the Holy Spirit bring you to completeness in faith, hope and love.

## Word of Mission

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,  
**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

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

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# NEWS AND NOTICES

## **CLIMATE CHANGE BANNER**

**The new climate change banner is now in place on the south wall of the church:  
Unite for Stronger Climate Action – NOW!**

The Climate Change Group thank all you folk who sent through captions and graphics for the Group to consider for the OUC Climate Change Banner. All the Banner contributions were great and a huge amount of thought and effort was evident. Thank you for contributing, we really appreciate it. The Group decided that Lisa Saffin's Banner caption was the one on which we would model the OUC display Banner. Congratulations Lisa. Lisa's 'prize' is a \$100 donation to the environmental cause she chooses.

## **DEMOLITION OF THE HALLS**

### **– CLOSURE OF THE CHURCH SITE FROM 24<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY**

The demolition of the Booran Rd hall and the North Rd hall is now underway. During this time the entire church site will be out-of-bounds. We will not have access to the church and the office will be relocated for the duration of the works.

During the demolition phase the office will be relocated to Trinity Uniting Church, Black St Brighton. We are very grateful to the Trinity Church Council for their generosity and hospitality during this phase.

When the project is finished the only building to remain will be the church. (The Fraser St hall will remain but this will be on the parcel of land which has been sold) New, temporary toilets will be provided on site. The church office will be located in the Link after the demolition.

During the demolition period the church office number will continue to be the new number 0411 958 127.

## **WORSHIP DURING THE DEMOLITION PHASE**

Note: Zoom Services will commence for Ormond Uniting Church worship effective from Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> January until the demolition is finished and services at the church will not re-commence until the demolition is complete. Please email the office or check website if needing to arrange access to the link.

## **PATHFINDER UPDATE**

Happy New Pathfinder Year, everyone -

Please send us your material by Monday 31st January - what's happening around the congregation and in your community. What reflections have you had about what you've heard in worship, other resources, stories to share about your January, etc.

Also keen to have dates and info about groups (eg Bob's Boys, Home Groups, etc.) Now is a great time to let people know something about what you do, when you meet, where you meet, etc.) to encourage opportunities for participation and connection, especially in the new few weeks when we can't worship in the church.

Please send us your contributions by Monday 31st if possible. If you will be later, please let us know so we can set space aside.

Looking forward to lots of contributions in 2022 - it will be an interesting year in lots of ways.

D & G

## **A NOTE FROM PAM**

Dear Ormond Friends,

No this is not a return to regular letters but it is a heartfelt "Thank You".

It was such a pleasant time at Allnut Park on Boxing Day and I was so pleased that so many of you were able to come, considering many of you had family commitments. What a wonderful thing to bind all those letters together for me to keep as well as writing your own. I will really treasure yours. Thank you.

And thank you for the other very generous part of your gift. I will enjoy browsing in Readings to choose some books and I will wait and buy something special with the money. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time among you and my prayers and hopes are for your future, especially as the new building development takes place.

With grace, peace and love,

Pam

## **ANDREW'S LEAVE**

A reminder that Cathy (Church Administrator) is now back in the office on Fridays from 9.00am – 5.00pm and Andrew is currently on leave returning on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

## ROSTER for Sunday 6 February 2022 (Service to be via Zoom)

Service will be lead by Warwick Barry

READING	Lorraine Denniston	
PRAYERS	Heather Baxter	
RESOURCES DELIVERY	Heather Baxter (TBA)	

### **ADELPHI PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY**

Presents: **THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS** by **RON BLAIR**

Join the classroom of Brother John in this entertaining and often hilarious award-winning play.

**SPECIAL EVENT WITH ALL PROCEEDS GOING TO THE ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE.**

**Date: Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> January**

**Time: 4pm**

**Venue: GEALC CENTRE 260 Booran Rd Ormond**

The play lasts for 1 hour and there will be no refreshments. All Covid safe protocols will be followed.

Tickets are \$10 and available at the door. Please let Brenda know if you are planning to attend so that you can be contacted in case of any change of plans.

Many thanks

Brenda Grootendorst 0433494600