

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

Epiphany 6

13 February



*They shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream.*

Jeremiah 17. 8

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.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.
They shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream.

Prayer

You who are the source of life and blessing,
We bless!
You are the source of all that is good and life-giving and
We seek your light and the blessing of your loving gaze upon us.

For the prophets, for your son, for all your children
Who bear your blessing to us, we give thanks and are joyful.

We acknowledge, O God, that too often we bear curses to each other,
That we and others are bearers of pain and the darkness
Which leads to living death.
We confess that we get caught up in this way of death,
That its pall settles over us and we ourselves become bearers of death to
Those we share our lives with and whom we meet.

Have mercy on us, O God.
We seek blessing but too often we are bearers of woe.

Your beloved Son Jesus has born your light and blessing into the world –
We rejoice that this blessing comes to us:
Through your word, through your faithful servants through time, through those who have been
hope-bearers for us.
We are grateful, O God.

May we be bearers of blessing also.
May the blessings we have received
Be shared with others
And so your reign be seen

And your kingdom come,
As in heaven,
So, on earth.
Amen

The Prophet Jeremiah 17. 5-10

Thus says the Lord:

Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals
and make mere flesh their strength,
whose hearts turn away from the Lord.

They shall be like a shrub in the desert,
and shall not see when relief comes.

They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.

They shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream.

It shall not fear when heat comes,
and its leaves shall stay green;
in the year of drought it is not anxious,
and it does not cease to bear fruit.

The heart is devious above all else;
it is perverse—
who can understand it?

I the Lord test the mind
and search the heart,
to give to all according to their ways,
according to the fruit of their doings.

Psalms 1

Happy are those
who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
or sit in the seat of scoffers;
but their delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law they meditate day and night.

They are like trees
planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
and their leaves do not wither.
In all that they do, they prosper.

The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement,

nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

The Gospel according to Luke 6. 17-26

Jesus came down the mountain with the apostles and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

‘Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

‘Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.

‘Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

‘Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.



‘But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

‘Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.

‘Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

‘Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

Reflecting

How Jesus came by the moniker *Gentle Jesus, meek and mild*, I am not sure. The words form the opening line of a fourteen-verse hymn by Charles Wesley extolling the virtue of little believers also being meek and mild – as Jesus is portrayed in the hymn –

Meek and lowly may I be,
Thou art all humility;

Let me to my betters bow,
Subject to Thy parents Thou.

Not that Jesus was inclined to be subject to his parents, nicking off to the temple when the family went up to Jerusalem when he was thirteen. I wonder when we might have a hymn which begins *Grumpy Jesus, short and cranky*, because, like the prophets before him, this is the way he often is.

We have read Luke's version of what in Matthew's Gospel are known as the Beatitudes. Luke's blessings are shorter but they also come along with a sets of woes. Woe to the rich, the full, the laughing – your time will come. And later in the Gospel Jesus again speaks a more direct series of woes to a group of Pharisees and lawyers with whom he is dining:

'But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practised, without neglecting the others. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love to have the seat of honour in the synagogues and to be greeted with respect in the market-places. Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without realizing it.'

One of the lawyers answered him, 'Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us too.' And he said, 'Woe also to you lawyers! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not lift a finger to ease them. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your ancestors killed.'

We cannot ignore the unequivocal way in which Jesus speaks to liars and hypocrites – the word of the Lord stands – this is the beauty and treasure of the word, that it affirms the way to life and alerts us to those ways which lead to living death.

Luke's Jesus stands in a long Jewish prophetic tradition which speaks against the violence which oppresses the poor. In Hebrew – linguistically - the opposite of poor is not rich. Rather it is violence and oppression. So, there is a linguistic connection between the two words poor and violence – that if there is someone who is poor there is also someone, or a system, which oppresses, a system of violence. The wisdom of our society goes that if someone is poor then they have not tried hard enough, worked hard enough, that they are feckless or lazy. They should pull themselves up by the bootstraps. Dare we consider that there is actually a system which is geared against them and maybe we are part of that system, that we may indeed benefit from it. Woe to you who are full now!

Psalm 1 speaks of those whose delight is in the law of the Lord:

They are like trees
planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
and their leaves do not wither.
In all that they do, they prosper.

In our prosperity-preoccupied world we can be forgiven if we think the prospering that comes from abiding by and in the law of the Lord is an economic prosperity. Maybe it might be. But it's not a prosperity that comes from the violent oppression and exploitation of others. The prosperity that the scriptures are concerned with is what Jesus refers to as fullness of life. This

fullness echoes the charge of Moses to the wandering tribes of Israel as they enter the land of promise:

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days,

The call by Jesus into the life of God is a call into a prospering of spirit that is able to receive all the fullness of the world as gift – sometimes these gifts are difficult but even in difficulties there can be light and joy to be found. God is always present.

We can rest secure in the grace and bounty of God and delight in the blessings which flow from this.

Prayer – prepared by David Northwood

Lord we pray
Hear our prayer today
As we pray for others
And for ourselves

We live in difficult but also encouraging times.

Sometimes we have been appalled by the political events and the introspection of government leaders who seem to have little regard for the common good.

One of the underlying themes during this period has been the demonising of vulnerable people, refugees, ethnic minorities, Muslims, and others.

With respect to refugees, if common sense and some vision prevailed amongst all the major political parties, then processing of refugees could be achieved with massive financial and humanitarian savings.

History shows that it's been possible to cause terrible harm to people by first stereotyping and dehumanising the people being harmed. Taking away the identity of refugees is an act of profound repression. Building policies based on racial contempt and divisiveness has sadly become central to some political parties and their idea of Australia.

However, we recognise that it is all too easy to blame others for these appalling situations.

Before we change the world need to change ourselves.

Lord help us

To care for the uncaring
To love the unlovable
To respect the disrespectful
To show compassion to the uncompassionate
To build harmony amongst the disorderly
To forgive the unforgivable
And to show humour to the humourless

Lord we thank you for the blessings of food, water, shelter, family and well being. As we enjoy healthy food, we will today think of those who struggle to feed their families every day.

You fed the hungry.

Inspire in us the commitment to follow your example,
showing compassion in action and sharing what we have with those who have less.

You cared for all.

Help us to remember your command to love one another.

Help us to see the Christ in each of our brothers and sisters especially those who are in need.

You are the Bread of Life.

Strengthen us as we work for justice in the world.

Help us to stand in solidarity with the poorest of the poor.

Help us to care more deeply, live more simply and share more fully.

We are reminded of the words in First John Chapter 3, "How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help?"

These are our challenges.

In the words of the old hymn by James Lowell

New occasions teach new duties, time makes ancient good uncouth

They must upward still and onward, who would keep abreast of truth.

Lord we pray help us to meet these challenges.

Amen

Our Father ...

Blessing

Happy are those

whose delight is in the law of the Lord,

They are like trees

planted by streams of water,

which yield their fruit in its season,

and their leaves do not wither.

In all that they do, they prosper.

God the Father make you holy in his love;

God the Son enrich you with his grace;

God the Holy Spirit strengthen you with joy;

the Lord bless you and keep you in eternal life.

Amen.

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NEWS AND NOTICES

WORSHIP DURING THE DEMOLITION PHASE

Note: Zoom Services will commence for Ormond Uniting Church worship effective from Sunday 30th 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 <https://www.ormondunitingchurch.org/> if needing to request access to the Zoom link.

MEETING UP DURING THE “DEMOLITION PHASE”

Last year the Formation Group made a commitment to offer a time to meet together, chew the fat and enjoy each other's company during the time that we are unable to be together in worship.

We'll meet in **Allnutt Park (Wheatley Road McKinnon) - Sundays at 6.00pm.**

BYO dinner, drink, and chairs. Following are the dates and the contact names of those who will be able to tell you about changes should the weather hamper the events.

20 Feb - Lorraine Denniston

Tues 1 March - Pancake day

6 March - Ron and Mardie Townsend

20 March - David and Heather Baxter

Heather (for the Formation Group)

DEMOLITION OF THE HALLS - CHURCH SITE CURRENTLY CLOSED

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.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Coatesville Uniting Church – UCAF, have sent an invitation to join their World Day of Prayer on **Friday 4 March at 1.30pm**. If anyone would like to take part in this event, please contact Jan Davenport on 9578 1713.

AN EXCELLENT DAILY REFLECTION BOOK

Ormond has been lucky to receive 3 additional copies (free) of With Love to the World this month. It covers the seasons of Lent and Easter.

This means there is an opportunity to "try before you buy". This resource covers about 3 months with a daily reading, reflection and prayer as well as stimulating questions to tackle at the end of each week. Normally the cost of a copy is \$6.00 and there are 4 copies during the year.

Let Heather know if you would like to try one of the 3 free copies and she'll post or deliver to you.

OFFICE HOURS

Andrew has now returned from leave.

A reminder that Cathy (Church Administrator) is now back in the office on Fridays from 9.00am – 5.00pm.

ROSTER for Sunday 20 February 2022 (Service to be via Zoom)

READING	Marg D	
PRAYERS	Dianne R	
RESOURCES DELIVERY	Marg D	

PHOTOS OF ORMOND CHURCH SITE THIS WEEK





Images provided by Gary

