

# ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



26 FEBRUARY 2023

LENT 1 YEAR A



# WORSHIP AT HOME

## Gathering

### Greeting

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all

**And also with you**

### Acknowledgement of First Peoples

In the Dreaming, the Spirit of God brought forth the blessing of Ancient Life through Mother Earth.

Ground Beings were given breath and rhythm... the offspring of the heart of God!

This place was tended by the Boonwurrung People – people of this Ground and this Land’s rhythms. We give thanks for their custodianship and honour their Elders – past, present and future.

### Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to worship. It is great to see you all and to celebrate the worshipping community of Christ which is Ormond Uniting Church (also welcome any new people.)

Today is the first Sunday of Lent and I will say more about that a little later in the service. Today is also the Launch of the Environmental Activism /Climate Change Art exhibition which the Yr 5 – now Yr 6 - students of Murrumbeena Primary School, created last year and which from today, and for about the next 8 -10 weeks, will be exhibited on the display boards, which are hanging on the wall of the ‘Link’ facing North Road – so “open’ for the public to see and enjoy. The students produced 60 pieces of art, some of which are hanging on the walls around the church, and which will also be projected onto our screens a little later. Today also sees the continuation of the Climate Change Hub course – the 2<sup>nd</sup> week – about 25 people attended last week and it was very stimulating. Please try and make it tonight. One of the notices on your pew sheet has more information. Lots happening – so we best get started with our Call to Worship

# Call To Worship

An Introduction:

*The call to worship is a very important part of worship. It is an invitation. God invites us. This is NOT an exercise in our graciousness or merit. 'How good of me to be here!' "*

*'No, I am not worthy to come before God!' No! Neither of those attitudes is correct. God invites ALL of creation, which of course, includes you and me, to enter into the presence of the Source of all love and all life – God: Father Son and Holy Spirit. The only question for us to answer is: will I faithfully and openly come? Will I truly accept the invitation and be open to meeting the Source of all love and life. The Call is to Worship. That is, to recognise, to be thankful for, to acknowledge the worth of, to value above all else the Source of all love and all life. By answering the Call, we are not stroking the huge ego of a God who remains remote and rules over us, but quite to the contrary, by answering the Call we are being given the key to all meaning, purpose and joy in our own life and love, and indeed of all life and love in the whole creation.*

THE CALL TO WORSHIP:

Let us come into the presence of Almighty God.

**Let us humbly and thankfully come into God's presence.**

Let us acknowledge the wonder of God's creation.

**God, who made all that exists and declared, 'It is very good!'**

Let us be honest and admit to our frailty and brokenness.

**Let us not hide anything from God who knows us inside out, but never ceases loving us.**

Let us see with our eyes and hear with our ears and know in our hearts and minds,

**the marvellous acts of God.**

Let us wonder at the mystery of a God whose love extends to dying for all his children.

**Who loves us all enough to die for us,**

to make us whole

**and new again.**

Let us, in deep humility, answer the Call,

**and come before this Lover and Creator of ALL!**

Let us worship God.

**Amen, Amen, Amen!**

**HYMN TiS 577: 'Come let us to...'**

## Prayers Adoration / Confession / Forgiveness

### ADORATION:

God of grace,  
You have made our minds, so help us to know you.  
You have made our hearts, so help us to love you.  
You have made our voices, so help us to sing your praise.  
You have made our souls, so fill us with your Holy Spirit,

so together we may celebrate your glory  
and worship you in spirit and in truth,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

### CONFESSION:

Lord, remind us often,  
when we are feeling  
proud,  
arrogant,  
beyond reproach,  
pleased with ourselves,  
self-sufficient in our ways,

that for such as us  
and better  
and worse  
you walked a road  
that took you to a cruel cross,  
and rose again to show us where  
we might look for rescue  
as from this lofty perch  
we fall.

Lord, without your journey along the way to the cross, we remain lost in a terrible wilderness of our own making.

Lord, forgive our brokenness – our self-centred indulgence, and embolden us in faith to walk hand in hand with you, into the darkness made light by you

We pray in Jesus' name

Amen

### BLESSING/ASSURANCE OF PARDON:

Hear Christ's word of grace to us.

Our sins are forgiven:

**Thanks be to God**

# We Listen For The Word

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

## A light to our path

Hebrew Scriptures: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

<sup>15</sup>The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

<sup>16</sup>And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; <sup>17</sup>but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

[Chapter 3]

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’” <sup>2</sup>The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; <sup>3</sup>but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’” <sup>4</sup>But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; <sup>5</sup>for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

<sup>6</sup>So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup>Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Epistle: Romans 5:12-19

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned— <sup>13</sup>sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. <sup>14</sup>Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come. <sup>15</sup>But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man’s trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. <sup>16</sup>And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. <sup>17</sup>If, because of the one man’s trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>Therefore just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. <sup>19</sup>For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

The Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. <sup>3</sup>The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” <sup>4</sup>But he answered, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” <sup>5</sup>Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup>saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” <sup>8</sup>Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; <sup>9</sup>and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” <sup>11</sup>Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

The Gospel of the Lord

**Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ**

## A Reflection on Lent and Climate Change

Today is the first Sunday in the season of Lent.

Just to refresh you:

Lent is a time of grace when the people of Christ reflect on their mortality and sin, as well as on the creative and re-creative power of God by which women and men are saved. You can't have one without the other!

Now, on the subject of sin, [I'm an expert in the field!] we are currently, and for the foreseeable future, all caught up in a very significant SIN. A SIN against the created order. It is a sin we are all a part of. It is a sin involving the whole of humanity. A sin which we cannot ignore, and which, on this first Sunday of Lent, we are urgently called to reflect and act on.

Climate Change. Yes, Climate Change. OUR Sin!

So, before we have a heart to heart about our Climate Change sin, let's muse a little on the readings for today, starting with Romans, where Paul states at the end of the reading:

*<sup>18</sup>Therefore just as one man's [Adam's] trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's [Jesus'] act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. <sup>19</sup>For, just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*

Bishop Tom Wright has this to say about Paul's writings on Adam and Jesus in this passage from Romans:

*“The point of the Adam/Christ comparison is to emphasize that the human project begun in Genesis, the key part of the Creator's project for the whole creation, has been put back on track. Paul doesn't offer a full 'doctrine of sin' here but merely summarizes what he had said [earlier.] Enough to know for the moment that sin involves disobedience, failure of loyalty, a fracturing of the creator's intention, which, because it is a turning away from the source of life, cannot but bring death.”*

I like that phrase: *'a fracturing of the creator's intention.'*

Climate change is literally a source of death, even now and when we get to 2-3 degrees centigrade rise, we will be seeing and experiencing death's hell, in all its forms, like never before. AND not only devastation for the planet and for humanity, but of God's intention of Heaven on Earth. Yes, it is true that intention has already been fulfilled through the life, death and resurrection of God's son Jesus, BUT our continued disobedience and denial of God's gracious gift of new life, frustrates and delays that fulfilment.

And what a cost! The longer we fail to act decisively in regard to our collective sin, especially in regard to the defilement of the created order, the more pain and suffering we inflict on the Saviour of the world as he bears our sin on the cross, over and over and over again!

How long!? How long!?

One other comment from Matthew's story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness before we get up close and personal with Climate Change.

Tom Wright again:

*'Jesus offers God not merely the obedience Adam refused but that redeeming obedience which Israel refused in the wilderness. Jesus faced the 'if...'* of the tempter with courage, with Scripture, with loyalty to the one who had called him.'

Because of his unfailingly obedient love he had to accept death on the cross – the death, through which, the Father's gracious gift of new life for all was freely given – including the entire created order!

THUS, how, then can we, his children do anything other than challenge sin and death in all its forms, including that of Climate Change, when confronted by with this extraordinary love and grace of God?!!

Climate Change.

It is a global challenge that affects every aspect of our lives, from the food we eat to the air we breathe. As I suggested above, Christians have a responsibility to care for God's creation and to take action to address climate change.

So, let's explore the Christian understanding and approach to climate change, including actions we can all take to mitigate its impact.

In the book of Genesis, we read that God saw everything he had made, and it was good (Genesis 1:31). The whole created order is a gift from God, and we are called to be stewards of his creation. As stewards, we have a responsibility to take care of the world around us and to protect it from harm.

Unfortunately, to put it mildly, we have not always been such good stewards of God's creation. Human activity, such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation, has led to a significant increase in the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This increase in greenhouse gases has led to global warming, which is causing changes in weather patterns, rising sea levels, and the extinction of species.

In the book of Isaiah, we read that the earth is God's footstool (Isaiah 66:1), and we are called to care for it as an act of worship and obedience to God.

So, a big part of our Christian calling in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century must be to take action to address climate change. This means that as individuals, communities, nations and as a world community, we need to take steps to reduce our impact on the environment and to protect vulnerable communities that are most affected by the climate crisis.

Let's get practical.

Here are some actions that ALL of us can do to help mitigate the impact of climate change.

1. Reduce our carbon footprint.
  - a. As noted previously, one of the most significant contributors to climate change is the emission of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. These gases are emitted by human activity, such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation. To reduce our carbon footprint, here are some actions we can take:
    - i. Use energy-efficient appliances: Use appliances that are certified as energy-efficient, such as refrigerators, washing machines, and light bulbs. These appliances use less energy and emit fewer greenhouse gases.
    - ii. Drive less: Consider carpooling, biking, or taking public transportation, instead of driving alone - or walk more. If you need to drive, consider using an electric or hybrid vehicle.
    - iii. Eat a plant-based diet as much as that is a possibility for you: The production of meat, especially beef, is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. By reducing your meat consumption or eating a plant-based diet, you can reduce your carbon footprint.
2. Support Policies that Prioritize Environmental Protections and sustainability.
  - a. Governments and businesses have a significant role to play in addressing climate change. We as citizens can support policies and initiatives that prioritize environmental protections and sustainability. Here are some actions that we can take:
    - i. Vote for candidates who prioritize environmental protections: Research the candidates running for office in your area and vote for those who prioritize environmental protections and sustainability.
    - ii. Support businesses that prioritize sustainability: Look for businesses that have a sustainable business model and support them by buying their products, even if it costs a bit more.
    - iii. Advocate for policies that prioritize environmental protections: Write to your elected officials and advocate for policies that prioritize environmental protections, such as regulations on greenhouse gas emissions and investments in renewable energy.
3. Care for vulnerable communities.



- a. We also have a responsibility to care for the most vulnerable members of our society, including those who are most affected by the climate crisis. In the book of Isaiah, we are called to "defend the oppressed" and to "take up the cause of the fatherless" (Isaiah 1:17). This includes those who are impacted by climate change, such as indigenous communities and low-income populations.

Let me conclude.

As Christians, we are called to care for God's creation and to be good stewards of the earth. This means taking action to address climate change and reducing our impact on the environment. Let us pray for the wisdom and strength to do what is right – that is, to do what reflects the truth of the gospel, that Jesus has already made all things new and when that is not the reality we see before us in the created order, our calling is to challenge and change our fractured selves and world by means of the transforming love and wholeness of the recreating Christ.

Let our expressions of his love be our Lenten calling!

Let us pray.

## HYMN TiS 668: 'Touch the Earth lightly'

*The offering will be received during the hymn*

### The Prayers of the People prepared by Marg Davis

*[The references used for today's Prayers for Others include: The Let us Pray book, by Janet Nelson, and the Fig Tree Worship resources.]*

Dear Lord, who breathes life into all of creation and from whose presence we can stray, but never hide, we bring our prayers to you this morning. **Let us pray**

We pray for your world tempted by power, wealth, greed and exploitation.

We pray for the nations of the world, for all people in dangerous places and for those experiencing violence.

We pray for the hungry and the homeless and our indigenous brothers and sisters and we ask you to guide those who hold responsible positions in government, so that decisions can be made to make our country and our world a better place for all.

We pray for the Church and for all communities of faith throughout the world and for those who minister in your name.

We also pray for all who worship at Ormond and we ask that you strengthen us to do your will and to fill us with your grace.

In our prayers we remember all who are struggling from one day to the next- for those who are anxious, the lonely, those who are sad and those who are grief-stricken, the sick and the dying and for all the care workers, medical professionals and others who provide support.

We pray for all with whom we share our lives, those who live in our community, our families, our friends and for ourselves.

Today as we launch the climate change posters, we pray for all who are desperately trying to protect, and save, our precious planet.

We thank Murrumbeena Primary School for sharing their Grade 5 art projects from last year and we are grateful to all young people, who are proactively concerned about the effects of climate change and who are constructively addressing this issue.

As we bring our prayers before you, Dear Lord, we know that through Jesus Christ we find strength to live justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our Lord.

We pray together the prayer you taught us

**Our Father in heaven,**

***hallowed be your name,***

***your kingdom come,***

***your will be done, on earth as in heaven.***

***Give us today our daily bread.***

***Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.***

***Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.***

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen**

**HYMN TiS 534: ‘Love is his word’ – verses 1, 5, 6 & 7**

## **Blessing and Sending Out**

Be strong and of good courage, do not be afraid; for it is the Lord who goes with you. Your God will not fail you or forsake you!

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness, to deny yourselves, and to take up the cross and follow him;

and the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and until the end of time.

**Amen**

## **Word Of Mission**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

**In the name of Christ, Amen.**

**Recessional Hymn For Lent: HYMN TiS 684:  
‘Love will be....’**

# Postlude

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

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Presider: Rev. Ron Townsend

Music: Peter Hurley

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NEWS & NOTICES