

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

Lent 1

6th March



Christ in the Wilderness ~ Ivan Kramskoi ~ 1872

WORSHIP AT HOME

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

*We began the Season of Lent this week and the movement toward Easter. We have shared with members of the congregation copies of the Lent devotion by Michael McGirr **This Cup We Bless**. Over the days of Lent we will read John's Passion in very slow motion. Usually, we read the whole of the Passion in one big slab on Good Friday. Like too much cake in one sitting, this single reading makes it hard to digest. So, Michael invites us to savour the Passion in little bites over the seven weeks of Lent. As you take a cup in your hands each day through Lent there is an opportunity, as you savour a drink, to savour this ancient story which tells us of the mystery of God with us in this difficult and yet everyday story. If you missed out on a copy of the book, please phone the office and we can arrange one for you.*

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.

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust.'

Prayer

Holy God,
Your chosen one Jesus
Set his face to Jerusalem
To a fate he knew would be difficult, even deadly.

He went with faith, deeply grounded in the assurance of your love and mercy.
He wanted to show us that your divine love transcends the worst that we can descend to,
To show us a new way.

For his vision and his faithfulness to your way
we give you thanks.

We enter Lent
and make our way toward Jerusalem and remembrance of the events Jesus faced there.

He calls us to take up our own crosses.
We are not sure what this means, O God.
Maybe we will find ourselves saying: not this cup, O God!

Amidst all the clamouring demands on us

And the temptations to divert from the path
We pray for your grace and courage to stay the path,
To know your presence with us,
To go with joy and with confidence in your love.

We pray in the name of him who has gone before us
And calls us to follow,
Christ our peace and our joy. **Amen**

Deuteronomy 26. 1- 15

When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, 'Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.' When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, you shall make this response before the Lord your God: 'A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.' You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.

When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year (which is the year of the tithe), giving it to the Levites, the aliens, the orphans, and the widows, so that they may eat their fill within your towns, then you shall say before the Lord your God: ... I have obeyed the Lord my God, doing just as you commanded me. Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel and the ground that you have given us, as you swore to our ancestors—a land flowing with milk and honey.'

Psalm 91

When we read the scriptures, especially in gathered worship, we perform a public act – we give ourselves over to these ancient words with the understanding that they speak to the eternal human condition. We affirm that the words carry a truth for now, as much as when they were written. They are not just 'our' words or private words for our private consumption – although they may speak to us in profoundly personal ways. Sometimes we can read these words for others, as a prayer and affirmation for others who may not be in a position, because of their circumstances, to pray them for themselves.

So, as we read this Psalm today with the people of Ukraine in mind.

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust.'
For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;
he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
You will not fear the terror of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,
or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
You will only look with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.

Because you have made the Lord your refuge,
the Most High your dwelling-place,
no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.
You will tread on the lion and the adder,
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honour them.
With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.

The Gospel according to Luke

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.' Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone."'

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.' Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."'

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."'

Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."' When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Reflecting

Last week on the Sunday when we marked the Transfiguration of Jesus we heard of Jesus meeting Moses and Elijah in a vision on the mountain. They spoke with him of the exodus, the liberation, he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem.

Both Moses and Elijah, giants in the Hebrew story, underwent great testing alone for periods of forty days: Moses on the mountain receiving the law – the commandment on how the fleeing slaves could live in harmony with each other and with God. And Elijah found himself tested in the wilderness for forty days and in this time was refined as prophet of God.

So, Jesus' testing in the wilderness for forty days comes as an echo of these figures' testing. He is being tried, refined, being made ready for the ministry and challenges before him.

Commentators suggest that Jesus faces a testing of the three vices in ancient Greek culture: the love of pleasure, the love of possessions and the love of glory. The proviso that the devil prefaces each of his temptations to Jesus with is: *if you are the Son of God*. If you are the Son of God is an invitation to Jesus to transcend the natural order of things, to avoid the reality of being human – hunger, the push and pull of human power relationships and the insecurity of our human lives.

Jesus returns from the Jordan where he has been baptised by John. As he is baptised the divine voice is heard -*You are my son, the beloved; with you I am well pleased*. Jesus' testing questions the heart of this divine affirmation, this expression of love.

Maybe the ultimate temptation for all of us is this question which sows doubt in our hearts: if you are the child of God. It is a question which de-centres our humanity, tips us into doubt and dysfunction, causing us to run after pleasure, power and glory.

As we enter Lent, we are invited to be watchful and observe Jesus and the forces that circle around him. We are invited to watch his centredness and his trust in God, even to the cross. It is a path he calls us to follow, to be his disciple. As he says in the Gospel of Matthew: take my yoke upon you and learn from me.

May Lent be a time when we come to know more deeply our own beloved-ness as children of God as we go on our way, that we may rest, trusting in the infinite and gracious mercy of God.

Prayers - prepared by Ron Townsend

God of the journey,
we wander through the wilderness
hoping to find what we are searching for.
As we search for our way through and beyond the wilderness,
may we be strengthened by your presence;
our water in the desert, our rainbow after the storm.

Yet again, Lord, it feels a lot like we humans are wandering and lost in a wilderness of our own making, as brother takes up arms against brother, yet again! Lost! Once more, we despoil your gift of true humanity. We pray for all directly involved in the war in the Ukraine. Lord God of all, for the sake of all your children, STOP THIS WARRING MADNESS! Teach us, in our lostness, to cherish your way of love, peace and care for each of your children - not to kill them!
As we search for your way through and beyond the wilderness,
may we be strengthened by your presence;
our water in the desert, our rainbow after the storm.

Lord, we pray for the people of Southern Queensland and Northern NSW, as they confront the disaster of unprecedented flooding. Sustain and re-build the lives of all who have lost loved ones and the very many who have lost all they have.
We pray for all who face hardship this day: the hungry and the homeless; the despairing and those who have given up on life; those who struggle to survive and those who have much but share little; the lonely and the neglected; the grieving and the dying – today we remember and give thanks for your servant Raie Lee – may she rest in your peace, and may you sustain all who grieve.

As we search for your way through and beyond the wilderness,
may we be strengthened by your presence;
our water in the desert, our rainbow after the storm.

We pray for your church, when it has lost its way, and found itself aimlessly wandering in the wildernesses: captured by the values of the world's cultures; convincing itself to pursue ways of self-serving popularity; lusting after material success; exercising power over the weak and vulnerable in the pursuit of acclaim; living self-righteously and engaging in sectarian stridency. In and through Jesus, lead your children out of desert darkness and into your glorious light.

As we search for your way through and beyond the wilderness,
may we be strengthened by your presence;
our water in the desert, our rainbow after the storm.

Lord of all, your planet, 'Mother Earth,' is groaning under the weight of the misuse of your gifts of Creation. Forests, and rivers and oceans and cities and the atmosphere poisoned, polluted and degraded in the pursuit of greed. We seem determined to reshape your Creation into our own monstrous, sterile and sullied wildernesses. Speak your word of re-creation and transformation to your children, and especially to our leaders, that we may act decisively on Climate Change and the despoilation of our only home.

As we search for your way through and beyond the wilderness,

may we be strengthened by your presence;
our water in the desert, our rainbow after the storm.

We bring before you our prayers for all those, including ourselves, struggling with one form of wilderness or another in our lives.

Jesus was 'taken to a wild place' where he faced the choice between darkness and light. He chose light. May we all choose his light and live by it.

As we search, for your way through and beyond the wilderness,
may we be strengthened by your presence;
our water in the desert, our rainbow after the storm.

In Jesus' name we pray
AMEN

Blessing

May the warmth of the sun
shine on you each day.
May the light of the moon
caress you each night.
May the arms of God enfold you always.
To keep you from fear,
to guard you from harm,
to bless you with love,
to hold you in peace.

Parts of the PoP adapted from: —a prayer from [Why I Believe: Daily Devotions on Faith & Discipleship](#) (UCPH, 2017)

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NEWS AND NOTICES

DEATH OF RAIE LEE – We are saddened to announce the death of Raie Lee early on the morning of Friday 25th February. Raie was 95 years of age and had been resident in Vasey Brighton for more than two years. Please remember Dianne and Rod and families as they grieve and give thanks for her life.

THIS CUP WE BLESS

This past Wednesday we commenced the period of Lent with Ash Wednesday. This Lent we are providing members of the congregation with the devotional resource *This Cup We Bless* by Michael McGirr. You will remember we used an Advent resource by him in 2020 – *Doorways into Hope and Joy for Advent and Christmas*.

Michael draws on the image of the cup as the basis of each day's reflections through the forty days and the Sundays of Lent. The cup is an image which occurs in many places throughout our scriptures. Michael writes:

Lent is the period before Easter in which we ask ourselves what really sustains us in our lives ... it is a time to really taste what is in the cup life presents us.

These are questions we can sit with and ponder in a sustained way over the Season. Michael reminds us that cups are an ever-present part of the course of each day, vessels for our sustenance, ritual containers for pausing in moments of joy, of reflection, of celebration, of revitalisation. As you stop for a cuppa through Lent you can pick up the day's reflection, as we all make our way toward Jerusalem with Jesus.

We trust that each day will be enriched by the reflections.

WORSHIP DURING THE DEMOLITION PHASE

Zoom Services continue while the demolition buildings on Church site is finished. 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. (see planned schedule of contacts below).**

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.

6 March - Ron and Mardie Townsend

20 March - David and Heather Baxter

JUSTICE AND INTERNATIONAL MISSION CONVENTION

April 30 2022 9.30 - 4.15pm at

Centre for Theology and Ministry (29 College Cres. Parkville or online)

Please refer to the attached Flyer.

"Our Planet is Changing - Do We?"

At this convention we will particularly consider the issue of whether technological developments will enable us to continue with our current lifestyles without unsustainable harm being done to our planet. The alternative possibility is that we will need to significantly change our lifestyles. "

Also

"An excellent film has been / is being released Regenerating Australia - made by the team that made 2040.

Here's the link to the trailer of the film

<https://theregenerators.co/regenerating-australia/>

DEMOLITION OF THE HALLS - CHURCH SITE CURRENTLY CLOSED

A reminder that during the demolition phase the Church office has been 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.

ORMOND LEARNING HUB – READING LUKE’S PASSION – during Lent

By far the largest section of each of the four gospels is the account of Jesus’ Passion. As the Cross is the prime symbol of the church, so the Passion is the prime story which shapes our understanding of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Yet, we only read the Passion on one day of the year, Good Friday, leaving little opportunity to explore our “biggest” story at any depth. The Passion is rich with symbolism, associations and religious connection back into Israel’s story.

In this 3-week course we will delve into Luke’s Passion, exploring the narrative movement leading up to it, the events of the crucifixion as Luke portrays them, the echoes of the Jewish story and what Luke is pointing to in his telling of the Passion.

When: Thursdays 17th, 24th & 31st March, 7.30pm.

Where: Face to face at Ormond Uniting Church – if the demolition is finished

Cost: \$30 for the course

Who: led by Rev. Andrew Boyle

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

ROSTER for Sunday 13th March 2022

READING	Gary Richter	
PRAYERS	Brenda Grootendoorst	
RESOURCES DELIVERY	Heather Baxter	

