

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

Easter 6

22 May 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

Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed

Call to worship

God calls us to this place, a haven for healing and hope.
We come, with the pain of our burdens,
we come to hear God's Word of hope for us.
Together, we will sing songs of joy;
each of us will hear God whisper our name,
'Beloved of my heart.'
We join our voices in prayer and praise;
we sing of our longing for new lives.
Here, our shadowed corners are filled with Light;
here we discover that God dwells in us.
And not just us, for God would teach all to love;
God's Spirit would lead all peoples in peace.

Opening Prayers

Adoration, Confession and Forgiveness:
Lord God the Almighty,
you bless us with all
that you have created:
you teach us to swim
in the bright crystal water of life;
you cook breakfast for us
in that eternal city;
you open your heart to us

and will never close its door.
We worship you.

Jesus Christ, Lamb of God:
you stand at the door,
 your hand on the knob,
 your coat over your arm,
 ready to go away.
Yet you do not leave us
trouble-hearted,
but fill our emptiness with your peace.
We praise you.

Holy Spirit, God-sent Gift:
you come to our defense
 when we are falsely accused;
you rescue us
 from the school yard bully
 who always picks on us;
you sit by our beds
 and comfort us
 when the nightmares of life
 keep us awake.
We open our hearts to you.

God in Community, Holy in One,
we sing for joy to you.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Because you dwell in our hearts, Eternal God, you know how the anger, the pain, the bitterness of our lives try to crowd you out.

The noise of the world deafens us to that Word which can heal us.

We want our children to be good, kind, and gentle to others, **and then they hear us call others names, and speak of them with demeaning words.**

Our desire for revenge towards those who have hurt us shows that **your peace, indeed, is not in us.**

You promise a new heaven and a new earth,

so create new spirits and new lives within us, Healing God. Shattered by our sin, your heart can still heal our brokenness.

Your Spirit, living deep within our souls, can teach us faithful ways. Your Word, Jesus Christ our Lord, whispers to us of your mercy, your hope, your love.

Silence is kept

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The Word which can transform us is not some idle gossip, but good news for us. It fills us with forgiveness, equips us for service, and sends us forth to love others as God loves us.

In our midst, the Holy Spirit teaches us all we need to know, gives us what we need in order to be faithful, and fills us with peace. Thanks be to God. Amen.

THE PEACE:

The Peace of the Lord be always with you
And also with you

The Service of the Word

Your Word, oh Lord, is a lamp to our feet;
A light to our path

Psalm 67: (Read responsively)

¹May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us,

²**that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations.**

³Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

⁴**Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.**

⁵Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

⁶**The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us.**

⁷May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him.

REVELATION 21:10 -22:5

¹⁰And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; ¹³on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷He also measured its wall, one hundred and forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using. ¹⁸The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰the fifth onyx, the sixth cornelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass. ²²I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. ²⁵Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶People will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations. ²⁷But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practises abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. 22:¹Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree

are for the healing of the nations. ³Nothing accursed will be found there anymore. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; ⁴they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

John 14:23-29

Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

²⁵“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

²⁸You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Reflection

EASTER CITY

What do you like most – country or city!

(show of hands)

I prefer the country – especially Bonnie Doon!

Why?

Well, I get to build and cut wood with my chainsaw and enjoy the trees and the birds and all that surrounds the house we have built – it is not perfect but it is our little piece of paradise – including sitting in front of a warm log fire, toasting marshmallows and drinking coffee and reading the latest thriller by ...

I also like the country because it offers a break from the hustle and bustle and noise and stress of the city.

Recently, Ukraine won the Euro vision song contest. I am sure the group that represented Ukraine were very good, but I also suspect that there was quite a strong sympathy vote for them, including the public vote, that led to their victory.

However, what really struck me about their victory were some comments made about a vision and a city! A vision and a city! Let me explain.

The person making that comments was the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. He said that, in the future Ukraine would host the Euro vision song contest, and it would be held in the city of Mariupol. Now to my mind that was quite an extra-ordinary, in fact, VISIONARY comment because Mariupol is a city which has been reduced to absolute ruin by the brutal and relentless bombing and missile attacks perpetrated by Russia on that city. This relentless attack by the Russians has resulted not only in the deaths of 1000s of innocent citizens, but the reduction of the city and its buildings to rubble.

Zelensky's vision is a defiant and prophetic one of a city which lives anew, resurrected from the rubble, a city that sings defiantly and joyfully of unity, diversity, creativity and peace. A city which celebrates peace and community in the face of impossible destruction and brutality.

Either Zelenskyy is completely out of touch with reality, or he is a true visionary – I think the latter.

President Zelenskyy is a prophet and proclaimer of a New Jerusalem, if you like!

What do you think?

I think I hear a few thoughts out there suggesting, 'Never - that is impossible – how can such a vision come true within a city where all buildings, people and songs have been silenced and destroyed – no such vision can possibly be realised!'

Which brings us to the apparently impossible vision of the New Jerusalem that John's revelation envisages.

¹⁰*And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.*

The language describing the Holy City is rich and extra-ordinary in its description of the city. (in fact, much of the description of the city was not in the set reading but I thought it needed to be there so included the whole reading)

One commentator remarks:

unbelievable extravagance is at the heart of this passage: what awaits God's people includes every hope imagined and many that are beyond human conception.

So, before we venture any further let me elaborate on those words of that commentator, namely: 'what awaits God's people includes every hope imagined and many that are beyond human conception.'

We are so captured and limited by the reality of the World we live in, that we humans have great trouble in envisioning that which is beyond human conception/comprehension. Yet the actual reality is that most of our lives are in fact full of the incomprehensible: mystery and matters which are beyond our understanding, yet we fall into the trap of limiting the future and life to what WE can touch and describe and shape and make and break - anything beyond that is 'unreal' 'fantasy!'

But that such a limited view of our reality is NOT about ultimate reality!

So, hang loose with Volodymyr Zelenskyy and let your visionary senses run wild. I don't want to hear any, 'oh no that is impossible' or 'forget it!'

Be open to what this astonishing vision of God's New Jerusalem is and has to say to us – to you!

The New Jerusalem is God's promised Heaven on Earth - the city of God, the New Jerusalem.

It comes from heaven to earth like a bride adorned for marriage. This is in fact a vision of God's ultimate gift to all his children, right here on little old insignificant earth. The gates of Heaven are opened to us all and gifted to us all. Here is God's redeemed community, the final fulfilment of the long and painful human story. It is sheer gift. Grace beyond imagining.

This vision of John's cannot possibly describe what the ACTUAL New Jerusalem might be like, but we can grasp some of the characteristics from his Vision.

For example:

It is a place of pure and eternal light this city of God.

"Its radiance is like a most rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal."

It is a place of gold and jewels, symbols of rare and valuable beauty. There is nothing ugly or obscene in this community. All that has been swallowed up in the victory of the Son. This City is beauty beyond imaging – God's beauty made tangible; touchable.

There is also perfect symmetry in the dimensions of this city.

That is, it is a place that is in perfect harmony. Everything has been planned to have its perfect place, and everything is in that right place. A community where all is in divine balance.

This city of God is also a place of openness and welcome – a place of hospitality.

It welcomes people from every conceivable direction. The 12 gates are never shut, for its free citizens do not ever need to be shut in, nor are there enemies to be shut out. This is truly a community of *shalom*, a city of peace. There is no hunger and thirst, no suffering, no separation, no loss and grief. All those agonies are gone forever when God fulfils God's ultimate purposes.

Most remarkably, there is no temple. Why not? Surely in the divine city there have to be places to worship the Lamb of God! No church building, no cathedral, no chapel, no synagogue, no mosque. You see, all our temples, no matter how beautiful, are secondary. The secondary temples have been made obsolete! How!?! By the presence and availability of God's own self.

And in this city, all who have lost their way finally come home forgiven and restored - transformed. In this city God forgives, transforms and enlightens everything and everybody.

'Preposterous,' 'Absolutely preposterous,' I hear you say,'

But St John says, 'why not' and I also 'why not'?! Why not! Who among you is brave enough to suggest that this New Creation is beyond the Creator, lover, reconciler, transformer of ALL? WHO?

God who is pure love, God who is the Creator of ALL, ALL, God who floods the Universe, including the New Jerusalem with his life, the life which penetrates even the hearts that have become as hard as stone. The Easter God whose love and grace is supremely shown in and through his Son, who also is at the heart of this City – and in the Son's giving of himself, the Lamb who is at the centre completes and brings the city to its rightful place on earth.

After all, do we not pray daily or at least frequently, 'Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name, YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN!'

In God's good time, so be it!

BUT WHAT ABOUT NOW?

Where does that leave us now?

Well

We are the in-between-people. We are the 'not yet' people

We are the church; this flawed yet hope-filled community, city. We are NOT in the Holy City, not just yet.

But we ARE on the Way there! The Way of Christ – The Lamb of God who is at the centre of the city.

Despite our broken and flawed progress, nevertheless God calls, equips and enables us all to make a difference – 'a New Jerusalem – holy city' type of difference!

By the irresistible all engulfing grace of God, we who are in the church, this in-between-city, the flawed community of faith, we are on the way to something far better.

We stand with John in his vision of the transformed new community of the Holy city. In fact, it is our only Hope and our only future. But oh my, what a hope and what a future!

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth..... and I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven like a bride adorned for her husband.

And the city has no need for sun or moon to shine upon it, for God is its light and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut.

Let us pray

Thank you, Lord for people like Volodymyr Zelenskyy who, where there was and is no hope, nevertheless visioned hope! In you we know our hope is never ultimately dashed, never lost, because through Christ Jesus, your Child, you have made all things new.

Fill us with your hope, especially when all looks hopeless around us.

We prayer in the name of the Lamb of God - Jesus, the Christ, who is at the heart of the City.

Amen

As you are able would you join me in the WE BELIEVE segment adapted from a Bruce Prewer reflection and printed in your order of service

“WE BELIEVE” STATEMENT: *(adapted from a Bruce Prewer reflection.)*

We believe:

in God the Creator, whose providence establishes all things since the first explosive moment of time and space;

we believe in the purpose which flows through this planet earth and its array of living plants and creatures,

in farmers who love the earth too much to exploit and exhaust it,

in city people who respect water too much to waste it,

in old folk who still exclaim at rainbows and children who dance in sun-showers.

We believe:

in God the Saviour, who in Jesus has inside knowledge of the glory and shame of the human race;

in the Wounded Healer who shared both the pain and the wonder of Easter love,

in those who give their hearts to him as the way, the truth and the light,

in the busy who, nevertheless, make time for Christ in reaching out to the hungry and thirsty, the prisoner and the sick.

in ordinary followers who dare go the second mile and forgive their enemies.

We believe:

in God the Holy Counsellor, who comes from the Creator and Saviour to be our Friend and Helper for all time

in the Friend who gives us the strength which unfolds in human weakness,

in people who understand that love is by far the Spirit's choicest gift,

in those who have found riches available within the poverty of the church,

in all who rejoice in the spring of joy which bubbles up into eternal life.

We believe at least this much, and sometimes much more, because God

the Creator, Saviour, Counsellor,

has embraced and baptised us with a new name which is forever,

called us to be good stewards of our unique planet-home,

and sends us out to become agents of reconciliation among all people.

Amen!

Prayers of the people

– prepared by Warwick Barry

There are many needy souls, but few of us who take time to really pray for them.
There are many suffering bodies, yet too few helpers to minister to them
In our prayers of intercession, let us pledge ourselves to both loving prayer and loving deed.
Let us pray.

Reconciling God, we pray for the peace of the world. Please continue your divine patience with us, and help us move closer to the destiny you promise.

For the end of all suspicion or rivalry among the many branches of your church.

Come with your peace, Lord Jesus;

Please come and heal your people.

For the exposure of all injustices, and for a new courage from all nations to outlaw them.

Come with your peace, Lord Jesus;

Please come and heal your people.

For a fairer sharing of the earth's resources and the feeding of the malnourished.

Come with your peace, Lord Jesus;

Please come and heal your people.

For the resettlement of refugees and the uplifting of the down trodden.

Come with your peace, Lord Jesus;

Come and heal your people.

For an end of terrorism and war, and for international commitment for just arbitration.

Come with your peace, Lord Jesus;

Please come and heal your people.

For the maimed and abused, diseased and the dying, the frightened and sorrowful.

Come with your peace, Lord Jesus;

Please come and heal your people.

Reconciling God, help us to allow the peace of Christ, which this world's sophistication cannot match, to keep us sure footed, even handed, and open armed; ready to assist those hurting folk whom you may send our way this week. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen!

Rev Bruce Prewer

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done
on earth as in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
and 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

Dismissal

And when the first things have passed away,
when we wander down the streets of the new Jerusalem,
we will find you waiting for us,
our sisters and brothers gathered together
around the Table of glory and wonder,
where we will sing our praises to you forever,
God in Community, Holy in One. **Amen.**

Sending out

Our God, who is gracious, sends us out to be a blessing.

**With our hearts, we will sing God's praises;
with our hands, we will serve God's people.**

Jesus, who is our Brother, sends us to be with others.

**We will comfort all whose hearts are troubled;
we will go to help all who cry out to us.**

The Holy Spirit, who is our Advocate, sends us into a broken world.

**We will work for justice for all who are oppressed;
we will teach songs of hope to all who despair.**

Blessing

And may the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always

AMEN

Word of mission

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
in the power of Jesus' resurrection. Alleluia!

Call to Worship, Opening Prayers, Dismissal and Sending Out: (c) Thom M. Shuman

22 May 2022 – service led by Ron Townsend
Music Director: Mr Peter Hurley

Church Office
Fridays, 9am-5.00pm – 0411 958 127
office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

Website: www.ormondunitingchurch.org

NEWS AND NOTICES

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our Annual General Meeting this year will be held after Worship on **SUNDAY 29TH MAY 2022.**

Documents relating to the meeting will be sent by email and distributed to those not on email, in hard copy Friday 20th May. Please put this date in your diary – we would love to see as many people as possible attending and participating in this important meeting.

Brenda Grootendorst
Congregational Secretary.

LEARNING HUB

Ormond Learning Hub (OLH) presents 'Eden to Babel: A Journey through the stories of Genesis 1-11'.

Commencing June 2nd, these weekly sessions will challenge the notion that the early Genesis stories are literal history, scientific facts or irrelevant myths. We will explore both the inspiring and problematic role they have played in our culture, in our understanding of God and in how they can shape us as disciples.

Ormond Learning Hub, an offering of Ormond Uniting Church, is a safe, friendly and collaborative learning environment focused on faith formation.

For more information go to <https://www.ormondunitingchurch.org/ormond-learning-hub.html> or call/SMS

Brad Denniston (Facilitator) on 0411 864 774

CHURCH OFFICE COVERAGE

Cathy O'Connor, from our church office has confirmed she will be leaving us on 27th May. Since the beginning of this year, Cathy has also been working in another job 4 days per week, but her OUC work on top of this means she is working more than full-time, which is not sustainable. Cathy informed us several months ago that she would need to resign her position at Ormond but (typical of Cathy) she has stayed on much longer than was legally necessary, as she didn't want to leave us in the lurch. Cathy has been a joy to work with and we will miss her, but we are fortunate to have recruited Cate McHarrie as our new Office Administrator. Cate is working with Cathy through to 27 May to help her transition into the job.

(Mardie Townsend)

BOB'S BOYS MEN'S BREAKFAST

A reminder that Bob's Boys aka Men's Breakfast has commenced again, from **8.30am on the last Saturday of the month** meeting at **Fig Jam Café, 128 Koornang Road Carnegie.**

Contact: Neville Parker if keen to join in.

ACT FOR PEACE – UKRAINE CRISIS

Please refer to the link below for more information and ways to help.

As we are all aware, the crisis in the Ukraine continues and there are ways to help. Please refer to the link [here](#) (Cntrl & click mouse) for more information and for the many ways to donate and help this appeal.

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UKRAINE CRISIS EMERGENCY APPEAL

The shocking Russian invasion of Ukraine has created a humanitarian crisis unlike anything seen in Europe since World War II. Millions of people could become refugees, forced from their homes and their loved ones.

Please give what you can today to help provide urgently needed food, medicine and temporary shelter to displaced families.

PLEASE GIVE URGENTLY

CALL: 1800 025 101
AFP.ORG.AU/UKRAINECRISIS

ACT FOR PEACE
CONFRONTING INJUSTICE TOGETHER
THROUGH THE *actforpeace*

The international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia | ABN 86 619 970 188

Photo: Reuters/SPH/Anadolu Agency

Indigenous Art - GLEN EIRA GALLERY (Town Hall)

Members of Ormond UC may like to take the opportunity to visit this significant exhibition of Indigenous art close by (details below), at the Glen Eira Town Hall Gallery, corner of Glen Eira Rd and Hawthorn Roads, Caulfield. Gallery hours are Monday to Friday 10am to 5 pm and Saturday to Sunday , 1pm to 5pm, admission is FREE!

Alternatively you might wish to participate in a group visit to the exhibition with members of Ormond UC planned for Sunday the 29th May at 2pm that afternoon, that coincides with National Reconciliation Week. Following the visit you may wish to join others for a chat and coffee/cake at the Parkside Pantry (near Caulfield Park one block away) about 3 pm. If you wish to attend with the group please let Warwick, Heather or Lorraine know by

Wednesday 25th May and whether you wish to go to the café, so that bookings can be confirmed. If you require a lift please indicate that to us as well. We hope you will take this great opportunity to learn more about Indigenous culture.

Warwick (on behalf of Ormond Indigenous Action Group)

Confined 13

Presented by The Torch

5 May to 5 June

Presented by The Torch, *Confined 13* includes artworks by Indigenous artists currently in or recently released from prisons in Victoria.

Featuring more than 400 artworks from 350 artists, *Confined 13* creates a strong visual metaphor for the over-representation of Indigenous Australians in the criminal justice system.

In 2022, *Confined 13* will coincide with National Reconciliation Week with a program of events celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

ROSTER for next week Sunday 29 May 2022

READING	Dianne Richter	
PRAYERS	Heather Baxter	
DOOR DUTY	Warwick Barry	Neville Parker
SOUND	Robyn Mulder	
MUSIC	Karen Roberts	
MORNING TEA	Brenda Grootendorst	Jan Rose Ron Townsend
RESOURCES DELIVERY	Marg Davis	