

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

Easter 7

29 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

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge those who were here before us, the first inhabitants of this place.
We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today.

Call to Worship

Loving God,
We come into this time of worship wanting to hear your word for each of us. Open our hearts and minds that we might find you here and respond to you now and in the days ahead with hope that is our joy and our future.

Happy are those whose way is blameless who walk in the way of the Lord.
Happy are those who keep his decrees, who seek him with their whole heart. (Ps 118)

Prayers Of Gathering In God's Presence

Light of the world you reveal yourself to us as you have done since the beginning.
We praise you as we gather for worship.
We praise you as we reflect on what you have done and what you are doing in our midst.
Great Creator Spirit, from the dawn of creation you have given your children the good things of Mother Earth.
You spoke and the gum tree grew.
In the vast desert and dense forest, and in cities at the water's edge, Creation sings your praise.
Your presence endures as the rock at the heart of our Land.
When Jesus hung on the tree you heard the cries of all your people and became one with your wounded ones: the convicts, the hunted, the dispossessed.
The sunrise of your Son coloured the earth anew, and bathed it in glorious hope". (Rev'd Lenore Parker)

Loving God,
We are your people.

We want to be serious about our faith but we know that at times we have not been able to live as your people; sometimes we have chosen another way. Your love upholds us but perhaps too often we drift away from you and your purpose for us.

We confess that we are not always keen to follow you as we deal with day to day issues.

Help us to see once more that you are the true path to life.

You have always been a forgiving God, willing to accept us as we are.

We pray with thankful hearts today that we are a forgiven people. Amen

*****Today before you leave the church, light a candle to remind all of us to continue in our ministry of reconciliation*****

Song © Julie Perrin and Robin Mann 1992

The Service of the Word

Your Word, Oh Lord, is a lamp to our feet;

A light to our path

ACTS 16:16-34

One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. ¹⁷While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, 'These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation.' ¹⁸She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour.

¹⁹But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market-place before the authorities. ²⁰When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, 'These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews ²¹and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe.' ²²The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. ²³After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. ²⁴Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul shouted in a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.' ²⁹The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them outside and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' ³¹They answered, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' ³²They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. ³⁴He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

PSALM 97: *To be read responsively*

¹ The LORD is king! Let the earth rejoice;
let the many coastlands be glad!

- ² Clouds and thick darkness are all around him;
righteousness and justice are the foundation
of his throne.**
- ³ Fire goes before him,
and consumes his adversaries on every side.
- ⁴ His lightnings light up the world;
the earth sees and trembles.**
- ⁵ The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,
before the Lord of all the earth.
- ⁶ The heavens proclaim his righteousness;
and all the peoples behold his glory.**
- ⁷ All worshippers of images are put to shame,
those who make their boast in worthless idols;
all gods bow down before him.
- ⁸ Zion hears and is glad,
and the towns of Judah rejoice,
because of your judgements, O God.**
- ⁹ For you, O LORD, are most high over all the earth;
you are exalted far above all gods.
- ¹⁰ The LORD loves those who hate evil;
he guards the lives of his faithful;
he rescues them from the hand of the wicked.**
- ¹¹ Light dawns for the righteous,
and joy for the upright in heart.
- ¹² Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous,
and give thanks to his holy name!**

The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

JOHN 17:20-26

¹I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ²⁴Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

²⁵‘Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.’

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Sermon Unity, Love and Reconciliation - Ron Townsend

There's a powerful saying about Unity. It goes something like this. A good team will always defeat a team of individual champions or something like that. I used to do a children's address that had children breaking some sticks – first up they would each break single sticks quite easily – then I would bind two sticks together and ask them to break them and, of course, that would prove more difficulty, then three, then a whole bunch of sticks which nearly always stopped them! But to illustrate the point perfectly, on one occasion a bright young spark suggested a plan to the other children which was to place the bunch of tied-together sticks between two bricks and then together to jump on the middle of them. It worked when the 4 kids all jumped together. SNAP went the bundled sticks! Mission accomplished. The strength of Unity demonstrated twice!

Jesus Prayer for the Unity of his followers emphasises the unity that exists between Jesus and the Father, the unity between the Son and his followers and the resultant unity between the Father and Jesus' followers. All are made one in Christ.

In the Uniting Church's Basis of Union, the theme of unity is central. The Church was called the Uniting Church instead of the United Church because the physical Union between the three denominations in 1977- Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian - was and is meant to be an ongoing process of physical unity between different churches.

The concluding sentence of paragraph 2 of the BoU says:

“The Uniting Church declares its desire to enter more deeply into the faith and mission of the Church in Australia, by working together and seeking union with other Churches.” (Para 2 final sentence.)

Now I am sure there have been other physical unions of churches around the world since the Uniting Churches Union in 1977, but I don't know of one! There certainly does not seem to be an appetite for that sort of Union in the present age.

In the current climate there is a continued struggle with internal uncertainties that has made it difficult for institutional churches to become very excited about suggested moves toward fuller physical unity.

The question this raises is, if not physical unity with other churches, then what does unity entail in today's world? Can a fresh look at Jesus' high-priestly prayer point us in some new directions in regard to how we might think about unity, now?

First, the prayer emphasises that this is an ongoing journey, which is not only about the unity between believers within their own church communities now but also is about the unity, built upon love, which creates love within the wider community now and into the future. The prayer envisions a long line of followers, stretching all the way to the final days, who will share in a profound fellowship not only with each other, but with Jesus and the Father

²²The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

For an example of this we need go no further than the story of Paul and Silas' release from prison – the faith, love and unity of God shown by these two disciples is transmitted through them to the Jailer and his family.

While this is a very dramatic example, we too need to appreciate that our efforts to live out and pass on the love and unity created through the Father, and the Son, is not dependent on our transmission of that love and unity alone. We participate with the whole communion of saints, past present and future, in making known in Christ, through the Father, God's love and unity.

One commentator commented:

Jesus' petition for unity encompasses past and future believers in an almost unimaginable circle of unity that culminates in a heavenly reunion. The prayer serves as a healthy reminder that the church is bigger than any one generation and prevents a paralyzing preoccupation with the present. It helps to alleviate our panic about current ecclesial problems and informs us that we and our grandchildren are the objects of Jesus' praying.

And I would add: 'until the end of time!'

One among many expressions of this love in unity or unity in love, which is God's gift to us, is that of reconciliation.

That is, where something is broken, we are called to be the welding flux which re-binds the broken – brings about a loving re-unification.

There are so many examples of this I could spend time on, both within the church and in the relationship between church and world.

However, given we are within the week of reconciliation between First and Second Peoples in this nation, let's explore that briefly.

What are the areas where the loving Unity of God might bring reconciliation between First and Second Peoples? The list is very long so let's concentrate on just three.

First, the Uluru Statement from the heart: Surely, we must support every effort to make this part of the Nation's constitution. If you have not read it, you might do so. It is a profound and inspirational statement for ALL Australians. And along with that we might add our strong support to the development of Treaties, such as the one now being developed between 1st and 2nd Peoples in Victoria. We might spend some time understanding exactly what such a treaty entails.

Secondly, we need to engage in Truth Telling so that our sordid past treatment of First Peoples is plain to see, and we can express our authentic sorrow for such past treatments. That may sound negative but is a part of any genuine ongoing unity in love relationship. It involves us in facing our mistakes and being open to genuine remorse and forgiveness before moving on. Without doing that, we leave a festering sore just below the surface that will corrupt any ongoing reconciling in unity and love.

Thirdly, we might gain a much better respect for the created order in Australia, if we explored, understood and accepted the reverence and respect First Peoples have for 'LAND' and 'PLACE!' Over the last 250 years Biodiversity has degraded at a faster rate in our land, than ever before. This has resulted in the rapid decline and extinction of many species of plants and animals. A very sobering example of Second Peoples appalling use of land over that period. However, we are still not listening to and hearing the Voice of the First People about sustainable use of Land and Place. It behoves us to really LISTEN and then act with justice towards First Peoples (eg Land Rights) and make appropriate changes in our own behaviours in relationship to the LAND.

Let me conclude by suggesting that the oneness, the unity of the church does not lie in being excellent reconcilers, nor in being devotees to doctrinal agreement and institutional relatedness between churches (none of which is unimportant). The church and its members loving unity issues from their experienced love of the Father. It is that connection with the Father and the Son which keeps believers reconciled and together in spite of their multiple differences, and links them with disciples; past, present and future, until the vision of the Holy City we shared from John's revelation last week, becomes earth's ultimate, final and blessed reality of God's unity and love.

Let us pray
Dear God, may it be so!
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
Amen

Prayers Of The People and Lord's Prayer- *Heather Baxter*

Holy Father, God of Love, you are the Creator of all things.

We acknowledge the pain and shame of our history and the sufferings of Our First Nations peoples,

We ask for your forgiveness.

We thank you for the survival of Indigenous cultures.

Our hope is in you because you gave your Son, Jesus to reconcile the world to you.

We pray for your strength and grace to forgive, accept and love one another, as you love us and forgive and accept us in the sacrifice of your Son.

Give us the courage to accept the realities of our history so that we may build a better future for our Nation.

Teach us to respect all cultures.

Teach us to care for our land and waters.

Help us to share justly the resources of this land.

Help us to bring about spiritual and social change to improve the quality of life for all groups in our communities, especially the disadvantaged.

Help young people to find true dignity and self-esteem, by your Spirit.

May your power and love be the foundations on which we build our families, our communities, and our Nation. [Amen]

(Reconciliation Prayer from Wontulp Bi-Buya Indigenous Theology Working Group)

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 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 for ever Amen

Blessing

May our footsteps, on these ancient lands,
remind us of creation and connectedness, in our search for truth.

May the Gum Tree, from its roots to its branches,
remind us to dig deep and reach high, in our action for justice.

May the Eagle, who soars in the sky,
remind us of the power, in our call for love.

May the expanse of the lands and seas, of the sky and stars, remind us of God's timing in our faith
in hope.

May the Holy three, Creator Spirit, Lord God, Papa Jesus, remind us of community.
So, with grace, mercy, and peace, go in truth, justice, love and hope.

(Brooke Prentice)

Music Director: Mr Peter Hurley

Church Office

Tuesday, 9.30am-12.30pm

Fridays, 9.30am-3.30pm – 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.

CAR PARKING

With the number of car parking spots currently limited, it would be helpful if those of us who are able bodied parked on the street and left the carpark spots for those with mobility issues. Thank you!

TEMPORARY TOILETS

Given the layout of the temporary toilets, it would be helpful (for privacy/modesty reasons) if the cubicles are used rather than the urinal. Thank you!

LEARNING HUB

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

Commencing June 2nd from 7:30pm – 9:00pm, these weekly live online 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.

Please Note: enrolment ASAP is advised so that you have time to look at some interesting course materials before our first session.

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.

ACT FOR PEACE
CONFRONTING INJUSTICE TOGETHER
THROUGH THE *act Alliance*

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

PLEASE GIVE URGENTLY



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

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 5 June 2022

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|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| READING | Gary Richter | |
| PRAYERS | David Northwood | |
| COMMUNION | Lorraine Denniston | Heather Baxter |
| DOOR DUTY | Hans Tilstra | Lynne Parker |
| SOUND | Neville Parker | |
| MUSIC | Peter Hurley | |
| MORNING TEA | Neville Parker | Elizabeth Northwood Mary Coulthard |
| FLOWERS | Jan Rose | Dot Rose |
| RESOURCES DELIVERY | Gary Richter | |