

# ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

Pentecost

5 June 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.*

### Prayer for today

Let's take a short walk along the Jesus way this morning.  
Let's take each other by the hand  
and let's make this prayer a togetherness thing;  
because there are some traps along the way.

Remind us, good Lord, that the path on which we set out  
is a rocky one and paved with good intentions.  
And there are distractions and tempting byways  
and the maps we use are not always reliable.

Help us not to be diverted by false doctrine, tempting teachings  
and promises of an easy faith.  
Help us not to be dazzled by the bright lights of our culture  
bearing down on us at speed.  
Help us to be committed to truth  
and to hold to values good, and virtues tested  
by time and the goodly teachings of Jesus.

This is a fearsome time we live in, good Lord.  
This is a time of disease, and war, and loose words  
and words that are losing their meaning.  
Help us to rescue our language from those who would use it to  
deceive us.  
Help us to converse more meaningfully,  
to communicate more deeply,  
to act more lovingly,  
to build rather than destroy,  
to love rather than hate.

Help us to find in our faith a new hope,  
renewed today and every day.  
Sharpen our minds and warm our hearts  
and remind us constantly that we are not well up to  
the missionary task of declaring and living out  
your gracious intention for this fractured world.

In brief, we have been a disappointment,  
and we need leave to make a fresh start:

## Assurance of forgiveness

Hear Christ's word of love to us, God forgives us, Christ renews us  
and the Spirit enables us to live in love.

Thanks be to God!

## Scripture

**Acts 2:1-21**

### ***The Coming of the Holy Spirit***

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a*

tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

### **Peter Addresses the Crowd**

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

"In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.

Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.

And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

The sun shall be turned to darkness

*and the moon to blood,  
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.  
Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*



## Reflection

### **Finding God. Being found by God.**

I opened the small pack of Twinings peppermint tea, and in my haste I almost missed the message. There, on the flip-back lid was this instruction "infuse your world every day..." A clever bit of copy writing by some ad agency.

The message is clear enough; a nice cuppa will warm the cockles of your heart and will make your personal world a better place to be. The ritual of tea drinking has long had a role in calming us down, clearing the mind and putting aside the hurley-burley of everyday life. Drinking coffee is not quite the same. Rather than calm us, coffee is meant to get us going. The Twinings company clearly wants us to understand the difference.

I want to say that there is a message in this bit of advertizing fantasy. I know it's an attempt to manipulate me into making a

consumerist choice, but I chose to read something deeper and more pure into it. I like to think that I did that because I have cultivated a certain sensibility which, from time to time, allows me make certain connections – perhaps.

At this time of Pentecost our attention is drawn by the church calendar to another sort of infusion. It is reported that The Holy Spirit infused a gathering of Jesus-followers, and other folk from distant parts. It seems that channels of communication were opened up.

When and where do we learn about God? Do we learn from the Bible? Do we learn by reading theology? Do we learn from sermons? Do we learn from experience? Do we learn from flashes of inspiration? Do we need a Pentecostal moment? Does God speak to us in more mundane ways, in the ordinary give-and-take of everyday life? Did God speak to me from the underside of a packet of tea bags?

I recently read a book by Karina Kreminski. She is a (relatively) young Baptist pastor working in the Sydney inner suburb of Surry Hills. The book is entitled *Urban Spirituality*, and in it she proposes that it is not a core Christian enterprise to find God in the Church, and then take him/her into the world; rather we should understand that God is already at work in the world, and what we need to do is find out where that is and get on board.

Identifying the work(s) of God and distinguishing them from the works that look like those of God, but may not be. Question: are there any criteria that we might apply to activities/enterprises/ideas/plans/ambitions to see if they are “Godly”. When I say “Godly”, I don’t mean “holy” or “sacred” — what I mean is consistent with what we understand to be “of God”. In the old days we might have contrasted the works of God with those of Satan. Jesus was certainly inclined to that language when he said (to Peter): “Get thee behind me Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” [Matthew 16:23 (King James Version)].

Today we might be less inclined to speak of Satan, but we might be comfortable distinguishing “the things that be of God” from “those that be of men [or women]”.

A few years ago I put my pen to paper (or my finger to iPad) in an effort to tease out what I understand to be the nature of God. This is what I came up with:

How will I know the mind of God?  
When sorrow is redeemed by joy.

How will I know the mind of God?  
When darkest thoughts are banished by the light.

How will I know the mind of God?  
When error is exposed by truth.

How will I know the mind of God?  
When war is not a last resort.

How will I know the mind of God?  
When insight takes the place of reason;  
when silence punctuates the syntax of my faith;  
when all the world is seen within a drop;  
when power permits persuasion;  
when minus is converted into plus;  
when anxiousness is overcome by patience  
and I know all things as they simply are.  
Then, and only then,  
will I begin to know  
the mind of God

Karel Reus

## Prayers of the people – David Northland

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

This prayer is based on prayers by John Birch who is a UK based theologian who has published several books of prayers. His website says that he also sells pet food online. Nothing wrong with that.

Let us pray.

Psalm 34 says 'The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.'

Unless the LORD had given me help, I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death. When I said, "My foot is slipping," your love, O LORD, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul.'

We pray today for all whose lives  
have been touched by the tragedy of war,

For those who suffer and mourn,  
immerse them in your love  
and lead them through this darkness  
into your arms, and light.  
For those who comfort,  
be in both the words they use  
and all that's left unspoken;  
fill each heart with love.



Help us to understand that often conflict arises through a misunderstanding of other people and nations and their legitimate needs and concerns.

Help us and others to realise that lasting peace comes more through communication, rather than more submarines.

Through talking rather than more tanks and reconciliation more than weapons.

We are moulded, each one of us,  
in the image of God,  
and within our souls there is a fingerprint  
none can erase.

We pray for those who have no regard  
for anyone but self,  
who put no value on human life.  
For nations and individuals who abuse and kill.  
We are not called to be judge or jury,  
but we are called to be agents of change,

And somewhere within the world  
reach into the hearts and souls of those  
for whom we pray, and reveal to them  
how precious are those  
for whom they have no love,  
and how precious are they  
who now bring tears to the eyes of God.

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

Amen

## Blessing

Do not die an unlived life  
and do not live in fear  
of falling or catching fire.

Choose to inhabit your days well  
and allow your living to open you,  
to make you less afraid,  
more accessible,  
to loosen your heart  
until it becomes a wing,  
a torch, a promise.

Choose to risk your significance;  
to live so that which came to you as seed  
goes on to blossom,  
and that which came to you as blossom,  
goes on as fruit.

*Dawna Markova (Amended)*

Go in peace  
to love and serve the Lord,

## Thoughts for the week to come

### ***Veni, Creator Spiritus***

COME, Holy Spirit, Creator blest,  
and in our souls take up Thy rest;  
come with Thy grace and heavenly aid  
to fill the hearts which Thou hast made.

O comforter, to Thee we cry,  
O heavenly gift of God Most High,  
O fount of life and fire of love,  
and sweet anointing from above.

Thou in Thy sevenfold gifts are known;  
Thou, finger of God's hand we own;  
Thou, promise of the Father, Thou  
Who dost the tongue with power imbue.

Kindle our sense from above,  
and make our hearts o'erflow with love;  
with patience firm and virtue high  
the weakness of our flesh supply.

Far from us drive the foe we dread,  
and grant us Thy peace instead;  
so shall we not, with Thee for guide,  
turn from the path of life aside.

Oh, may Thy grace on us bestow  
the Father and the Son to know;  
and Thee, through endless times confessed,  
of both the eternal Spirit blest.

Now to the Father and the Son,  
Who rose from death, be glory given,  
with Thou, O Holy Comforter,  
henceforth by all in earth and heaven.  
Amen.

Attributed to Rabanus Maurus (776–856), a German monk and priest.

## Postlude

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

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