

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



3 JULY 2022
PENTECOST 4

GET UP!

STAND UP!

SHOW UP!

WHITE AUSTRALIA HAS A BAK HISTORY!
NO PRIDE IN GENOCIDE!
STOP STEALING OUR KIDS!
BLAK LIVES MATTER!
HEALTH CARE! LAND RIGHTS!
JUSTICE!
STOP THE LIES! STOP THE MAGES!

NAIDOC WEEK

Stronger, Ryho Dank (Nardurna)

3-10 JULY 2022
#NAIDOC2022 #GetUpStandUpShowUp

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I created this piece after reading this year's NAIDOC theme. I have thought many times about the people, places and events that have shaped my life and how they have shaped the world we live in. I have thought about the people who have shaped my life and how they have shaped the world we live in. I have thought about the people who have shaped my life and how they have shaped the world we live in. I have thought about the people who have shaped my life and how they have shaped the world we live in.

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

Teach us, good Lord

Teach us to walk together on the road to peace.

In the classrooms of our faith
may we learn our lessons well.

Teach us to dance for joy, but not on the graves of our enemies.

In the classrooms of our faith
may we learn our lessons well.

Teach us to lift our very hearts and souls in gratitude.

In the classrooms of our faith
may we learn our lessons well.

Teach us to resist the pressures to conform to the ways of the world.

In the classrooms of our faith
may we learn our lessons well.

Teach us what it means to be citizens of The Kingdom of God.

In the classrooms of our faith
may we learn our lessons well.

Teach us to weep for the lost, the weak, the lonely, the poor and the dispossessed

In the classrooms of our faith
may we learn our lessons well.

Teach us to lament the passing of opportunities to live out the implications of your Word

In the classrooms of our faith
may we learn our lessons well.

Teach us to speak words of comfort and truth, and to decry propaganda and news-speak.

In the classrooms of our faith
may we learn our lessons well.

Teach us to be regularly amazed by the world as it is, and work for a world as it might be — starting in our own small corner.
In the classrooms of our faith
may we learn our lessons well.

Confession

Prayer adapted from Psalm 86 #2

In the day of my trouble we will call to you,
for you will answer us.
When we have done what is wrong
and displeasing in your sight,
O Lord, extend your love to correct us.
When we ignore those in need
and pretend that all is right with the world,
O Lord, help us to face the truth.
When we turn a blind eye to those
who have been stricken with poverty
and are facing the injustices that come along with it,
O Lord, teach us your way.
Enable us to extend your love;
and give us an undivided heart,
that we may fear your name.
We will praise you, O Lord,
with all our hearts;
and we will glorify your name forever.

Amen.

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.

Scripture

2 Kings 5:1–14

The Healing of Naaman

⁵Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favour with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. ²Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³She said to her mistress, 'If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.' ⁴So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. ⁵And the king of Aram said, 'Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel.'

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. 6He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, ‘When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy.’ 7When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, ‘Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.’

8 But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, ‘Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.’ 9So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha’s house. 10Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, ‘Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean.’ 11But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, ‘I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! 12Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?’ He turned and went away in a rage. 13But his servants approached and said to him, ‘Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, “Wash, and be clean”?’ 14So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

Reflection

Who is my enemy?

The Bible is a really complicated book — or set of books, to be more precise. Of course, I’m not telling you anything new, am I? Some people insist that it is written by one hand; God’s hand. Some people argue it is written by many hands over many hundreds of years. I’m not going to lay down the law here and now and tell you which of these is right. You need to work it out yourselves. I suppose my own position is that I would like to have a bet both ways — many authors over many years, but driven by the same idea; to document a growing understanding of the mind of God and his interactions with an historically specific and real people. And I certainly believe that we can discern God’s will by reading The Bible, but for me, God’s will is conveyed by hints and nudges and prompts. Sometimes it’s hard to get the gist of the message. It can be hard work. One thing makes me rather uncomfortable I must add, and that’s when someone tells me that they know the will of God absolutely, with great authority and with utter conviction and that they have privileged access to the truth.

In our day and age we are fascinated by the struggle between good and evil. We often see the world in black-and-white terms. We enjoy reading about good triumphing over evil — how the baddies get their comeuppance. That is not just the stuff of crime novels and screen thrillers; this is the stuff of The Bible. In the Bible we meet a special people, known variously as Hebrews, Israelites or Jews. These are the good guys. Then there are a variety of bad guys — Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks and the ultimate baddies, the Romans. These are main ones. There are others. What the baddies have in common is their desire to eradicate the Jews, or at least keep them under their thumb. The Jews, on the other hand, are convinced that God likes them best. Sometimes they see this favour as applying to them only, and sometimes they understand that they will be the means by which the rest of humankind comes to know God. It doesn’t end well for the Jews. Their nation is obliterated and they are scattered.

The New Testament continues the story. It also has goodies and baddies. It also has a HERO. More of that another time — let me just say that we have not, in the New Testament, escaped the hints and nudges and prompts. We still have to discern and work it out. But for now I want to return to The Old Testament, and the story of *Naaman* the Aramean. This looks like a story of the kind that has dogged the Jews, because the Jews as goodies, often turn out to be baddies as well. Very often in the biblical narratives, the good folks turn out to have a dark side also. The story of *Naaman* is a good example. *Naaman*, you see, is a mighty warrior for the enemy nation of *Aram*, and he had more than a little to do with *Aram*'s victories over the people of Israel, *Naaman* contracts leprosy. It must have seemed unfair to the Arameans, and it must have caused a great deal of satisfaction amongst the Israelites. But *Naaman* is advised by an Israelite captive slave girl that *Elisha*, the prophet could heal him. An unlikely scenario. Why would *Elisha* do such a thing. However, on hearing of the request *Elisha* sends a message to *Naaman* to bathe in the *Jordan*, seven times. He is healed. The enemy is healed! The normal morality is turned on its head. Goodies lose the battle but heal the enemy's commander. As if that is not the only twist, in an extension to the story that we did not hear today, *Gehazi*, an Israelite, but also a thief, contracts a skin disease. So:

- The good guys are defeated;
- The bad guys ask the good guys for help;
- Help is provided by the good guys
- But a good guy (who is not so good) gets sick.

Now here are a set of hints, nudges and prompts to think about:

- Bad folk have the same needs as good folks, and they are both subject to the same twists and turns of fate.
- There are times when common shared humanity is more important than the divisions between enemies.

Where is all of this going? Well, this is NAIDOC Week, and we are reminded of the relationship between the conquered and the conqueror in Australia. It is too easy to talk about goodies and baddies in this case, though the burden of guilt surely rests with the colonisers. At this time, especially, we need to reflect on the complexity of human relationships. They are never as simple as they seem, and the choices we make are rarely between simple alternatives.

How will we relate to our indigenous countrymen? That is a burning question for us all. We will be measured by the way we answer that question.

Prayer — prepared by Marg Davis

As we worship today on the first Sunday in July it is easy to think, and say, negative things about what is occurring around us - in our country and around the world. Let us try to focus on gratitude and on saying thank you for all our blessings.

Let us pray

Dear Lord- we give you thanks for each new day and for your steadfast love for us. Help us to do your will and to always be mindful of the needs of others, especially those less fortunate.

Thank you for drawing us together as members of one body- the universal church. We pray for world church leaders and for ecumenical dialogue and for those who minister and worship in our own church and we give you thanks for all who preach your good news of peace and justice.

We pray for all who suffer from the dangers of war, for the dispossessed and refugees. We give thanks for all who have risked, or lost, their lives and those who continue to do so, in the hope of peace and a better world.

Our prayers are with the many people who are vulnerable and in special need of care and love – and this includes, but is not limited to, those who are marginalized, the sick, sad, lonely, frail, undervalued, the homeless, the hungry, those in pain of body or anguish of mind, the dying and those who mourn. We thank you for the many people who dedicate their lives to caring for others and we pray for these people as they face so many challenges.

We give you thanks for the many charity workers and volunteers, who are struggling to provide support for the diverse needs of so many people - and we hope that the outreach, and support, that is provided by our Ormond congregation continues to contribute to the care of others.

Lord we pray for our own families and friends, our neighbours, colleagues and ourselves. Help us to love, and care for one another as you have loved us.

Loving God, be with us and give us courage to respond to your call

In your mercy

Hear our prayer

Blessing

May God give you...
for every storm, a rainbow,

for every tear, a smile,
for every care, a promise,
and a blessing in each trial.

For every problem life sends,

May God give you
a faithful friend to share,

For every sigh,
May God give you
a sweet song,
and an answer for each prayer

Word of Mission

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord In the name of Christ. Amen

Thoughts for the week to come

God ran away

God ran away when we imprisoned her and put her in a box named Church. God would have none of our labels and our limitations and she said:

“I will escape and paint myself in a simpler, poorer soil where those who see, will see, and those who hear, will hear. I will become a God - believable, because I am free, and go where I will. My goodness will be found in my freedom and that freedom I offer to all- regardless of colour, sex or status, regardless of power or money. Ah, I am God because I am free, and all those who would be free will find me, roaming, wandering, singing. Come, walk with me - come, dance with me! I created you to sing - to dance - to love...”

If you cannot sing, nor dance, nor love, because they put you also in a box, know that your God broke free and ran away.

So, send your Spirit then, to dance with Her.

Dance, sing with the God whom they cannot tame or chain.

Dance within, though they chain your very guts to the great stone walls...

Dance, beloved, Ah, Dance!

Edwina Gately

Postlude

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

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Music: Peter Hurley

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