

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



17 JULY 2022
PENTECOST 6



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

Praise to you O mighty mover...

Praise to you O mighty mover;
moving over the brooding waters of the beginning;
moving over the backwaters of our minds;
moving down the streams of our thoughts;
moving in clouds of smoke and pillars of fire
ahead of us in our wildernesses
as we seek our very own promised lands.

Praise to you O mighty mover.
Without movement there is no life.
Move us, we pray.

Move our eyes
that they may see your Word with eyes of faith.

Move our ears
that they may hear your Word more clearly.

Move our feelings
that they may sense your beating presence.

Move our hearts and voices
that they may be lifted up.

Move our minds and souls
that they may spread compassion.

Let us not make a virtue out of immobility.
When we are still let it be because
only in stillness will we recognise
your deep and abiding presence
lifting, caressing, challenging, creating,
moving us closer to you.

In this, our prayer we recognise the presence of Jesus;
that journeyer above all journeyers;
that rootless drifter;
that homeless man who found his home in God,
and whose proclaimed Kingdom Way
leads to reconciliation and redemption.

Confession
Forgive our disregard...

Direct our attention Father
to the people in need, who surround us with claims on our time,
and who need to be noticed and valued
and loved -- by us.
Our journeys, so often, go on in splendid isolation
in a world that nurtures narcissism
and obsessive self-regard.

As we pass by, direct our attention.
Father hear our prayer.

We disregard the sight
of the homeless and destitute,
sheltering in doorways and under bridges.

As we pass by, direct our attention.
Father hear our prayer.

We disregard the bravado
of those we place in power
as they try, in vain, to live up to our expectations.

As we pass by, direct our attention.
Father hear our prayer.

We disregard the words of grace
from those we call to sacred office
as they strive to lead our faltering steps.

As we pass by, direct our attention.
Father hear our prayer.

We disregard the muffled cries
of the victims of abuse in home and church
when trust betrayed shakes the foundations of innocence.

As we pass by, direct our attention.
Father hear our prayer.

We disregard the anguish
of those whose lives are ravaged by flood and fire
as nature has its way with us.

As we pass by, direct our attention.
Father hear our prayer.

We disregard the plight
of refugees who want a home and safety
free from oppression and mind-control.

As we pass by, direct our attention.
Father hear our prayer.

We disregard the calls of women
for equality of opportunity and a fair go
in home and work and public service.

As we pass by, direct our attention.
Father hear our prayer.

We disregard the frail of body and mind
whose daily struggles are hidden away
in private spaces.

As we pass by, direct our attention.
Father hear our prayer.

We disregard the sighs and complaints of the aged who are defined as problems
and whose legacy is lost in benevolent care.

As we pass by, direct our attention.
Father hear our prayer.

Amen

Assurance of forgiveness

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Scripture

From the Hebrew scriptures

Genesis 18:1-10a

A Son Promised to Abraham and Sarah

18The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. 2He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. 3He said, 'My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. 4Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. 5Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.' So they said, 'Do as you have said.' 6And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, 'Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.' 7Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. 8Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

9 They said to him, 'Where is your wife Sarah?' And he said, 'There, in the tent.' 10Then one said, 'I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him

From the New Testament

Luke 10:38-42

Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. 40But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' 41But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; 42there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

Reflection

Many of you will be aware that, in the last edition of Pathfinder, I suggested that we gather ideas about what our church is, or might be, about. The challenge was to complete the sentence: “Ormond Uniting Church: A place where...”. Some ideas are drifting in. I won’t share them with you now, but it wouldn’t be fair if I asked you to do something I would not do myself. So, here is an offering from me: “Hospitality”; and I want to explore this idea with you.

Two readings today: one from the book of Genesis and the other from the Gospel according to Luke. The first is a sort of foundation text in the duty and art of hospitality — the second is a sort of object lesson in what happens when we lose sight of the point of hospitality.

Let’s you and me visit these two stories and insert ourselves into them. Let’s quiet ourselves — eyes shut — imaginations in top gear. Go back to the readings above. I invite you think about some key sentences:

First, the desert encounter:

Note that Abraham offers the strangers at the entrance to his tent the best he can offer. Abraham offers the generosity of the desert. These days we would think of him as a Bedouin. He is numbered as one of those whose life is a constant journey. It is a hard life. One’s sources of food travel with such nomads. There is not much available beyond everyday needs. And yet, hospitality is a cornerstone of the nomadic culture. There is much to learn from reading this story carefully.

Next the urban encounter:

There is much to learn from the story of Martha and Mary. Both are heirs to the same ethic of hospitality. Both are heirs to a desert culture. Nevertheless some things in the story are different, because in one of the women the core generosity of spirit has been distorted into duty. Not the duty of Abraham, but the duty of a different sort. There is in Martha a desire to please, but she is only too well aware of the cost of hospitality. Compare the two stories. Abraham is delighted with the pleasure his visitors take in the meal he offers them. Martha feels too much the burden of the required hospitality.

Of course we don’t know how Abraham’s wife, Sarah, felt about being required to put together a meal in a hurry. Nor are we told how the servants felt. Hospitality is a two-edged sword. If we are to be members of a community that values hospitality above almost everything else, then let us understand that hospitality has a downside; that we cannot be a hospitable people, and take joy in serving the strangers in our midst, if we are not prepared to live with the downsides of work and duty.

Probably many of us will recognise in Martha feelings that we have had in the past – feelings of being put upon, of being taken for granted, of slaving over a hot stove while others play the Mary-role of attentive disciple. But there is a need for Mary as well as Martha, and maybe it will be best if the roles of neither are set in stone.

Prayers – prepared by David Northwood

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

Lord help us

To care for the uncaring
To love the unlovable
To respect the disrespectful
To show compassion to the uncompassionate
To build harmony amongst the disorderly
To forgive the unforgivable
And to show humour to the humourless

We hear daily about the war in Ukraine and the Russian invasion and control of the eastern areas of that country. The loss of life of the combatants and civilians and the terrible damage to the country and the war crimes are all disastrous.

Our government and other governments rightly condemn the Russian invasion. However, in all cases where we criticise other people, other groups or other nations we should rightly reflect on our own record with respect to foreign wars.

In Australia we are fortunate that we have not needed to fight a war within this country. However, in the past 120 years we have been involved in 24 wars or conflicts overseas. We are all aware of the first and second world Wars, the Korean and Vietnam war and the war in Iraq but what about the other 20? All of these in other countries not ours. If any war is justified, then in some cases these conflicts may have been justified but others most certainly not.

The Australian War Memorial in Canberra is a splendid museum which documents the accounts of Australians at war. From my observation however it lacks what should be some essential elements of a war memorial.

It lacks a discussion on “how did this conflict arise, could it have been avoided and what lessons have we learnt in terms of how to avoid future conflicts”.

The Australian War Memorial has none of these reflective elements.

Help us to reflect on our own experience with conflict.

We also pray that in the fullness of human time there will be some long-term good arising from these conflicts and in particular the Ukrainian war.

When and not if the war in Ukraine is finished then we can help the people redevelop the country, remove the corruption and the oligarchs and after a period join the European Union.

We also pray that the Russian people, suppressed for over hundred years by various dictators will eventually become a free liberal democracy.

When and not if the Russian Federation eventually becomes a democracy it will join the European Union. At that point there will be no need for NATO.

You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. Amen

Blessing

Nothing is visible unless it is exposed to light,
Once we were in the darkness
but now we are in the light of Christ.
Go now and live as children of the light.
Seek what is pleasing to God.
Expose the unfruitful works of darkness,
and commit yourselves to the works of God who sends you.
We are numbered among those whose eyes have been touched with the salve of Jesus Christ.
Amen! Once we were blind but now we can see!
See clearly and walk gently wherever you go this week.
Look gladly on those who encourage, and deal patiently on those who irritate.
See light where others see gloom, and hope where many see defeat.
Look upon weak souls with mercy and face the tough characters without fear.
Travel calmly with the confidence of those who have caught glimpses of a divine glory,
In and through Christ Jesus our Saviour.
And the blessing of God,
Creator, Redeemer, and Giver of Life,
go with us, today and always.
AMEN

Word Of Mission

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

Thoughts for the week to come

“The Fellowship of the Unashamed” – Author Unknown

“I am part of the “Fellowship of the Unashamed.” I have Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I’ve stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I won’t look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still. My past is redeemed; my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colourless dreams, tame visions, mundane talking, chintzy giving, and dwarfed goals!

I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don’t have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by presence, lean by faith, love by patience, lift by prayer, and labour by power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, diluted or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won’t give up, shut up, let up or burn up till I’ve preached up, prayed up, paid up, stored up, and stayed up for the cause of CHRIST.

I am a disciple of JESUS CHRIST. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know and work till He stops.

And when He comes to get His own, He’ll have no problems recognising me. My colours will be clear.”

Postlude

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

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NEWS AND NOTICES