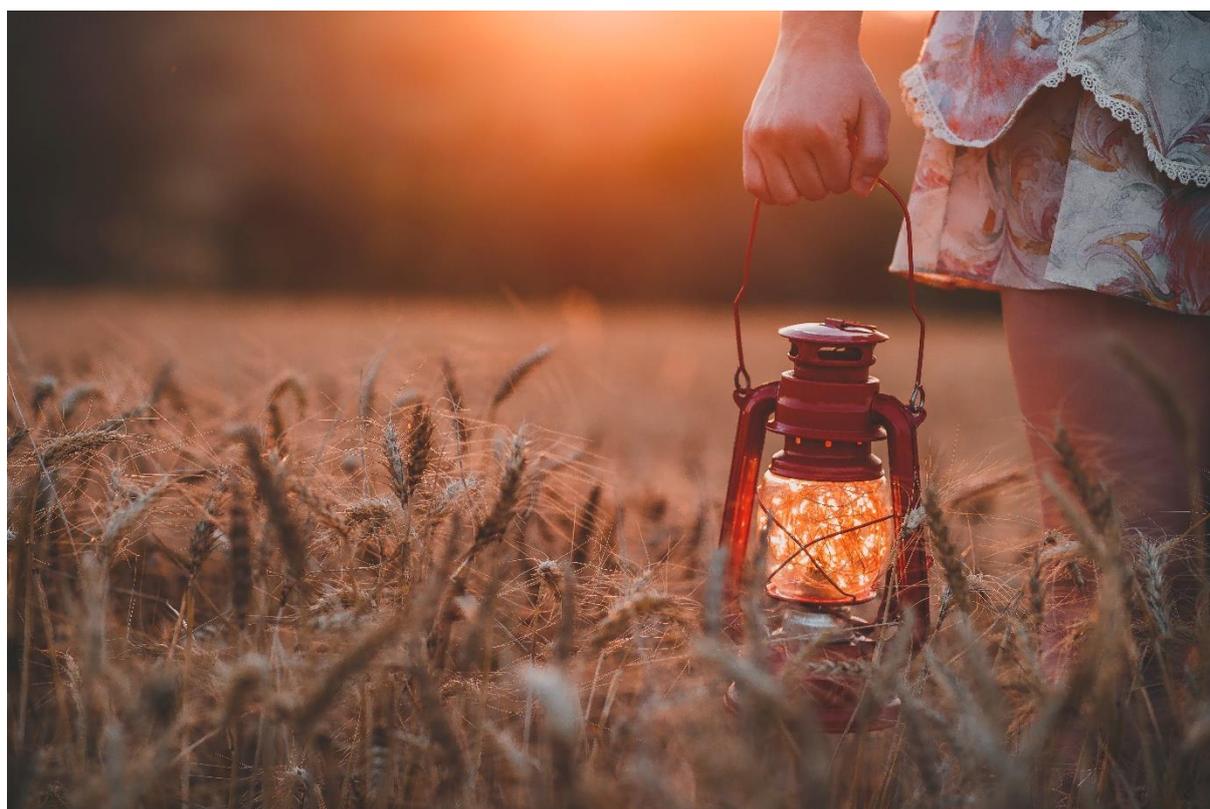


# ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



7 AUGUST 2022  
PENTECOST 9



# 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.*

## HYMN: TIS 627 Praise and thanksgiving...

### Prayer for today

“Mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us. The important thing is not to think much but to love much and so do that which best stirs you to love. Love is not great delight but desire to please God in everything.”

Teresa of Avila

#### **Walk with us**

Walk with us today, good friend.  
Walk with us down this rocky path  
that we call “The Faith”.

Fortify us today, gracious friend.  
Shelter us from the inclement weather  
that, too often leaves us clod.

Support us, strong friend.  
Give us a hand up when we falter  
before obstacles that threaten to overwhelm us.

Cheer us up, hope-full friend.  
Show us the bright side of life  
and give us joy.

And help us manage our memories of indiscretions  
and stupid words and actions and inactions  
and opportunities lost

to be better, braver champions of just causes.

Forgiving friend;  
hope-giver, fear-fighter, giver-of-clear-sight,  
granter of bountiful visions  
of a world as it might be;  
show us The Way  
so that your kingdom comes  
amongst us — here, in Ormond.

Rejuvenating friend;  
help us to get the message;  
help us to live the message;  
help us to proclaim the message;  
our mistakes and misdeeds are not the end.  
Today, every day, we are granted the undeserved opportunity  
to make new starts, to embrace new beginnings,  
to live new lives.

This is the promise:  
Our sins are forgiven,  
we can begin again.

Thanks be to God!

## HYMN: TIS 427 Lord you word abideth...

### Scripture

#### **Isaiah 1:1 and 1:10-20**

1 The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

10 Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! 11 What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. 12 When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more; 13 bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation— I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. 14 Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them. 15 When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. 16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, 17 learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. 18 Come now, let us argue it out, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they

shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. 19 If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; 20 but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

### **Hebrews 11:1-3 and 11:8-16**

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old— and Sarah herself was barren— because he considered him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore." 13 All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, 14 for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

### **Luke 12:32-40**

32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailling treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 35 "Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; 36 be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. 37 Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. 38 If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. 39 "But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

# Reflection

## Finding faith.

Today's reading from the letter to the Hebrews focuses our attention on the question of faith. Take the time to read these excerpts and then look at the questions and points below:

### Excerpts from the letter to the Hebrews (in the translation: *The Message*)

#### Faith in What We Don't See 1-2

*The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd.*

*8-10 By an act of faith, Abraham said yes to God's call to travel to an unknown place that would become his home. When he left he had no idea where he was going. By an act of faith he lived in the country promised him, lived as a stranger camping in tents. Isaac and Jacob did the same, living under the same promise. Abraham did it by keeping his eye on an unseen city with real, eternal foundations—*

[Discussion of the faith of Sarah, and Noah and others]

*13-16 Each one of these people of faith died not yet having in hand what was promised, but still believing. How did they do it? They saw it way off in the distance, waved their greeting, and accepted the fact that they were transients in this world. People who live this way make it plain that they are looking for their true home. If they were homesick for the old country, they could have gone back any time they wanted. But they were after a far better country than that—heaven country. You can see why God is so proud of them and has a City waiting for them.*

That's the way the writer of the letter to the Hebrews talks about Faith.

#### But what is faith for you?

Is it taking as true what we have received from higher authority?

Is it what we hold to be true, in the absence of evidence?

Is it the same as (or close to):

- Acceptance?
- Trust?
- Commitment?
- Guesswork?
- Belief?
- Fantasy?
- Worthiness?
- Virtue?

Is it something:

- You have?
- You receive?
- You earn?
- You feel?
- You don't question?

Do you get it from:

- The Bible?
- The church?
- The example of others?

Is it yours to pass on (to give)?

Can you force it on others?

Can you share it?

Can you divide it up?

Can you codify it (like in a creed)?

Can you imagine a church that does not talk about faith?

Can you imagine your own life without faith (is life even possible without faith)?

Can we own faith?

What do we have in mind when we speak of "a person of faith"?

What do we have in mind when we talk about a "faith community"?

Is this (Ormond UC) a faith community?

Would you describe yourself as a person of faith?

Would the world be a better place with, or without, faith,  
or would we hope for an abundance of it  
in every little corner of our lives.

There are no right and wrong answers to the above. Your thoughts may be assisted by reading the following poem by Kate Louise Wheeler:

### **Faith**

Faith is needed every day,—  
Faith to work and faith to pray;  
Faith to learn and faith to teach,  
Faith to practice, faith to preach;  
Faith to love and faith to charm,  
Faith to quicken, faith to calm;  
Faith to bless and faith to chide,  
Faith to follow, faith to guide;  
Faith to prove and faith to know,  
Faith to stay and faith to go;  
Faith to urge and faith to keep,

Faith to waken, faith to sleep;  
Faith to do and faith to dare,  
Faith to bear and faith to share;  
Faith to bind and faith to break,  
Faith to give and faith to take;  
Faith to stand and faith to yield,  
Faith to heal, faith to be healed,  
Faith to pardon, faith to seek,  
Faith to listen, faith to speak;  
Faith to wait and faith to try,  
Faith to live and faith to die.

Kate Louise Wheeler

## HYMN: TIS 699 A new commandment...

### OFFERING PRAYER

Today is a day of receiving;  
receiving from your welcoming table, Lord,  
but today presents us also with the opportunity to give.  
Today we give our offerings great and small;  
money, good intentions, good will  
and we pray that these will enhance  
the growth of your Kingdom  
in places both near and far.

## Prayers – prepared by David Northwood

Last week the Prime Minister outlined a movement towards a referendum relating to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice.

The proposed wording at this stage for the referendum may be:

There shall be a body, to be called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice may make representations to Parliament and the Executive Government on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws with respect to the composition, functions, powers and procedures of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

Our prayer today is based around the referendum on this voice.

Let us pray

God of the Holy Dreaming help us to understand the culture and faith of first nation people.

Great Creator Spirit, from the dawn of creation you have given your children the good things from the Earth Mother.

In the great deserts and the dense forest, in the cities and at the water's edge, creation sings your praise. Your presence endures as the rock at the heart of our Land.

You have heard the cries of all your people and became one with your wounded ones: the convicts, the hunted, the dispossessed.

Lead us, Great Spirit, as we gather from all corners of the earth; enable us to walk together in trust, from the hurt and shame of the past into the new full day which has dawned.

Loving God, we pray for Indigenous peoples, the traditional custodians of this land, and thank them for their care of your precious creation. May we learn from their wisdom, working towards a sustainable future where the land is nurtured, respected and shared by all.

We recognise that

The Uluru Statement from the heart is an invitation from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to “walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future”. It calls for structural reforms including constitutional change to establish a Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Constitution.

We Australians are still coming to terms with the consequences of invasion, settlement and exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Among the descendants of the later arrivals is a will for reconciliation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians desire recognition that they are the original Australians, but insist that it must be accompanied by measures that give them an assured voice in shaping the policies, laws and administrative regulations that affect their lives.

The referendum will not succeed unless supported by both major political parties. We pray that there will be sufficient goodwill on the part of our elected representatives to work together to bring about this important change to the Australian Constitution.

Amen

## HYMN: TIS 531, Sent forth by God's blessing..

### Blessing

May there today be peace within.  
May you trust God  
that you are exactly where you are meant to be.  
May you not forget the infinite possibilities  
that are born of faith.  
May you use those gifts that you have received,  
and pass on the love that has been given to you.  
May you be content  
knowing you are a child of God.  
Let this presence settle into your bones  
and allow your soul the freedom  
to sing, dance, praise and love.  
It is there for each and every one of us.

Teresa of Avila

### Thoughts for the week to come

#### **The Silence**

Poet: Edgar Nye

When the burdens of life get too heavy  
And what should be sweet seems as gall,  
I go on a soul-cleansing journey  
That shows me the need of it all.

Away from Life's troubled pathway,  
Through the valley and up the hill,  
To the peak of a lofty summit where  
The pulse of the world stands still;

There I see God's love all about me  
In the wonderful things He has made,  
And peacefully return from the Silence  
To take up my life unafraid.

## Postlude

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

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