

Ormond Uniting Church



DEAD AND ALIVE

Pentecost 22 - Haggai, Psalm, Luke

November 2, 2025

Minister: Rev Ron Townsend

Chair of Council: Dr Mardie Townsend

Music: Peter Hurley

WELCOME:

Welcome

Great to be in contact!

This week heralds the 22nd Sunday of the Season of Pentecost in Year C and just two Sundays before the final Sunday of the Christian Year when we celebrate Christ as the King of all Creation. In the lead up to that celebration this week, we recall the Resurrection life as God's great gift to all creation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

This a Sunday when we recall the greatest victory ever for the whole created order: the ultimate victory of life over death.

CALL TO WORSHIP:

The God who is greater than we will ever understand,
is humbled to become one of us.

The God who is more loving than our hearts dare imagine,
gives us more grace than we ever realize.

The God who is wiser than we will ever know,
teaches us all we need to become God's children.

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HYMN TIS 100: 'All Creatures of... V 1, & 4-7'

Based on Laudato sia Dio mio Signore the 'Canticle of the Sun' of St Francis of Assisi 1182-1226 by William Henry Draper 1855-1933

PRAYERS OF ADORATION/CONFESSION/FORGIVENESS:

ADORATION

O God, our God, how great you are.

On the first day of the week
we commemorate your creation of the world
and all that is in it.

Thank you for the light which wakes us
morning by morning,
and for the greater light which shines in Jesus Christ.

O God, our God, how great you are.

On the first day of the week you raised Jesus from the dead. Raise us with him to new life.

O God, our God, how great you are.

Again, on the first day of the week
you sent the Holy Spirit on your disciples.

Do not deprive us of your presence,
but renew the Spirit within us day by day.

CONFESSION

Let us in silence confess our sin
and seek God's mercy and forgiveness.

SILENCE

O God, we confess the blindness that is not even aware of sinning;
the pride that dares not admit it is wrong;

the selfishness which can see nothing but its own will;
the righteousness that knows no fault;
the callousness that has ceased to care;
the defiance that does not regret its own sins;
the evasion that always tries to make excuses;
the coldness of heart that is too hardened to repent.

God, we are sinners; be merciful to us.

Amen

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

God is love.

Through Christ your sins are forgiven.

Take hold of this forgiveness

and live your life in the power of the Holy Spirit

Thanks be to God

READINGS:

HAGGAI 1:15- 2:9

¹on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month.

In the second year of King Darius, in the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai, saying: ²Speak now to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, and say, ³Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing? ⁴Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord; work, for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts, ⁵according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit abides among you; do not fear. ⁶For thus says the Lord of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; ⁷and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the Lord of hosts. ⁸The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts. ⁹The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the Lord of hosts.

PSALM 145: 1-5, 17-21

¹I will extol you, my God and King,

and bless your name forever and ever.

²Every day I will bless you,

and praise your name forever and ever.

³Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;

his greatness is unsearchable.

⁴One generation shall laud your works to another,

and shall declare your mighty acts.

⁵On the glorious splendor of your majesty,

and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.

¹⁷The Lord is just in all his ways,

and kind in all his doings.

¹⁸The Lord is near to all who call on him,

to all who call on him in truth.

¹⁹He fulfills the desire of all who fear him;

he also hears their cry, and saves them.

²⁰The Lord watches over all who love him,

but all the wicked he will destroy.

²¹My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord,

and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

LUKE 20:27-38

²⁷Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him ²⁸and asked him a question, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. ²⁹Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; ³⁰then the second ³¹and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. ³²Finally the woman also died. ³³In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her.” ³⁴Jesus said to them, “Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; ³⁵but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. ³⁶Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. ³⁷And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. ³⁸Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.”

HYMN TIS 102: ‘Praise to the Living God..’ *From Jewish Yidal c.13th Cent tr. Max Lansberg 1845-1928, Newton Mann 1836-1926 and William Channing Gannett 1840-1923.*

SERMON: DEAD and ALIVE!

Let us pray

O God,

Let the Gospel of your Son come to us,
not only in word and in sign, but in power and love.

May the Holy Spirit teach us now,
that we may receive with understanding
what you have revealed,
and eagerly do what you have commanded;
through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen

Well, I think most of you will be aware that both Mardie and I have both been confronted with the question of the ‘ultimate,’ with our diagnoses of life-threatening diseases. Mardie with cancer and me with a rare Auto-Immune disease. We are open about this because we place our hope in God and rely on the love and support of this wonderful community of Jesus people. And of course, that is true of others in this congregation, too.

When Mardie and I received her diagnosis, we were stunned. I did not have a very good night's sleep that night. I was beset with all sorts of wondering. Some understandable, but most selfish, like – 'How will I ever cope without her!?' Lots of BIG questions!

Such stages in one's life lead one to have hard thoughts and considerations about the end of life.

But of course, this is real for all of us at some stage of our journey. There is an end in sight. But what end? Most regard it with silence and fear

We talk about dying in such hushed tones or euphemisms like 'passed' or 'packing it in' or 'losing one's life' or avoiding the topic altogether. In many cultures including ours, the topic of death raises awkward, sensitive, fearful and apparently unanswerable questions about our existence, meaning and purpose in life; questions for which our culturally-shaped rational accounts of life are totally inadequate. A modern day example of this, is that of not having the coffin of a dead person in the church or place where the funeral service is conducted, because some may be upset or because the funeral director thinks it inappropriate. The Uniting Church funeral service does not state that the person has 'passed' or 'passed on' but says in the Committal,

We have entrusted N (the person's Christian Name) to the hands of God. We now commit her body to the ground (or to the elements), (earth to earth), ashes to ashes, dust to dust... ..

I'll share the conclusion of the Committal later – but note, death is real – we all end up as star dust.

So, to the readings set for today

The common theme in the Lectionary readings this morning is:

GOD'S UNFAILING PRESENCE WITH US – in fact, not just WITH US but IN US, – PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE and particularly, in life and in DEATH and beyond.

I'll repeat that:

In the Gospel, Jesus encounters some Sadducees, who do not believe in the resurrection, and they employ a trivial objection or 'hair splitting' ridiculous argument, NT Scholar Brendan Byrne calls it a 'quibble.' They seek to portray just how outlandish and nonsensical the concept of life after death, that is, Resurrection, really is. They're trying to trap, trick, and humiliate Jesus, make a fool of him.

So how does He deal with their trickery AND in the process where does he point his listeners – back then and right now?

Certainly not to some complicated marriage plan in the afterlife – 'is this one my spouse or this one or this one?'

No!

³⁴Jesus said to them, “Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; ³⁵but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage. ³⁶Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.

In the resurrection state there is absolutely no need for procreation and the accompanying order of marriage because there ‘they cannot die anymore.’ The dead are God’s angels, they are children of God – children of the resurrection. Jesus confronts the Sadducees with the ‘evidence’ that their very ancestors, Abraham, Issac and Jacob ARE (present tense) alive! He concludes by stating that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.”

So, what might this resurrection life look like – that’s hard to say

But we might say, for instance, that in resurrection we will live in the “nearer presence” of God. Further, while we don’t know what relationships will be like, there, we know that we will be related to each other in and through our relationship with God. (Lose)

And note, also, resurrection life is not just the domain of the dead, raised to new life

We’ve just celebrated All Saints Day, remembering all the saints – past, present and future.

‘He is NOT the God of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.’

We’ve just lost our sister Shirley Hopwood, who died last week

‘He is NOT the God of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.’

Mardie and I will die, and let me stress it is not my or her intention that that might happen any time soon – God’s gift of life here is too rich and wonderful to easily let it pass - so

‘He is NOT the God of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.’

And to all his children here on earth, past present and future - again

‘He is NOT the God of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.’

For us, through our baptism, confirmation and living out of God’s gift of life, the Resurrection life begins in this earthly realm – yes, we are invited into God’s realm while we still inhabit this mortal realm but ALSO, over and over again the scriptures attest to the truth that God loves us, his children, eternally, forever and ever. He loves us so much that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, his Son, he gives each one of us a place in God’s own Kingdom eternally.

‘He is NOT the God of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.’

You know we are learning about the Nicene Creed in the learning Hub – 2 sessions down – 2 to go – the third one this afternoon (all are welcome – 4pm). We will be given the opportunity at the conclusion of the sermon to recite this wonderful ancient 1700 year old Christian creedal statement of the faith, which the church across the world sees as its most profound statement of faith.

It concludes with these words:

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come

'He is NOT the God of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.'

Dare to believe this, my friends – even though the world around us sees such claims as foolishness

Dare to place your hope there, in this foolishness of God

Dare to trust this immense God of immense grace and unfathomable love

Dare to trust Jesus with your future in life and in death, for there really is no other way to live and be!

The Psalmist knew and proclaimed God's eternal presence and love for us and with us.

²¹My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

In the 2nd chapter of his 2nd letter to the congregation at Thessalonica Paul declares that God's grace and eternal comfort and hope give us strength to live the eternal gift of life right now.

¹⁶Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, ¹⁷comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

And in our reading from Haggai the sceptical and timid Israelites in exile are promised a 'new temple' far superior to that which was destroyed – one which God has promised and will deliver – this is the God who never leaves them or us beyond God's own loving, life-giving embrace, in life and in death and until the end of time

⁹The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the Lord of hosts.

Pastor Dr Toar Banua Hata Gulang (pg 8) The Director of Theology and Church History at the College of Divinity in SA where UCA students train, said in WLTTW on Haggai

God gave the Israelites a new hope.whenever we feel down, hopefully we can take courage. May we (also) be empowered by the ever-abiding God

He adds (in his thoughts on the Gospel)

'(we hold the) hope that Christianity never stops at death,' (AND as a consequence,) 'this is a calling for us to celebrate life here-and-now and there-and-then in the life to come.'

If all of this is true, if through Jesus we truly are all children of the resurrection, then how does that free us now? How do we spend our time? Our money? Our energy? We need to view this life differently, perhaps loosening or lessening anxiety and fearful urgency in order to free up energy for hopeful action on behalf of the gospel. (Mohn)

Let me conclude, then, WITH the full UCA funeral Committal

We have entrusted N (the person's Christian Name) to the hands of God. We now commit her body to the ground (or to the elements), (earth to earth), ashes to ashes, dust to dust... ..AND THE FINAL SECTION... .in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died was buried and rose again for us. To God be glory for ever,

AMEN

Let us pray

In you, Father we are one family in earth and in heaven.
We remember in your presence those who have died,
giving thanks especially for those
who have revealed to us your grace in Christ.
Help us to follow the example of your saints in light
and bring us with them
to the fullness of your eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen

DECLARATION of FAITH: The Nicene Creed

Now please read through this amazing creed as a personal belief statement.

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

HYMN TIS 385: 'Now is Eternal Life ...' *George Wallace Briggs 1875-1959*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

This is the practice we follow each Sunday immediately before the Prayers of the People, so you know we value YOU!

"As we prepare for our prayers for others, we light this candle to remember all those who are part of our church community but who are not at worship with us today."

Light the candle.

We know that God's presence is always with us in all our thought and actions and today – the 22nd Sunday in Pentecost - we join together in our prayers for others

Let us pray

Loving God, we acknowledge and give thanks for our many blessings.
In our country we have a society with a rich variety of people who have come from near and far. We give thanks for our freedom and pray that we may live together and be kind to one another.

We pray for the worldwide church and all who minister. We thank you for the church in Australia. Inspire us to promote the unity of your church as we pray for all its congregations and its clergy.

Today we think of Ji, our Minister, as he attends the Uniting Church President's Conference in Tonga. May it be a fulfilling, and faithful, experience and we ask that you care for him on this journey.

As we approach Remembrance Day, on Tuesday, we recall with respect and gratitude all those who died or have suffered in wars around the world. We also pray for those still involved in conflicts and for the families, who they have left behind.

We pray for peace in our troubled world, and we ask that you give us peace in our hearts.

Dear Lord, bring peace to all who are suffering – be it as a result of homelessness and disconnection from family and friends, for refugees and asylum seekers, who are trying to adjust to a life in a new country and culture. For victims of crime, who are feeling frightened and vulnerable and we also pray that you guide the perpetrators of crime to realise the error of their ways and appreciate that there is a better pathway to follow.

We pray for all who care for others in hospitals, in care centres, in detention facilities and in private homes and for all volunteers who contribute so generously to our society.

Dear Father we think of those who are mourning the loss of loved ones and this morning we remember your loyal servant – Shirley Hopwood – who died on October 30 and we pray for her family, especially Jan as she grieves the loss of her precious Mother.

Our prayers go to all who are sick, sad and lonely and especially to a number of people in our own congregation who are dealing with health issues. We pause to pray silently for these and others who are ill.

Merciful Father, Almighty and Eternal God, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ who taught us the prayer that we say together:

**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 forever. Amen.**

HYMN TIS 155: ‘How Great Thou Art...’ *Based on Carl Gustaf Boberg 1859-1940 tr.
from a Russian version-Stuart Wesley Keene Hine 1899-1989*

DISMISSAL:

Whatever you do, in word or deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God through him.

Colossians 3:17

BENEDICTION:

The God of peace,
who brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep,
make you perfect in every good work to do his will;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
rest upon and remain with you always **Amen**

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

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