

# ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



14 MAY 2023

EASTER 6



Love Reigns

# 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.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FIRST PEOPLES

### WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP

Psalm 66: 8-20 “Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me.

<sup>8</sup> Oh, bless our God, you peoples!  
And make the voice of His praise to be heard,  
<sup>9</sup> Who keeps our soul among the living,  
And does not allow our feet to <sup>[a]</sup>be moved.  
<sup>10</sup> For You, O God, have tested us;  
You have refined us as silver is refined.  
<sup>11</sup> You brought us into the net;  
You laid affliction on our backs.  
<sup>12</sup> You have caused men to ride over our heads;  
We went through fire and through water;  
But You brought us out to <sup>[b]</sup>rich fulfillment.  
<sup>13</sup> I will go into Your house with burnt offerings;  
I will pay You my <sup>[c]</sup>vows,  
<sup>14</sup> Which my lips have uttered  
And my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble.  
<sup>15</sup> I will offer You burnt sacrifices of fat animals,  
With the sweet aroma of rams;  
I will offer bulls with goats. *Selah*  
<sup>16</sup> Come *and* hear, all you who fear God,  
And I will declare what He has done for my soul.  
<sup>17</sup> I cried to Him with my mouth,  
And He was <sup>[d]</sup>extolled with my tongue.  
<sup>18</sup> If I regard iniquity in my heart,  
The Lord will not hear.  
<sup>19</sup> But certainly God has heard me;  
He has attended to the voice of my prayer.  
<sup>20</sup> Blessed be God,  
Who has not turned away my prayer,  
Nor His mercy from me!

# HYMN: TIS 215: You servants of God, your Master proclaim

## Acknowledgement of Mother's Day

# HYMN: TIS 417: Loving Spirit, loving Spirit

## SERVICE OF THE WORD

### New Testament Reading: Acts 17: 22-31

<sup>22</sup> Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

<sup>24</sup> "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. <sup>25</sup> And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. <sup>26</sup> From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. <sup>28</sup> 'For in him we live and move and have our being.'<sup>[a]</sup> As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>29</sup> "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. <sup>30</sup> In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup> For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

## HYMN TIS 681: Lord let me see.

## REFLECTION: Love Reigns

I drive past Ormond Uniting Church as I drive to work as a Chaplain at Strathcona Girls Grammar school I always love looking at your sign. This week it is simple, two words, "Love Reigns".

I am going to use this as the title for my reflection on this Mothers' Day before I head out to celebrate with my family. My Mum died last year at the age of 92. We are missing her greatly as she was the "matriarch" of the family. She grew up in Moonya rd, Murrumbidgee and went to St Giles Presbyterian Church as a girl. I think I might need to write a book about her one day. On this Mother's Day. I am thinking heaps about her love for her family, her fierce intelligence, and her ability to keep us all in line. As my daughter said at her funeral, she was fiercely loyal, fiercely kind and fiercely loving.

In the reading today we come across another fierce person, the apostle Paul. We read in the Acts passage about his preaching in Athens. I was able to go on a pilgrimage to Greece and Turkey in 2019 (pre covid) to follow in the footsteps of St Paul. The message of Jesus that he preached to male and female, Jew and Gentile, slave and Greek was one of radical inclusion. Paul was able to

find ways of using the culture around him to find a point of reference with the people to whom he was preaching. In Acts 17: 22-31 he uses the tablet/statue to the “Unknown God” as a way of introducing Jesus who is able to be known.

“We are God’s offspring” God has been raised from the dead and we are his children. As we remember we are the loved children of God on this Mother’s Day, it is a time to remember that love does reign.

Working in a school environment, I try and use things from our modern culture to find a way in the relating the story of Jesus and being loved children of God.

I have been reading a book by Miroslav Volf, a Yale theology Professor who grew up in communist Romania as a Baptist. He has written a book called “Life worth Living – A guide to what matters most”.

I have been using this as a starting point in speaking to secondary students about the question of what makes life worth living.

The book covers three main points that I think Paul would agree with.

1. Purpose
2. Listen to everyone around you.
3. Pain and suffering will be encountered and strengthens us.

Paul certainly found new purpose in life after his turning around from persecuting Christians to preaching the message of Jesus. He listened to people around him and used the culture, like referencing the Unknown god to talk about Jesus who can be known. He certainly learned through pain and suffering yet never turned away from preaching the message of Christ crucified and rising from the dead.

As I think of my fiercely loyal, fiercely kind and fiercely loving Mum today on this Mother’s Day, I think she lived a life worth living with purpose, she loved taking on ideas from others and talked of the furniture of the mind being so important. She encountered pain and suffering from nearly dying as a teenager of rheumatic fever but she overcame these things.

Love Reigns! Whether you are a Royalist, or a Republican, we saw an amazing coronation last week. My Mum, who we called “Queen Anne” would have loved Handel’s Zadok the Priest and the pomp and ceremony. However as your sign says outside Ormond Uniting Church “Love reigns” and this is the message that I leave you with today. Through our pain and suffering and existential angst, we have the assurance of Knowing God and this is what gives us purpose and hope in life now and the life to come. **Love Reigns!**

## HYMN: TIS 681 Lord let me see...

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE- Prepared by Dianne

God is more ready to hear our prayers than we are to utter them. Let us pray for other people.

God our Creator, at the beginning of time you breathed life into your creatures. Hear our prayers for your world and its people who so sorely need to experience that new life. We pray for all whose lives are bound by war, natural disasters, poverty or oppression:

- For the hungry, the homeless, asylum seekers and refugees
- For world leaders and all who work for justice and peace

Breathe into your children your spirit of hope and possibility.

O God, put your spirit within us,  
**And we shall live.**

God our Redeemer, you hold before us the choice of life or death: Hear our prayers for your church worldwide. We pray for places where it is impacted by division, discord or lack of resources:

- For those persecuted for their faith and for those whose faith is weak
- For church leaders and everyone who ministers in your name

Breathe on your church your spirit of passion and power.

O God, put your spirit within us,  
**And we shall live.**

God our Companion, you have shown to your people the way of true love: hear our prayers for the communities in which we live – local, school, church, work, family, sporting and social clubs. We pray for all whose lives are bound by bitterness, jealousy, resentment or mistrust:

- For those who are victims of intolerance, violence or abuse
- For our places of work, our neighbours, our families and friends

Breathe on your children your spirit of reconciliations and love.

O God, put your spirit within us,  
**And we shall live.**

God our Comforter, you wept at the death of your friend, Lazarus: hear our prayers for all those in need and for those who minister to them. We pray for all whose lives are bound by despair, misery, confusion or pain:

- For the lonely, those who feel forgotten and all who mourn
- For people who are unwell and all who are close to death

Breathe on your children your spirit of comfort and consolation.

O God, put your spirit within us,  
**And we shall live.**

God our Resurrection and Life, by your dying and rising you bring new life to others: hear our prayers for all who have died. We give thanks for the faithful people of this church community who have gone before us;

- For those whose yearly remembrance occurs at this time.

Call us forth from the tomb and set us free from all that binds us in death, that, with Lazarus and your friends in every age, we may rise to new life with you forever.

O God, put your spirit within us,  
**And we shall live.**

**The Lord's Prayer**

**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 690 Beauty for brokenness...

BENEDICTION

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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NEWS & NOTICES