

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



28 MAY 2023

PENTECOST



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.

Introit- TIS 412 God sends us his Spirit. vs 1

Acknowledgement of First Peoples- By Bible Reader Marg Davis.

Welcome and Greeting

Call to worship

L: Through skyscraper canyons you come, Holy Spirit,

Down lanes and arcades, suburbs and country roads you come;

From the north, from the south, from within and without, like wind.

Like wind, the roar of Pure Wind, you come sweeping through to renew.

L: Through grand gothic cathedrals and flat roofed churches you come, Holy Spirit,

To choir, congregation and Church Council you come.

From the west, from the east, from the font and from the feast, like fire.

Like fire, the roar of Pure Fire, you come sweeping through to renew. ¹

Prayer of Invocation ²

L: Spirit of God, swirling like wind and blazing like fire;

whispering to us a word of gentle peace:

come into our time of worship and renew our hearts.

Stir us with your presence, give us fresh dreams

and visions of a world filled with love.

R: Send your Spirit here,

and recreate us as your people. Amen.

Hymn TIS 491 Father welcomes vs 1, 3 and choruses

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Your people dream dreams and carry visions of peace.

Your people proclaim love out in the open

and point out the unity of diversity.

We are so glad to be your people, Loving God.

Your people forgive and know themselves to be forgiven.

Your people wonder aloud

at the astonishing beauty of life.

We are so glad to be your people, Loving God.

God put your Spirit upon us. Amen.³

First Word- Video /Song : Hana Wa Saku (Flowers Will Bloom) was written in 2011 by Shunji Iwai and Yoko Kanno to support NHK Japan's reconstruction efforts in the areas hardest hit by the March 2011 Great Eastern Earthquake. The earthquake and tsunami brought an unprecedented scale of damage to north-eastern Japan. In 2021, a multilingual version of the song was created, which is sung in 11 languages. Some singers took part from outside Japan. Some singers translated the lyrics by themselves, while others expressed the wish that children of their country will listen to the song. Eleven artists each put their thoughts into the song to try to sow seeds of hope for the future.

Song Lyrics at the end.⁴

L: How did you feel when listening to a song sung in different languages every few lines? Was it good to have the English subtitles? What would you have felt without the English subtitles?

What would you feel if you were, say, Indonesian, and suddenly you could understand what the singer was saying? Would you respond better than if you didn't understand the other languages used?

So making the gospel message easier for others to understand is essential for all Christians. E.g. speaking their languages. Using their stories. Using the their meanings for gestures and body language, not just your own. What else might we need to do to communicate to Ormond people? Older people? Younger people? Jewish people? Homeless people? Discuss.

Now see what God did on the day of Pentecost.

Epistle reading- Acts 2:1-21 (reader- Marg D)

² When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues^[a] as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,^[b] ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome" (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ "In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹ And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.^{5[c]}

Prayer of Confession

L: “Stop them!” they cried when “unauthorised persons”
were prophesying in the camp of Moses.
“They are filled with new wine,” sneered the onlookers
on the day of Pentecost. The disciples were meeting
in a locked room out of fear,
when Jesus appeared to them and said, “Peace be with you.”

Is there no end, Patient Love, to the ways
we can ignore or deny your presence?
Why is our first response to mystery so disdainful?

**Merciful God,
forgive our closed minds and suspicious hearts
and open us to your enlivening spirit.
Out of our hearts, let flow rivers of living water.
Out of our mouths let flow words of praise,
visions of hope and dreams of peace.
Let us bear witness to your restoring love. Amen.**

Declaration of Forgiveness

Into the closed room, stale with fear
because of all we regret
and because of shame from within and without,
Jesus enters and breathes upon us a word of peace:
we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God. Amen. ⁵

Pass the Peace- with 3 simple Auslan signs, used with the deaf community in Australia- 1. circle 2 V
fingers for “peace”, 2. crossed finger pairs with ‘with’, and 3. right hand 2 fingers, point in a line away from the
body, “You”. And the minister adds the 4th gesture -right hand palm up in a circle away from the body for “All”.

The people reply with the first 3 gestures.

Gospel Reading- John 20:19-23 (Marg D)

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Hymn TIS 416 Great God, your Spirit like the wind

Sermon – Pentecost sermon Acts 2: 1-11 Ormond UCA Sun 28 May 2023 The Firemaker story.⁶

Once upon a time there was a man who was able to make fire. The people of the village were amazed at this gift though they were a bit afraid of it. The firemaker showed them how they could keep warm in winter, cook food and even fire pottery from which to eat their food. Fire could, however be dangerous and cause destruction so the firemaker showed them how to use it with care. In no time at all the firemaker's gift spread from one village to the next and he was in great demand and people thought that he was close to the gods.

In time the popularity of the firemaker came to the attention to the village elders and rulers and to the lord of that region. They were jealous of the firemaker as people were turning away from them so they agreed that the firemaker must go. One night they trapped the firemaker in a dark corner and killed him.

The people were dismayed but afraid to challenge the rulers and the rulers wondered how to placate the people and take their minds off this dangerous man. They hit upon the idea of encouraging the people to build shrines in memory of the firemaker. The shrines were decorated with flowers and people gathered to remember the firemaker and all he meant to them, though they began to forget most of what he taught them. They wrote what they remembered in books and read those books together when they met. The people got used to chilly dark nights again and eating cold food and they forgot how to dance and sing in the firelight. The firemaker's gift was lost and there was no fire.

This Sunday we celebrate **Pentecost**, the day that is often described as the birthday of the Church. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples and the miracle of the church was brought into being. As the church grew however, the church turned from a gospel movement into an institution with rules and regulations that were meant to keep order.

"Sadly the free flowing of the Spirit, with a few exceptions, was left behind, confined to the pages of the Bible. And so today those self-same rules and regulations have often been used to exclude. Joining a church is often seen as an obstacle race, where a newcomer is expected to go through a series of hoops until they are finally accepted. And I don't think this is what Jesus had in mind when he said, **"Come to me all who are weak and heavy laden and I will give you rest."**

Rev Paul Dau, a South Sudanese minister in our Presbytery said these words this week.⁷ And he should know, coming from a country currently riven with internal civil war, and himself have come to Australia through a refugee camp as a child. He told me recently that the current South Sudanese civil war is caused by two feuding generals of opposing units of the Sudanese army, both wanting ultimate power. One army, the National Army is funded by Egypt. And the opposing Army unit is funded by Saudi Arabia. Note they are both funded by Islamic countries! But all it brings to the people is destruction, fear, and terror of one's neighbour. So what hope do they have? Without God's help, I don't know.

So the South Sudanese people, led by the generals, need a new Spirit, in order to learn to live in ways that offer peace and welcome to each other, despite their differences. They need to see past each other's differences, if they are to have a future worth living.

It is the same for the church today; both the wider church and this congregation. We too need the Holy Spirit of God to help us to communicate better, and make each other welcome. In order to have a future worth living, we too need to be inclusive, not exclusive, of people who are different to ourselves. We need to welcome others, even if we don't understand their language, or their clothing style. Maybe they have tats, or wear dreadlocks!

One day my mother Carol put me to shame when we on holidays in southern WA when we met a surly young man with long fuzzy dreadlocks camping near us. I must admit my initial reaction was to turn up my nose a bit. He looked different! But my mother's first genuine reaction to the young man was "What wonderful dreadlocks! You must have spent a lot of time and money to get dreadlocks like that!" And after getting over his shock, the man's face changed from being surly to being a face filled with pleasure and pride at my mother's appreciation of his dreadlocks. He proceeded to tell us all about them with great enthusiasm, and I must say that before that conversation, I had no idea how much effort and how much it cost to get good dreadlocks! So I learned to be more inclusive next time!

Now maybe we are suspicious of a strange person, maybe we doubt their motivations, and we worry we may be taken advantage of. I mean, we all know about scammers! And yes, scammers do exist, and we need to be cautious. But remember that these days, most of the scammers we are dealing with are not actually here in Australia at all. They are in call centres overseas, not with us, talking face to face on our doorstep or in our streets.

Some of you will know that last Sunday, just as we finished our service, a young homeless woman named Rebecca walked into the foyer of this church, and asked for help. As I reflected on it later, I think it was a God-moment. Would we live up to the fine words we had said a few minutes earlier in our service about making new people feel like they could come in, and be welcome amongst us?

Those of you who were here will know that as we got to know each other, she came into the church's worship space, asked intelligent questions about our beautiful stained-glass windows, and was willing to talk with us some more. We told her about the Little Food Pantry, gave her a voucher for the dog food, and will work on a list of Community Services in this area. Maybe we might think about joining a church accommodation program used in Manningham and Canberra, where churches offer their buildings for one night per week during the winter for a certain number of homeless people to rest and sleep. And each church only is responsible for one night a week. And as a team with other church and community services, the homeless people can get the sort of help they need.

In Rebecca's case, she was trying to support herself through busking with her guitar. She told us she liked Alanis Morissette and The Doors' music. I didn't really know those artists. But I said if she came back again, I could help her with her guitar playing, because I play guitar too. And when I went home last Sunday, I kept my word. I listened to the music of Alanis Morissette, found the song "Hand in my pocket", and learnt enough to help Rebecca when she returns.

Maybe Rebecca will come back, and maybe she won't. But I know that I have done what I can to make her welcome and feel like she belongs here with us. And I will do the same for any other person God brings to us. Because like I showed you with the Lego/ Duplo blocks, that is how a church grows. It doesn't grow by making people believe certain things first off, or making them behave in certain ways. People relax and change after they feel they belong! And then they start to ask questions about our behaviour, and then about what we believe. It is not the Billy Graham model of "Believe, behave and belong." Jesus actually did it in the reverse order. "Belong- behave- believe." And it is the Holy Spirit of God that enables us to do that.

Our church's future is only assured if we continue to be an inclusive community, with wider and wider ways. We are to invite people to "Come as they are" in the words of the song. And our interest in any newcomer is not so much about what they believe, but rather who they are, and helping them to feel they belong with us.

Jesus' prime mission was bringing Shalom, God's reconciling peace and healing in all its forms, and he asks us to follow in that way of living. I agree with Rev Paul Dau when he said that the future church will be about the creation of healing communities, energised by the Spirit and gathered for a variety of reasons but with the Gospel of Jesus Christ at their centre. There will be no membership hoops to jump, and we will know more about God's love and each other, than about regulations and creeds. Now that's what I call "church"! Amen.

Prayer

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Offering- to the Glory of God⁸

Prayers of the People- (By David Northwood).

The constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, known as the Voice to Parliament, is being debated at present, prior to the referendum later this year.

Before we begin our prayer today I would like to read some extracts from the Uluru Statement from the Heart which was compiled at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention.

"Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness.

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future."

Our prayer this morning is based on a prayer compiled by Glenn Loughrey, who is a Wiradjuri man committed to advancing the well being, culture and spirituality of the First People of Australia. He is the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne's Educator and Advocate for an enshrined Voice to Parliament and the Executive Government.

Let us pray

God who listens,
open our hearts to hear the gentle invitation of those without a voice;
placeless and dispossessed of all that was theirs,

instead of anger, revenge or blame,
they offer in their open hand absurd generosity,
an act of transformational forgiveness
from the centre of their being to ours:

May we sense the integrity of country speaking to country, body to body; and find within ourselves the humility to accept and journey together, to become our nation's better future, resolving our colonial memory, Australia's original sin.

As Jesus gave to us, help us to receive and pass on this gift of new life.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Commissioning and Benediction

L: By the hand of God, we are sent into the world; go out to testify to God's transforming Spirit.
God's Spirit is within us, empowering our lives.

L: Go in joy as the people who have received the Holy Spirit.
Go and bring that life into all the world.

L: And may each day hold a greeting from the Spirit of God,
Each night be visited by the dove of peace, And the holy life of Emmanuel,
God-with-us, Be seen anew in wisdom, truth and peace.⁹

Recessional hymn- TIS 411 Filled with the Spirit's power

¹ Bruce Prewer, *City Pentecost*, adapted by WS. *Australian Prayers* pg 59

¹ Words for Worship Pentecost FW170604 Mediacom.

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¹ **Lyrics: Hana wa Saku / Flowers Will Bloom - 花は咲く**

English Ver. - Il Divo - *Flowers Will Bloom* trans. **Kelvin Arnandi**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUJopR7MGRU> Accessed 16 May 2023

My heart goes out to you. When the winter snows give way to spring
My heart.. is longing now, longing for the town where happiness had been...
Been a place of hope, and dreaming too
Been a home where my heart always went back to you
But for now... I only dream.. of the people who I loved and knew

Someone is singing, I can hear, singing now
Someone is weeping, I can hear, their tears
Someone is smiling, showing me. Why and how
to go on.. living.. for years and years
(Chorus)

Flowers will bloom, yes they will..., yes they will... For you who are here or yet to be born
They'll bloom, yes they will and they'll bloom again until
There's no missing sorrow and no reason left to mourn
My heart.. goes out to you. When the winter snows give way to spring
My heart.. is longing now, longing for the town where happiness had been...

I regret mistake, that I sometimes made But I know our love, will never fade
And you'll live on, instead of me And that you will have whatever love can be
Someone is thinking, I can read, every thought.. Someone is shedding tears for all that was lost Someone is
leading you to love that they sought, asking you to love all that you love the most
(Chorus x 3 times)

Flowers will bloom, yes they will..., yes they will... For you who are here or yet to be born
They'll bloom, yes they will and they'll bloom again until
There's no missing sorrow and no reason left to mourn.

¹ Words for Worship Pentecost FW170604 Mediacom.

¹ (From Rev Tony Duncan, source unknown.)

¹ Rev Paul Dau, Minister's Words in the Cranbourne UCA newsletter for Pentecost 2023.

¹ FWOTS_Fresh Winds of the Spirit vol 2 by Lavon Bayler. P 94

¹ FWOTS_Fresh Winds of the Spirit vol 2 by Lavon Bayler. P 95

Postlude

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

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Music: Karen Roberts

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Fridays, 9.30am-2.30pm

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