

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



4 JUNE 2023

TRINITY – YEAR A



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.

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all
And also with you

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

A rock is placed before the people.

Over eons the earth has settled and formed. The colours merge and the stories entwine.
May those who have kept the stories of God's earth be honoured.

Water is placed before the people.

The flow of life ripples, finding cracks and crevices. It glistens and sparkles with promise.
May those who quench a spiritual thirst be blessed.

A candle or fire is lit.

Darkness is banished with the sharing of warmth.
Relationships enlighten and corruption dissipates.
May the Light of the World be carried in the hearts of the People of God.

The people stretch out their hands, palms upward.

We reach out to God and to one another.

**May God remake us as a Covenant People,
Bound together by the Spirit of this Land and guided by Her First Peoples.**

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Today is Trinity Sunday.

Today we also recognise National Reconciliation Sunday as part of National Reconciliation Week.

The Uniting Church is in an ongoing journey of reconciliation with our First Peoples.

We believe that restoring human relationships is part of God's reconciling mission in our world.

Through forgiveness, God's grace works to provide all with hope and a new way of living.

This journey of reconciliation is a response to the Biblical call to care for all people, including the marginalised and vulnerable, and in particular, for Australia's First Peoples.

CALL TO WORSHIP

God of Love, we come to worship you.

You are the Creator of this land and of all good things.

Our hope is in you, because you gave your Son, Jesus to reconcile the world to yourself.
And to complete that reconciliation, sent your Holy Spirit.

Through this gift of yourself...

You gave us your strength and grace to forgive.

You gave us your love to share with all your children.

You gave us new life, through your Son.

Your gifts for all your people, to transform all our lives, in this world and the next.

So, Lord of All, by your grace, your love, your strength, your forgiveness and your peace, mould our lives and shape our relationships, especially between First Peoples and we Late Comers in this Land.

Let us Worship the Father, Son and Spirit; the triune God of us all.

(adapted from material by Wontulp Bi-Buya Indigenous Theology Working Group)

HYMN TIS 442: All Praise to our Redeeming Lord

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND CONFESSION

Lord, Your awesome work of creation is stunningly visible to us all.

Jolt us into wonder and praise.

The reconciling love of your Son, Jesus, screams out to us from the cross.

Pinch us into the wakefulness of faith and obedience.

The wind of your spirit is blowing, across all the nations.

‘Blow us away’ with your whirlwinds of love, grace, joy and peace!

God of all, you are beckoning, calling, summoning us! Empower us all to worship you in spirit and in truth.

O Trinity of love, One God, community for which we yearn, look now on us – who look on you, and hear our prayer for our community:

Where there is falseness,

reveal it by your truth.

Where there is coldness,

kindle the flame of your love.

Where there is sorrow,

let there be grief that is good.

Where there is joy and hope,

free us to share it together.

And make us one,

as you are one.

Dear Unifying, Reconciling and Peace-making God,

we confess that we as individuals, communities and as a nation:

- have harboured hatefulness against others, particularly against our First Peoples.
- (we) have inflicted harm against others, particularly against our First Peoples
 - (we) have wronged others, particularly our First Peoples! (Silence)

We admit our need, our unworthiness and plead for your unifying, reconciling, Peace-making forgiveness. (silence)

Jesus says to us, each one of us:

“Go, you are forgiven, made new.

Sin no more, and

come and follow me”.

Adapted from Iona Community - from Terry C Falla (ed) Be Our freedom Lord: Responsive prayers for contemporary worship (2nd edition) Open Book 1994, pages 29, 144/5

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

Your Word, Oh Lord, is a lamp to our feet;

A light to our path

GENESIS 1:1 – 2:4

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

³Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so.

¹⁶God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” ²¹So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. ²⁵God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” ²⁷So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have

dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

²⁹God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ²And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

⁴These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

JOHN 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.

The gospel of the Lord

Praise to you. Lord Jesus Christ

SERMON: EVEN GOD NEEDS A VOICE!

Long ago, I wondered why my young daughter wanted to be a speech Pathologist. I thought Speech Pathologists were people who taught others to ‘speak ‘proper’!’ ‘No!’ My daughter said! Speech Pathologists give people who, for one reason or another, cannot speak, a VOICE or more precisely, THEIR OWN VOICE. Speech Pathologists are voice healers. They help the muted ones to relearn the powerful gift of speech and VOICE.

You know our ‘voices’ are not only important – VOICE is also the means by which we live. If we don’t give voice to something, ie, speak, then nothing happens. If we don’t speak there is nothing to listen to, no connection, no relationship. If we don’t speak, no learning can be stimulated, and insightful growth occur. Voice is critical.

For too long we late comers to this land have silenced the Voices of the first inhabitants – or we have ignored and dismissed their voices when what they said did not coincide with our voices and suit our purposes or we have been perplexed and confused as to how to respond to their voices and done nothing. Historically, rarely have we authentically listened, heard and responded in ways which indicated we were genuinely listening to their voices.

I could give detailed voice here of many horrendous examples of not truly hearing First Peoples’ voices. I’ll list just a few: for example, literally silencing the Aboriginal voice by means of indigenous massacres, stealing their children, imposing governmental policies like restrictive welfare cards, spreading

propaganda and disingenuous misinformation about First Peoples, inflicting atrocious levels of Indigenous incarceration, engaging in sexual abuse and harassment of First peoples, practicing racially motivated policing, engaging in toxic racial vilification – there's more, it is a longer list than this, but I see no point in us languishing in the guilt we must bear – rather I want to give voice to where we are challenged to go by the Voice of God which was fully expressed in the WORD made flesh, in Jesus his Son.

In the Hebrew scripture this morning we heard the first of the stories about the Creation. Let's do a little dissection of the text from Genesis – that is, take a closer look at some of the words used.

In terms of the words used, what is going on in this story? How does Creation happen?

Think particularly about the second rather strange reading of certain parts of that Creation story that were read after the dramatic reading. What did that highlighting of those parts of the text indicate?

Invite Contributions

And the answer is: GOD VOICES CREATION INTO BEING! God speaks and it happens!

You see, “even God needs a VOICE!”

Time and time again, in this story we heard from the VOICE of the writer: ‘And God said’ – ‘And God said!’ On each occasion it is the same pattern. God Speaks and an aspect of Creation happens! And the Narrator says: AND IT WAS SO! AND IT WAS SO! And then we hear: AND IT WAS GOOD. AND IT WAS GOOD!

A Trinitarian Voice, if you like, is at the very heart of the Creator God!

AND then we heard another WORD spoken by another VOICE – that of St John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

St John concludes this section as follows:

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

That is, the Voice of God is en-fleshed in humanity! At Jesus' baptism the Voice of God declares from the Heavens: ‘This is my Son, with whom I am well pleased LISTEN to him!’

Jesus IS the VOICE of God!

The Voice of God made flesh in Jesus came to achieve reconciliation between God and God's broken Creation.

His VOICE was silenced on the Cross but not in heaven!

God's faithful Son had reconciled heaven and earth and a new order was established forever. And this new order meant we were ALL ALL – reconciled to God and to each other!

Our challenge is to accept that complete and final reconciliation of all things, between God and God's Creation and LIVE IT OUT! We ARE reconciled one to another, me to you, you to me, me to my neighbour, my neighbour to me, me to my enemy, my enemy to me, me to First Peoples and First Peoples to me – etc etc etc – no exceptions – The Cross of Jesus mocks us if that is not the case!!

Our task as Christians is to give voice to the gift of reconciliation accomplished through the Word made Flesh.

What does this mean in practical terms?

Well, this is where the Trinity comes in!

By means of the gift of creation, ie, the gift of life, and through the gift of recreation, ie, the gift of new life, three precious ways are opened for us that enable us to help complete the totality of reconciliation between the Creator and the Creator's creation, which, of course, includes reconciliation between First Peoples and Late comers in Australia.

1. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
2. The Love of God
3. The communion or Fellowship of the Holy Spirit

Grace, Love, Fellowship the instruments of Reconciliation.

Grace: To live out the grace given to First Peoples, at this time, is to use every means at our disposal to enable the new life First Peoples were given by the WORD. It's just plain foolhardy, or worse, to suggest that the granting of a VOICE to share their story is not their right by grace. Jesus' death and resurrection gave new life to Australia's First Peoples. Let us acknowledge their gift of new life and their right to give VOICE to it! That's Grace. That's reconciliation!

Love: Of course, I don't know the mind of God, but this I do know, God who is pure love had his heart broken, when his innocent Son was falsely arrested, imprisoned, abandoned, unjustly condemned and brutally murdered. I think the First Peoples understand this!! AND YET God continued to love his own Son and his own Son's tormentors! That is extra-ordinary! Such love is at the heart of what it means to be truly human. Many First Peoples' hearts have been broken by the loss of so much, often of their own children. Surely, we must hear their Voices, hear their stories and offer our love, as Christ loved us. Let them have their voice! That's Love! That's reconciliation!

Communion or Fellowship: The work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus here with us now, is about connection, community and companionship. In the context of NRW, connection with, companionship with and sharing community between First Peoples and late comers, that is, Shared Voices, is at the heart of our calling. Let them have their voice and share, truly share, what they have to say and for us to truly listen! That's Communion. That's reconciliation!

Let us pray

Lord, what we say is so important. You spoke a wondrous Creation into being and when it was corrupted you spoke again and your Voice spoke a final Word – your Son, who made all things new. May we all raise our voices to proclaim that Word, which is pure love, and that Word, which has reconciled all our differences.

We pray in Jesus' name, the Reconciler.

Amen

HYMN TiS 683: God! When Human Bonds Are Broken

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

prepared by Marg Davis.

Resources include: Be Our freedom Lord: by Terry C Falla and Let us Pray by Janet Nelson

Dear Lord – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. On this Trinity Sunday we come together with our prayers for others.

Let us pray

We pray for your creation:

May we all learn before it is too late
to respect the uniqueness, fragility, and beauty
of our earth and all its creatures.

*Hear our prayers for the world-wide church -
particularly in places where it is persecuted or ignored*

We pray for church leaders and for all who minister and serve in your name

We pray for peace in our torn and troubled world

Lord, help us to uphold the voices of the poor and call for the silencing of weapons of war
To challenge voices of hate and prejudice with the Word of God and the Peace of Christ

We pray for every nation and race, especially for the first peoples of this land:

May our actions and our lifestyle bear out our belief that all people everywhere are our sisters and
brothers,

whatever their country, their city, or their tribe,
whatever their education or their culture,
whatever their circumstances, religion, or colour.

Three-in-one God, you give life to your people, comforting us in our sorrows and sustaining us in our need

Hear our prayer for all who are suffering

For the grief stricken, the broken hearted and all in despair, for the sick, the dying, the sad and the lonely.

We ask your blessings on those who are disadvantaged, and neglected and in these wintery conditions
we pray for all who are sleeping rough and those who are cold, hungry and frightened, especially children

Dear Lord we pray for our families, friends, neighbours and ourselves.

Help us to love and care for one another as you have loved us.

God of glory, in your mercy

Hear our prayer AMEN

Let us pray together, 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 for ever. Amen.**

HYMN TiS 692: Sometimes a healing Word is comfort

DISMISSAL

Go out into the world in the power of the Spirit;
In all things at all times,
Remember that Christ is with you;
Make your life your worship
To the praise and glory of God

BLESSING

May your footsteps on these ancient lands,
remind us of creation and connectedness, in our search for truth.
May the Gum Tree, from its roots to its branches,
remind us to dig deep and reach high, in our action for justice.
May the Eagle who soars in the sky,
remind us of the power, in our call for love.
May the expanse of the lands and the seas, of the sky and the stars,
remind us of God's timing in our faith in hope.
May the Holy Three, Creator Spirit, Lord God, Papa Jesus, remind us of community.
So, with grace, mercy and peace, go in truth, justice, love and hope.

WORD OF MISSION

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

Postlude

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

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Presider: Rev Ron Townsend

Music: Peter Hurley

Church Office

Tuesdays, 9.30am-1.30pm

Fridays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Phone: 0411 958 127

office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

Website: www.ormondunitingchurch.org

NEWS & NOTICES

