

# ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



18 JUNE 2023

PENTECOST 3 – 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.*

## Introit- TIS 135 All things bright and beautiful

Chorus- All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful  
The Lord God made them all.

1. The wildflowers in their beauty, The mountain ranges tall,  
The billabongs and rivers, and friendly birds that call,

Chorus- All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful  
The Lord God made them all.<sup>1</sup>

## Acknowledgement of First Peoples Read by Jan Davenport

## Welcome and Greeting

## Call to worship. *Psalm 116:13-18*

L: Each day and every day God hears our voice and listens to our cry for mercy.  
How can we repay the Lord for all his goodness to us?

**R: Let us lift up the cup of salvation  
and call on the name of the Lord  
Let us fulfil our promise to the Lord  
and sacrifice a thank offering to Him  
Let us call on the name of our God.  
in the court of the house of the Lord.**

## Prayers

Thank you, Lord, for the free gift of salvation.  
We come to you with a heart full of confidence,  
with the knowledge of your presence in our life;  
with a cry for your mercy.

As Abraham cried for mercy,  
O Lord, "if we have found favour in your eyes, do not pass your servants by." (Genesis 18:3)  
We, the undeserving sinners, are seeking your mercy for ourselves and for our people.  
May your love surround us.

Thank you, Lord, for your Son Jesus Christ, who set us free from all condemnation. Help us to set our mind and live our lives according to the desire of the Holy Spirit who indwells in us.

As you said to your disciples in the first century,  
“the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few,

ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers to the harvest field,” (Matthew 9:37-38)

O Lord, we, the forgiven people, are pleading your mercy to continue showering your blessings upon those who are serving you in helping the helpless, providing for those in need, caring for the sick and listening to those who call.

We ask your blessings and strength for those who are being trained, and those in the stage of discernment; We seek your inspiration to touch the heart of young people to commit their lives to work in the harvest field.

**R: O Lord, we are the helpless and the helpers who need your blessing.**

**We are the sheep and shepherds who need your leading.**

**We are your servants in the harvest field who need your empowering. Amen.<sup>2</sup>**

## Hymn TIS 727 In the presence of your people

1. In the presence of your people,  
I will praise your name;  
for alone you are holy,  
enthroned on the praises of Israel.  
Let us celebrate your goodness,  
and your steadfast love;  
may your name be exalted here  
on earth and in heaven above.

2. Lai lai lai...<sup>3</sup>

**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 4<sup>th</sup> gesture -right hand palm up in a circle away from the body for “All”.

**The people reply with the first 3 gestures.**

## Old Testament reading: Genesis 18: 1-15 The need for hospitality

Read by Jan Davenport

### The Three Visitors

18 The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup> Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

<sup>3</sup> He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord,<sup>[a]</sup> do not pass your servant by. <sup>4</sup> Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. <sup>5</sup> Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.”

“Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.”

<sup>6</sup> So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs<sup>[b]</sup> of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

<sup>7</sup> Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. <sup>8</sup> He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

<sup>9</sup> “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him.

“There, in the tent,” he said.

<sup>10</sup> Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.”

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. <sup>11</sup> Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. <sup>12</sup> So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

<sup>13</sup> Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ <sup>14</sup> Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

<sup>15</sup> Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.”

But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

## First Word- Introduction to the Uluru Statement from the Heart

Led by Warwick Barry.

*I'm happy to help lead a group or read should you wish it.*

Readers to read alternating paragraphs of the S of the H, ensuring people have a copy of it as they enter the church. Key terms such as Makkarata ( agreement/ treaty making between First P & gov't), Voice-body representing First Peoples of Aust on issues affecting them, Sovereignty- rights or claims over lands, ie concept of guardians / caretakers.

2 Then have just two questions for people to discuss in small groups, preferably written on a white board, taken from the UCA study guide:-

How open are you to the the idea of a First Nations Voice to Parliament?

What are your hopes and / or concerns?

3 Allow 15 mins for people to discuss them and encourage them to have one person feedback some responses at the conclusion of the discussion. These don't need to be put on the whiteboard but will encourage them to learn about what others are thinking.

Encourage them to consider learning more by attending the session at Murrumbreena UCA with Rev Glen Loughrey or by borrowing the books from Heather and to be on the look out for further info from the UCA like the. 2 sided sheet next week etc.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 9: 35 - 10:8

### **The Workers Are Few**

<sup>35</sup> Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. <sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup> Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

### **Jesus Sends Out the Twelve**

<sup>10</sup> Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

<sup>2</sup> These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

<sup>5</sup>These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. <sup>6</sup>Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. <sup>7</sup>As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ <sup>8</sup>Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy,<sup>[a]</sup> drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

## Hymn TIS 143 Immortal invisible vs 1, 3, 5. <sup>4</sup>

1. Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
Almighty, victorious, your great name we praise.

3. You give life to all, Lord, to both great and small,  
in all life now living, the true life of all;  
we blossom and flourish like leaves on the tree,  
then wither: but ever unchanged you will be.

5. All praise we would render, reveal to our sight  
What hides you is only the splendour of light;  
and so let your glory, Almighty, impart,  
through Christ in the story, your Christ to the heart.

Walter Chalmers Smith 1824-1908 *alt.*

## Sermon & Prayer

In Matthew 9, Matthew reports Jesus as saying “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” So what are we to make of that, as Christians challenged to be open to Gentiles (that is, non-Jews) in the story of Pentecost?

Rev Dr Paul Goh, formerly of the Melbourne Korean Church in Malvern, and now a Synod Consultant in South Australia, answered this problem by writing a letter from ‘Matthew’s point of view. And then he uses it to challenge South Australian UCA congregations, and us, to consider whether we can change our minds about things the way that Jesus did.

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*A letter from Evangelist Matthew: Toward intercultural transformation, published in*

*New Times - October/November 2020. Published on Oct 12, 2020 By Rev Dr Paul Goh.*

Dear Uniting Churches in South Australia,

When I asked to write about One Church and Many Voices, in the first place, I thought Paul the Apostle would be a right person for this edition as he already wrote about the issues of unity in diversity from theological and ecclesiological perspectives in his letters. But as I pondered your situation in terms of your congregational make-up, I found that I have a say to your churches in that my congregation was also a (Jewish dominant) homogenous Christian community.

Let me first commend your vision and commitment to be a multicultural church with an affirmation that “Christians in Australia are called to bear witness to a unity of faith and life in Christ which transcends cultural and economic, national and racial boundaries” (*Basis of Union* Par. 2). In order to help you to further your aspiration, may I tell you the story of the Canaanite woman (Matt 15:21-28) again? I won’t repeat to tell the story since it is familiar to you. Rather I invite you to imagine you are walking on a street in the Gentile region near

Judea in the first century. There is a woman from that region following Jesus in the crowd. She rushes to come to Jesus, desperately saying something to him. Can you see her face? Can you hear what she says?

“Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon. Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”

Let me elaborate why this Canaanite woman’s voice was challenging to my 1<sup>st</sup> century congregation. With this voice I raised an uncomfortable question to my Jewish Christian community: “Should our church continue to struggle to keep our Jewish identity by limiting its ministry to Jewish people? Or, should we extend our ministry to people of other backgrounds living in our multicultural society of the Greco-Roman world?” And I know my congregation’s immediate answer to this question and takes a risk by putting it to Jesus’ lips:

“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. . . .”

Perhaps some of your congregations in SA would resonate this answer, saying, “Absolutely! Why bother us? There are a variety of CALD churches available for others— Chinese churches, Korean churches, African churches, etcetera, etcetera. . . .”

Yet, this story does not end here. Instead, I have the Canaanite woman talk back to Jesus. Regardless of his biased words, she is persistent in her request for him to extend his grace to her and her demon-possessed daughter, saying like this (in my paraphrasing). “Yes, Lord. Yet, my daughter and I also deserve to eat the food that comes NOT from your children’s table but from God’s table.”

Then, surprisingly enough, her words moved Jesus’ heart, and he embraced them in his ministry of reconciling love and compassion by healing her daughter immediately.

If you read my Gospel more carefully, you would learn that the story of the Canaanite woman is a turning point in Jesus’ ministry. That is, the rest of the chapter shows that Jesus’ ministry has changed its direction beyond his ethnic boundary toward the Gentile believers: In the following verses of the chapter, he heals many sick people who have followed him from the Gentile region and feeds four thousand men plus women and children who are non-Jews. What happened is a mutual transformation. On the one hand, the Canaanite woman could receive the grace of God; yet, on the other hand, Jesus could get a new vision for his ministry. Through the story, I tried to tell my Jewish homogeneous community that “Like Jesus, we are good guys, faithful Jews, a chosen people, descendants of King David. But, like Jesus our Lord, we are challenged to reconsider our identity and ministry from God’s point of view.”

Having heard the voice of Canaanite woman from the margin, my community was challenged. And I hope all your congregations in SA are challenged too.

If Jesus had been challenged and changed the direction of his ministry, my church, which was also challenged, should also change the direction of its ministry. How, then? You know, I ends my gospel with Jesus’ great commission to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. . . . I am with you always, to the end of the age” (28: 19-20). What I wanted to say with this and the story of the Canaanite woman is that our church, located in a multicultural neighbourhood, should be the first place to make “disciples of all nations” and be a ‘foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation’ (*Basis of Union* Par 3). Please note that I did not propose to my church any long-term and short-term strategies to make my church a multicultural community of faith. Instead, I did just one thing, that is, to let a Gentile woman who visited my community challenge my congregation by making her voice be heard.

Who is she? She is an extremely marginalised person, the stranger of the strangers to my Jewish Christian community: her ethnic profile doesn’t match that of the majority of my congregation; her gender draws people to look down on her; obviously she is not in a socially respected position; perhaps, she is a single parent; perhaps, as a Canaanite, she spoke to Jesus with a strong accent.

So my question today for you. Do you find a person with this kind of personal profile among your congregants? If so, how, then, can their challenging voices be heard? I am curious how your church has listened to their desperate cries and responded to them with Jesus' love and justice. I assume some of your congregations would be shaking their heads in answer to my question. Maybe their congregations are culturally, linguistically and socially homogeneous. Then, without the Canaanite woman, who can challenge their church? If you don't have the Canaanite woman in your congregation, who can play the Canaanite woman's role for your church? In response to these questions, I'm encouraged to hear that your Synod Mission Resourcing team has been undertaking a research project, *Mapping Intercultural Neighbourhoods in SA*, to assist your congregations to find where the Canaanite woman and her faith communities are worshiping in your neighbourhood. I hope and pray that you shall be challenged and transformed by listening to her stories of faith, suffering and hope as my community did.

In God's mission together,

Matthew =====

Let those with ears, let them hear. Amen.

## Hymn 474 Here in this place vs 1, 2,4.

1. Here in this place new light is streaming  
Now is the darkness vanished away,  
See, in this space, our fears and our dreamings  
Brought here to you in the light of this day.  
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken,  
Gather us in, the blind and the lame,  
call to us now, and we shall awaken,  
we shall arise at the sound of our name.

2. We are the young, our lives are a mystery;  
We are the old, who yearn for your face;  
We have been sung throughout all of history  
Called to be light to the whole human race.  
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty,  
Gather us in, the proud and the strong,  
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly,  
Give us the courage to enter the song.

4. Not in the dark of buildings confining,  
Not in some heaven light years away,  
But here in this space, the new light is shining,  
Now is the kingdom, now is the day.  
Gather us in, and hold us forever,  
Gather us in, and make us your own,  
Gather us in, all peoples together  
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.<sup>5</sup>

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

It's Refugee Week - June 18-24, 2023 – 2025 Theme – **Finding Freedom**. What does it mean to be free? To live without the fear of war, to have your basic human rights upheld, to live in equality and without the fear of persecution are just some of the examples of what freedom can entail. Every day millions of people across the world embark on dangerous journeys for the sole purpose of finding safety and freedom. From Australia to nations

across the globe, settling into a new environment after experiencing the perils of a refugee's journey can also provide the opportunity to live, to love and to dream. [Refugee Week 2023 Theme: Finding Freedom](#)  
June 20th is World Refugee Day. [World Refugee Day 2023 | UNHCR](#)

June 22nd is also the Uniting Church in Australia's birthday - Happy 46th Birthday to us!

## Offering to the Glory of God

L: God, shower of blessing,

Bless these gifts of love we bring as a token of our thankful hearts, life and our soul.

**May the blessings we share reach the needy,**

**May the care we give comfort the crying,**

**May the pain we bear heal the broken**

**with your abundant love and blessing. Amen.**<sup>6</sup>

## Prayers of the People Prepared by Rev Ron Townsend.

Today is Refugee Sunday – part of Refugee week.

We will share two slightly adapted prayers focused on Refugees; from The Catholic Order of the Brigidine Sisters website, and a prayer from 'Baptist World Aid Australia.' Then we will briefly pray for the needs of others – observing a time of silence after each petition.

Let us pray

Almighty and merciful God,

whose Son became a refugee

and had no place to call his own,

look with mercy on those who today

are fleeing from danger:

homeless, hungry, lost, dying, despairing.

Bless those who work to bring them relief.

Inspire generosity and compassion in the hearts of all of us.

Guide us and every nation of the world towards that day

when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and of peace;

Through Jesus Christ, our brother, and our Lord. Amen.

*From the Catholic Order of the Brigidine Sisters website, and adapted prayer from <http://nouwen-network.com/prayersforrefugees.html>*

We pray for Vulnerable Refugee and Asylum Seeker children.

Father,

countless of your precious children have been killed, taken away from parents, and made homeless over the last 5 years during the conflicts in Syria, the Ukraine, Russia, and other places.

We remember, with deep sorrow in our hearts these vulnerable ones; each one loved deeply by you.

Please carry them safely through these conflicts,

hold them close, in their places of refuge,

and wrap them in your tender mercy and compassion.



May their fathers, mothers, teachers, and community leaders,  
keep them safe and protect them from their severe loss, grief, pain and despair.

Through the presence of your Spirit, may all who care for such children, whatever their nationality or religious affiliation, show these children, that, even in the midst of their unimaginable struggles, your love will never ever leave them; and in God's time will bring them 'home.'

And, make us people who love and stand up for the most vulnerable.  
Transform our hearts so that we remember to pray and act, always seeking your wisdom and grace.

We pray in the name of the One who made himself vulnerable for our sake, Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

*Prayers for Syria, Baptist World Aid Australia*

*Brief silence*

Now we pray for the victims, the families and the friends of those involved in the horrendous road tragedy in NSW last Sunday.

*Silence*

At the behest of the Assembly of the UCA, we pray for sister congregations in the UCA: The Cecil Gribble Tongan Congregation in Dee Why, NSW and the Pennant Hill UCA in Sydney NSW, and, also, today we remember the UCA Congregation of Nightcliff in Darwin – home congregation for Ali Grootendorst and Sarah Baxter, and we give thanks for that congregation's support of Asylum Seekers.

*Silence*

Lord, we also remember the work of the JNC which meets today to deal with our current vacancy, and we ask for your blessing on their continuing work.

*Silence*

**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**

## Commissioning and Benediction

L: Jesus Christ is calling. The Spirit is leading. God's reign and realm are all about us.  
So let us give ourselves anew to be God's servants wherever we are.  
May the love and strength of God hold us firm.  
May we see with the clarity of Christ all that needs to be done.  
And may we walk each day in the power of the Holy Spirit.  
Go, blessed, now and forever. **Amen.** <sup>7</sup>

# Recessional hymn- TIS 531 Sent forth by God's blessing vs 1

1. Sent forth by God's blessing, our true faith confessing,  
The people of God from his table take leave,  
The supper is ended: may now be extended  
The fruits of his service in all who believe.  
The seed of his teaching, our hungry souls reaching,  
shall blossom in action for all humankind.  
His grace shall incite us, his love shall unite us  
To work for his kingdom, his purpose to find.<sup>8</sup>

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We pray together then as Jesus taught us:

**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.

<sup>1</sup> CCLI

<sup>1</sup> Figtree liturgy for June 18 2023, by Rev Jennie Gordon.

<sup>1</sup> Brent Chambers 1948– Words and music © B. Chambers by permission Scripture in Song

<sup>1</sup> CCLI

<sup>1</sup> Marty Haugen 1950- One License and CCLI

<sup>1</sup> Figtree liturgy for June 18 2023, by Rev Jennie Gordon.

<sup>1</sup>Words for Worship 2020

<sup>1</sup>CCLI

# 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 Wendy Snook

Music: Karen Roberts

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## NEWS & NOTICES