

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



25 JUNE 2023

PENTECOST 4



Time for Gathering Together

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.

Remember the first peoples of the Country on which you live, work, and worship this morning!

Hymn/Song: Together in Song (TIS) 210 O for a thousand tongues to sing.

Prayer for today

God of peace, you bring peace to a troubled world, you bring peace to troubled hearts, you bring peace to our past, you our present and to our future.

You are the great reconciler. Your love binds up the broken world. Your peace heals. Your joy fills our minds and hearts.

You never stop loving us. You never give up on us. You never fail or falter. We live in a world flooded with your light and love and for this we give thanks.

(Words for Worship 20221120)

Gracious God, forgive us when we do not spend enough time with you for the self-care of our soul. However, when we undermine the value of the other person and overlook those who are already neglected. When we cannot cry with the crying and do not have empathy, tears to shed for the oppressed.

When we fail to acknowledge the power of our own daily struggles.

When we let the sun set without raising a single word of thanks.

When we fail to see your beauty every morning.

When we fail to shepherd your sheep in the right direction for food, water, shelter and security that they need each day.

When we hold on to the undeserved success bestowed upon us.

When we cannot let go of the string of past hurting and harm done to us.

When we are not bold enough to invite the unchurched friends to come to your holy sanctuary.

When we are not aware enough to say, "Hello" when we meet you in your children on the street.

Thank you God, for not counting our sins against us, and for forgiving us through the forgiving prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Fig Tree Worship Resource, Gippsland Presbytery. 20221120)

Assurance of Forgiveness: (based on Col 1:19,20):

In Christ we see the image of the invisible God. All the fullness of God was pleased to dwell in him and through him all things – whether on earth or on heaven, are reconciled to God And for this we say – **Thanks be to God!**

STORY TELLING AND STORY LISTENING

From the Hebrew Scriptures – Jeremiah 20.7-13

O Lord, you have enticed me, and I was enticed; you have overpowered me, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long, everyone mocks me. ⁸ For whenever I speak, I must cry out; I must shout, “Violence and destruction!” For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. ⁹ If I say, “I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,” then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. ¹⁰ For I hear many whispering: “Terror is all around! Denounce him! Let us denounce him!” All my close friends are watching for me to stumble. “Perhaps he can be enticed and we can prevail against him and take our revenge on him.” ¹¹ But the Lord is with me like a terrifying warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble, and they will not prevail. They will be greatly shamed for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonour will never be forgotten. ¹² O Lord of hosts, you test the righteous; you see the heart and the mind; let me see your retribution upon them, for to you I have committed my cause. ¹³ Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers.

From the Gospels - Good News according to Matthew 10.24-39

²⁴ “A disciple is not above the teacher nor a slave above the master; ²⁵ it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

Whom to Fear

²⁶ “So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷ What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸ Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, fear the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹ So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³² “Everyone, therefore, who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

Not Peace, but a Sword

³⁴ “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, ³⁶ and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

³⁷ “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, ³⁸ and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

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Hymn/song: TIS 609 May the mind of Christ my Saviour

An Anniversary reflection on our 46-year journey as the UCA – From the Sermon – “What have you/we done with what we/you have been given?”

Walter Wangerin tells of accompanying his church’s youth choir on a singing tour and sharing the group’s talents in an unlikely, frightening place — the Colorado Women’s Penitentiary:

Holy, holy, holy. Who suckered us into this?

One by one, male and female, we were patted down while our arms drooped out like chicken wings: pits, waist, back and stomach, crotch and legs. I was the first man frisked. The first woman came forward shivering as though she'd swallowed a raw and living fish. "Ohhh! That was terrible!"

The auditorium was a great cement room in which all sound was as alive and clean as a guitar string... Cheryl, louder than she intended, called the choir to position and to practise in its little space.

But who would listen to us? And of those who did, what would they care?

Would they scorn us? Sneer in the face of our earnest offering?... Cheryl raised her arms before our multi-coloured choir, intending to practise a piece, to measure the sound of the place. Hollis hit a chord. And then stark wonder began...

It wasn't even time yet for the concert to begin. No introductions had been made, either by voice or music, and this was not our program. Yet the women were coming, and the practise piece drew a smattering of applause, and Cheryl was lost.

By fitful habit she led the choir into another piece for practise, "Soon, and very soon, we are going to meet the king." Oh, the choir swung hard and speedily against its beat and Timmy simply hid himself in the solo, and the women laughed at our abandon, and behold: the song itself, it took us over! The nerves left us, and we too began to laugh as we sang, as though there were some huge joke afoot, and we were grateful for the freedom in our throats, and we looked, for the first time, on one another, nodding, slapping another's back, singing!

And the women took to clapping, some of them dancing with their faces to the floor, their shoulders hunched, and they filled the place with their constant arrival, and sometime — no one knew when — the practise turned into an honest concert...

Song after song, the women stood up and beat their palms together. And they wept, sometimes. Timmy can do that to you.

And at one point the entire auditorium, choir and criminals together, joined hands and lifted those hands and rocked and sang, "Oh, How I Love Jesus." My God, how you break the bars! How you fling open the doors that imprison and divide us!

(Walter Wangerin, Jr., "The Body of Christ —Set Free," *Ragman and Other Cries of Faith* [San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984], pp. 146—149.)

RESPONDING

Hymn/Song: TIS 583 Take up your cross (during which the Offering is taken)

Prayers of the People (Mardie Townsend)

Let us pray:

Loving and merciful God, you care for all your people and all your children are precious in your sight: we pray for all the nations and peoples of the world. We pray for all whose lives are torn apart by disasters and wars. We think of the people of Ukraine and Sudan, where war is destroying lives and livelihoods and leaving a trail of destruction which must seem overwhelming. We think of the ongoing struggle between Israeli settlers and the Palestinian people whose lands and homes have been confiscated. We pray that, despite our differences, peace and goodwill may grow among nations. We think of those whose lives have been devastated by major accidents such as the Indian train crash and the Hunter Valley bus crash; those suffering the impacts of floods and fires; those worn down by disease and famine. We pray for understanding, compassion and generosity to prevail so that all may know your love and grace.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving and merciful God, your love for all your people is steadfast and abundant: we pray for our community. We pray for our families, our neighbours and our friends, for all whom we meet in our daily lives; we pray for those struggling to make ends meet, the hungry, the homeless, those without work. We think of those with whom our relationships are strained, those who feel undervalued in our community, those who struggle to deal with their past, those who experience discrimination and disadvantage. We pray for a community that values and cares for all its members, that fosters reconciliation between first and second peoples and between individuals whose relationships are broken, so that all your people may live in dignity and hope.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving and merciful God, you are filled with compassion for your people, and, in our troubles, you hear our cries: we pray for all in need. We pray for all who are lonely or sad, for those in grief or despair, for the sick and the dying and for all who care for them. We pray for courage in our own troubles, and compassion and generosity that we may respond to the needs of others. In a moment of silence, we bring before you those known to us who are in need:

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving and merciful God, you offer your people redemption and fullness of life: we pray for your church. As we celebrate the birthday of the Uniting Church, we give thanks for those whose faith and vision underpinned our church's formation. We pray for the churches of Australia, for church leaders, teachers and theologians, for clergy and lay people. May the vision of the Uniting Church's founding leaders guide us towards increasing unity among all Christians, that together we may proclaim your gospel of love.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

And now let us join in the prayer Jesus taught us:

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 and 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

Renewal of our commitment to God's giftedness and our calling – The Covenant

Sisters and brothers in Christ, let us again accept our place within this covenant which God has made with us and with all who are called to be Christ's disciples.

This means that, by the help of the Holy Spirit, we accept God's purpose for us, and the call to love and serve God in all our life and work. Christ has many services to be done:

some are easy, others are difficult; some bring honour, others bring reproach;

some are suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests, others are contrary to both; in some we may please Christ and please ourselves; in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. Yet the power to do all these things is given to us in Christ, who strengthens us.

Therefore let us make this covenant of God our own. Let us give ourselves to God, trusting in God's promises and relying on God's grace.

Eternal God, in your faithful and enduring love you call us to share in your gracious covenant in Jesus Christ. In obedience we hear and accept your commands; in love we seek to do your perfect will; with joy we offer ourselves anew to you.

We are no longer our own but yours.

I am no longer my own but yours. Your will, not mine, be done in all things, wherever you may place me, in all that I do and in all that I may endure; when there is work for me and when there is none; when I am troubled and when I am at peace.

Your will be done when I am valued and when I am disregarded; when I find fulfilment and when it is lacking; when I have all things, and when I have nothing. I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you, as and where you choose.

Glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. May it be so for-ever. Let this covenant now made on earth be fulfilled in heaven. Amen.

Hymn: TiS 411 Filled with the Spirit's power

The Blessing: We remember who we are, and we receive the promise of God's presence with us whatever we do and wherever we go.

(TIS 779)

May the feet of God walk with you, and God's hand hold you tight.

May the eye of God rest on you, and God's ear hear your cry.

May the smile of God be for you, and God's breath give you life.

May the Child of God grow in you, and God's love bring you home.

(Words © A. W. Podlich)

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCERNMENT IN THE WEEK TO COME

Extracts from the ULURU Statement from the Heart

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.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

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

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 Tony Floyd / Rev Sue Stott

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