

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



10 SEPTEMBER 2023

PENTECOST 15



WORSHIP AT HOME

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

Set aside 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. We join with them all.

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.

Focussing ...

From the splash of the stone the ripples move out, wider and wider until they touch the edges: all the edges, and some bounce back. Memories entered and trusted can ripple through our lives, to the edges and sometimes back, and in the ebb and flow memory nurtures hope, becomes living water – gifts of a loving and bountiful God. Thank you God!

Acknowledgement of Country: We come to meet this morning from all manner of places, and on the Country of diverse Clans and Nations of First Peoples', and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging, and commit ourselves afresh to the journey of justice and reconciliation.

Focussing on Worship

The peace of Christ is with us all! And also with me/us!

We are those who are offered life in all its fullness.

Life to be shared in justice, freedom and peace.

In thanksgiving we are gathered. In a gathering which is for all.

Hymn/Song: Together in Song (TIS) 414 There's a spirit in the air

Our prayers of Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession, and Assurance of Forgiveness.

We praise you Spirit of God for the gift of life. We praise and thank you that when you breath the mystery of your life into our midst, you enlarge our dreams, you enhance our love for each other and the world. When we listen your voice comes as music to our souls and cuts through our doubts and fears, lighting in us a fiery passion to be your brave people. So, come holy Spirit, come!

God of colourful life, we often appear rather pale in our living and relating, washed out by our hesitations and seeking after safety on your prophetic way. We often stand paralysed by doubt and uncertainty: **come, Holy Spirit, visit us with your grace and bring us back into life.**

We also own that sometimes we try to hold your lithe Spirit, capturing you in our neat rules and ordered lives, or believing that we can keep you in a company of our choosing: **come, Holy Spirit, visit us with your grace and bring us back into life.**

If we defend ourselves against the challenge of your vivid life, Holy Spirit, raising barriers to your call so that we can stay comfortable and safe in our place: **come, Holy Spirit, visit us with your grace and bring us back into life.**

Listen: Wait in wonder for the gifts of the Spirit, gifts of healing and comfort, gifts of forgiveness and love. Wait in wonder and faith for the Holy Spirit has indeed come to all who believe. We are forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

A TIME FOR STORYTELLING AND LISTENING

Readings from the Bible: (Read by Marg Davis)

“Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet, a light to our path.”

Exodus 12.1-14 - The First Passover Instituted: 12 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 2 “This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. 3 Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. 4 If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6 You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. 7 They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. 8 They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 9 Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. 10 You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn with fire. 11 This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand, and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the Passover of the Lord. 12 I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from human to animal, and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. 13 The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

14 “This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

and Matthew 18.15-20 - Reproving Another Who Sins: 15 “If your brother or sister sins against you,^[a] go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. 16 But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector. 18 Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.)

Hymn/Song: TiS 699 A new commandment, I give unto you

Reflection – something to think about ... Listen for the Word of God in the reading

Being ‘like Christ’ means that out of the love which has been received grows a deep sense of commitment to the ‘outsider’- one who has wandered off or been pushed out; indeed to everyone in the community.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT ? Because if we, who have knowledge and experience of the love of God for the whole creation, keep quiet about it ... then others will not know freedom; they will remain blind to possibility, deaf to hope, crippled by despair - “This IS how things are!” NO ?

It is sometimes flippantly said, “I don’t get angry, I get even!” But the one is worse than the other. Anger need not always be wrong, but vengeance is always and in all circumstances

forbidden to believers. Those who practise it betray the God who created them. Take a look - it is impossible not to - at the way in which vengeance is consuming the USA and especially its leaders since "9/11" as Americans refer to the events of a year ago. Instead of vengeance, the Apostle says, there is to be a confrontation with love, not violence; with friendship, not hostility.

This must be as true in our personal relationships as in our community and national behaviour, our religion and in our politics. With our friends and our bureaucrats and our church leaders; with our mates and our politicians, our religious soul-mates and those whose way of faith differs from ours. We must walk the way of inclusion, not isolation or annihilation.

Listen to Jesus as Matthew tells it: "*Honestly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you set free on earth shall be set free in heaven!*"

So Jesus gives us a message of civility, charity and solidarity for church life and his promise is that it doesn't take the Moral Majority or some religious equivalent of weapons of mass destruction to bully our way into the Kingdom. In fact, the presence of God in Jesus is there even when there are only two or three of us together working in love to overcome all evil with all good.

As we live our lives together in worship, learning and service, there are many opportunities to celebrate and to remember who and whose we are; to listen to the stories of our ancestors, our neighbours and ourselves. To let the **compost** of the biblical witness nourish us and bring into being what was not, and what could never have been imagined. To allow those stories to ferment in our imagination and to become there the Word of God to us, leading us out of our exile and into that promise towards which God is working and in which we are committed to share as members of the Uniting Church in Australia.

The simple signs of water - poured over - refreshing and giving life; and bread and wine - broken and poured out - bringing wholeness and strength are God's gifts for that journey. God's hospitality - sign for the places where we too bring either greater bondage or words of freedom and of life.

THANK YOU GOD ... FOR TRUSTING US SO MUCH!

Hymn/Song: TIS 668 Touch the earth lightly

Notices

Prayers of the People: (prepared by David Northwood)

Including the lands and peoples of Ghana and Nigeria

"As we prepare for our prayers for others, we light this candle to remember all those who are part of our church community but who are not at worship with us today." *Light the candle*

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 next month.

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.

"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 and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born from, remain attached to, and must one day return to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

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

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.

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

*instead of anger, revenge or blame,
they offer in their open hand 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

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

We also recognise that men and women of good faith, integrity and honour will have different views with respect to the voice to Parliament and we pray for the gift of listening with openness and humility to these views. Holding divergent views is a part of our democratic process.

We also ask for help to recognise that all our piety and all our wit and all our logical arguments and all our sophistry are unlikely to change the opinion of others. That's just the way it is.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer (please pray the version you are most familiar with).

Hymn/Song: TIS 691 Faith will not grow from words alone

The Blessing/Berkat:

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

All respond by singing a blessing to one another: (TIS 779)

May the feet of God walk with you, and his hand hold you tight.
May the eye of God rest on you, and his ear hear your cry.
May the smile of God be for you, and his breath give you life.
May the Child of God grow in you, and his love bring you home.

We put out our candle remembering that Christ goes with us and lights our way in the world.

(Revd Dr Tony Floyd)

Postlude

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

Music and Words reproduced with permission under CCLI licenses

Presider: Revd Dr Tony Floyd

Music: Karen Roberts

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