

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



17 SEPTEMBER 2023

PENTECOST 16



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.

Joining the scattered community

Here we begin another week, weaving together the fabric of our lives, in all their different textures and colours, their changing forms and flows.

Here we mark the things that have gone before and hope for newness to come.

Here we celebrate each other's place as one thread in the weaving and cherish the moments when the fabric of our lives become whole.

Hymn/Song: Together in Song (TIS) 667 How shall I sing to God?

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

We praise and thank you for your vivid life which you breathe into us. That life colours our horizons with the rays of your new ideas, your hopes and purposes as we meet this day. You make yourself known to us in warmed hearts and risen hopes and so we wait on you in humble faith.

We love to dwell on your kindness to us, God, on the gentle Shepherd, Christ. When you come to us in indignation, in fiery determination and confront or complacency, we confess that we are tempted to turn away and pretend we have not noticed. ... Forgive us, God. Stand before us in light and fire to warm and renew our lives.

If we tend to look on those who disturb our peace as troublemakers, do-gooders, or as people who are being too political, hold our minds open to look at them with wisdom in case they are the bearers of your word. If we refuse to engage with the stirring of uneasiness the challenge to what we know: Forgive us, God. Stand before us in light and fire to warm and renew our lives.

When our lives and minds are reduced to small issues, when we become preoccupied with insignificant things and lose your perspective in our feverish little causes: Forgive us, God. Stand before us in light and fire to warm and renew our lives. Confront us with the truth through your Holy Spirit.

Even the Christ is challenged by the task before us. Take heart and believe that God knows or every struggle and still brings us grace. We are forgiven. Thanks be to God

A TIME FOR STORYTELLING AND LISTENING

Readings from the Bible: (Read by Robyn Mulder)

Exodus 14.19-31: ¹⁹ The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. ²⁰ It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. ²³ The Egyptians pursued and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. ²⁴ At the morning watch the Lord, in the pillar of fire and cloud, looked down on the Egyptian army and threw the Egyptian army into a panic. ²⁵ He clogged^[a] their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt."

The Pursuers Drowned ²⁶ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." ²⁷ So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. ²⁸ The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. ²⁹ But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

³⁰ Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

Matthew 18.21-35 – Forgiveness ²¹ Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant ²³ "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him, ²⁵ and, as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.

²⁸ But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹ When his

fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place.

³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

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Hymn/song: TiS 629 When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

Prayer and then preaching - Revd Dr Tony Floyd

This gospel reading continues teaching about forgiveness in the Church.

Firstly - this part of the story begins in verse 21 with Peter asking - "If another member of the church sins against me..." (delapan belas - dua puluh satu).

Second - Matthew shows the church as that place where we pioneer, witness to and live those God like characteristics that are needed by the world and its peoples. Relationships between people in the church are like a laboratory where others can see what sort of lives Jesus makes possible.

"I forgive you!" are probably the most difficult words to say with meaning to another human being. Why should we forgive anyone who deliberately hurts other human beings or us? Every day we are hurt by what people say and by their silence, by what they do and by what they fail to do.

Imagine if you can the worst that someone has ever done to you - picture yourself with open arms, welcoming them in forgiveness. Can you even imagine that?

Why should we forgive? Whenever we pray the Lord's prayer we pray - "Forgive us our sin as we forgive those who sin against us!" Often we happily seek after God's forgiveness and warmly commend it to others. But the second part of that same prayer is much, much more difficult.

All of this is even more difficult when we speak of hurt between groups of people - families, groups within congregations, racial and cultural groups, different religious groups. The group mind is even more ready for revenge and closed to the difficult and personal process of reconciliation. Yet in our personal journey as well as in the wider community here are those people who in their words and actions bear the suffering of others and yet are able to lead us into the place of peace which comes through forgiveness.

We call this kind of conduct grace or gift because it comes on us without condition. This kind of conduct comes for its own sake, out of the pure joy and love of doing it. Believers say this kind of life-giving forgiveness has its source in God who pours out life without calculation.

There is an ancient Jewish story that might help us understand the steps on the way to this kind of life:

An old Jewish grandmother used to take her grandchild on her lap and read to her from the Jewish holy book the Talmud - these words:

"If you have done others a little wrong, let it be in your eyes great. If you have done them much good, let it be in your eyes little. If someone has done you a little good, let it be in your eyes great, And if someone has done you a great wrong, let it be in your eyes little."

Then she would say to me: These are good words to live by. If you live by them the Lord God will not be angry with you when you go to be judged by him.

Matthew 18.21-22 – Forgiveness ²¹ Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

A TIME FOR RESPONDING

Hymn/Song: TIS 242 I danced in the morning

Prayers of the People: (prepared by Marg Davis)

Including the leaders and the people of Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay

Lighting the candle to remember those who are not worshipping with us today

Dear Lord we bring our prayers to you, for your world and your wider church. Let us pray

Creator God, help us to care for the treasures of the earth, so that its riches and beauty maybe preserved for future generations.

We pray for those who receive too little of the earth's resources and we ask that you guide world leaders to enable a greater fairness in the sharing of all that you provide.

God of all creation, we thank you for the diversity of our country and its people.

Help us to learn from the first Australians, who know, love and respect this continent.

We think of our indigenous brothers and sisters and pray with hopefulness that together we can build a more cohesive society, and really be as one - based on respect, understanding and compassion

Dear Lord we pray for all in positions of power and ask that you help in important decision making, so that those, who make rules, consider the repercussions of the choices they make.

As we come before you, we pray for the church worldwide and the many faith leaders.

Inspire all Christians to be true to the example given to us by **your son, Jesus Christ**. Help us all to show kindness and concern for each other.

We pray for all who are suffering- those experiencing physical or mental pain and those who are terminally ill. Surround them with your love, and support, and sustain all the people who provide care and assistance.

We pray for all who have recently died and for those who have lost loved ones.

We pray for each other and for ourselves and ask that you help us all to serve you faithfully in all that you entrust to us.

Never let us take the gift of life for granted and each day **help us to give thanks for our many blessings**.

These prayers we offer to you as we join together and say the prayer that you taught us:-

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

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

Hymn/song: TIS 690 Beauty for brokenness

The refrain is sung after the 2nd, 4th and 5th verses

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 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.

We put out the Christ light (candle) remembering
that Christ goes with us and meets us in the world.

Postlude

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

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Music: Peter Hurley

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NEWS & NOTICES