

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



15 OCTOBER 2023

PENTECOST 20



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.

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.

Focussing for Worship (from Psalm 148) - God the Creator and Provider

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honour and majesty,² wrapped in light as with a garment.

⁵ You set the earth on its foundations,⁶ You cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.

¹⁰ You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills,¹¹ giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst.¹² By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches.¹³ From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

Song: TIS 698 When the light of first creation

Our prayers - of Thanksgiving:

We celebrate spring's returning and the rejuvenation of the natural world. Let us be moved by this vast and gentle insistence that goodness shall return, that warmth and life shall succeed, and help us to understand with thankfulness our place in the world, this miracle. Let our grateful eyes see that as the bird builds its nest, bravely, with bits and pieces, to you grant us grace to build our faith and the spirit in which to live it. Through your goodness, it is our simple duty; the highest art; it is our natural and vital role within the miracle of spring and the creation which you give us.

God help us to find our confession. Help us to cross the boundary of our understanding. Lead us into the darkness that we may find what lies concealed; that we may confess it towards the light; that we may carry our truth in the centre of our heart; that we may carry it cross wisely

and bring harmony into our life and our world. That life and harmony which are your gifts as your forgiven and reconciled people.

(With thanks to Michael Leunig for the framework of these prayers)

TIME FOR STORYTELLING AND LISTENING

(Read by David Northwood)

Your Word, O God, is a lamp to our feet: **a light to our path**

First Testament: Exodus 32.1-14

³² When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron and said to him, *“Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”* ² Aaron said to them, *“Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me.”* ³ So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears and brought them to Aaron. ⁴ He took these from them, formed them in a mould, and cast an image of a calf, and they said, *“These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”* ⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it, and Aaron made a proclamation and said, *“Tomorrow shall be a festival to the LORD.”* ⁶ They rose early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being, and the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to revel.

⁷ The LORD said to Moses, *“Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; ⁸ they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’ ”* ⁹ The LORD said to Moses, *“I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. ¹⁰ Now let me alone so that my wrath may burn hot against them, and I may consume them, and of you I will make a great nation.”*

¹¹ But Moses implored the LORD his God and said, *“O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. ¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’ ”* ¹⁴ And the LORD changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

Gospel: Matthew 22.1-14 The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

²² Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ² *“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴ Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’”* ⁵ But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶ while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. ⁸ Then he said to his slaves, *“The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹ Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.”* ¹⁰ Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad, so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹ *“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, ¹² and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot,*

and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

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Song TiS 453 We limit not the truth of God

Something to think about – consider – and respond
to for our lives: (Two poems by the Revd Ken Rookes)

Golden and Bovine shaped

Where are the gods
who brought us out of Egypt;
where are the reassuring gods
who speak the words we anxiously crave?
Let us build an altar upon which our chosen
and carefully crafted god
can be enthroned in majesty.
And let us dance and sing
in frenzy and abandon
to the gods of gold and comfort;
the gods that promise
that our labour will be rewarded,
our bellies will be filled,
our borders protected,
our security guaranteed,
and that those less worthy will receive
only that to which they are entitled.
Golden and bovine shaped.
These, these are the gods we adore,
before whom we will make the sacrifice
of our planet and our peace,
our compassion and our conscience;
and the future of our children.
Let us build an altar.

(In Promptings and Provocations, page 163)

Reconciliation

Those who have been torn apart
with violence and cruelty
are not easily brought together again.
Some have tried.
The wolf and the lamb were encouraged
to put aside their differences;
they each claimed to be committed to the process,
but couldn't agree on a satisfactory form of words.
The leopard and the kid were persuaded
to lie down together for the cameras,
but haven't been seen in each other's company since.
The calf is still waiting for the lion to say "sorry."
The lion, for his part, can't see why he should apologise
for the misdeeds of his unenlightened forebears.
Speaking of bears, the cow and the bear

did come to an arrangement to share grazing rights,
but the cow has since fenced the paddock
and put a lock on the gate.
Reconciliation is a slippery thing.
It requires respect, trust, grace and commitment;
scarce commodities.
Without them, we might as well go home now.

(In Promptings and Provocations, page 23)

TIME FOR RESPONDING

Song TiS 288 Not the powerful, not the privileged

Prayers of the People –Including – the lands and peoples of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico (Prepared by Warwick Barry)

"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

Ever-present God,
you walk with us
through good times
and bad,
mountain top
and valley deep,
your footsteps our guide,
everlasting arms our support.

Ever-present God,
you are close to us
when life is smooth
or rough,
in wholeness
and brokenness,
your healing our hope,
your touch our desire.

Ever-present God,
bring comfort and peace
and the warmth
of your presence
and we shall fear no thing,
for you are with us,
always.

Lord God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,
on this day and in this place, with awe and gratitude,
we acknowledge your presence with us.

Remind us that you are with us always wherever we go, whoever we are with and whatever we do. We pray this morning for all people everywhere affected by natural disasters, civil conflicts or war. May the present crisis of violence across the Holy Land, between Palestinians and Israelis, come to a speedy end so that, with the help of other nations, dialogue can lead to peace and justice, stay the indiscriminate cost of violent retribution. We pray for the people of Ukraine & Russia that an end to the futility of war may come soon too.

GOD OF LOVE

We pray for the people who have experienced trauma and devastation in their lives. Bless everyone actively involved in helping all those affected as they try to recover from the heartbreaking devastation. Surround everyone affected by these disasters with kindness, comfort and hope for the future. We remember those who have lost their homes to fires in Spain, Greece, Hawaii, Australia and those still rebuilding their lives and homes from both fires and floods. We pray for the people of Afghanistan in the aftermath of a terrible earthquake and the grief and loss that lives on.

GOD OF LOVE

We continue to pray for all those who have been bereaved during the long years of war; for families trying to rebuild their lives and for the children still suffering from the effects of what happened to them, their families and their friends. Comfort, sustain and surround them with loving and healing friendships. We ask that much be given to those who have lost so much, and that You lighten the darkness of those who despair in Ukraine, the Holy Land, South Sudan, Armenia and Myanmar.

GOD OF LOVE

We pray for the church worldwide, infuse the leadership with sound judgement and inspire all Christians everywhere to be true to the example given to us by Jesus Christ. Where there are divisions, we ask that you sow the seeds of tolerance and understanding. We pray for our UCA Assembly, for the Vic/Tas Synod and our presbytery of Port Phillip East, for the moderator Rev Sharron Hollis and all who minister within the various levels of our church.

May the future of our congregation be filled with hope as we all strive to become more of who we aspire to be. Inspire us to acts of kindness and concern for each other and those who are vulnerable in the communities we live in.

GOD OF LOVE

We pray for all who are suffering, those in physical or mental pain, and those who are terminally ill. Surround them with your love and light and support and sustain all the people providing care for them. We pray for those who have been recently bereaved and for those who mourn; comfort them as they grieve. We pray particularly for those we have been asked to remember in our prayers today David Ward & friends, Alice Kaufmann and relatives and friends.

GOD OF LOVE

We pray for ourselves and for each other.

We acknowledge that you called the rich to travel towards poverty, the wise to embrace folly, The powerful to know their frailty; who gave to strangers a sense of homecoming in an alien land and to stargazers true light and vision as they bowed to earth.

We lay ourselves open to your signs to us
stir up within us a holy discontent over a world
which gives its gifts to those
who have plenty already
whose talents are obvious,
whose power is recognised.
and help us both to share our resources
with those who have little
and to receive with humility the gifts they bring to us;
and make us restless
till we journey forth to seek our rest in you
Finally, Gracious God, support us all the day long
until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes
and the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over
and our work is done

then Lord in your mercy grant us safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at last,
through Jesus Christ our Lord

AMEN

(Adapted from Meriel Wilson, Pilgrim UC & Faith & Worship)

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

We say together

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

Song TIS 609 May the mind of Christ my Saviour

The Blessing: ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4.2-7)

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.

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We put out the Christ light (candle) remembering that Christ goes with us and meets us in the world. **And we close the Bible and** remembering that Christ is the Living Word.

Revd Dr Tony Floyd – Pentecost 20 - 2023

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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