

# ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



02 JUNE 2024

PENTECOST



World Environment Day

# 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.*

## WE GATHER

### **GREETING:** Karen Roberts

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all

**And also with you**

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY:** Karen

From before recorded time, the First Peoples cared for this Land. We praise the Creator for the beauty of this land and honour those who have offered themselves in tending it. We acknowledge the Elders and communities who have told the sacred stories and nurtured faithfulness to the Creator. We ask God's blessing on those who continue to work for the healing and restoration of this land and her Communities.

### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:**

Welcome to worship at home. I truly felt bewildered in my preparations for today. So many things have filled my mind these last few weeks regarding today's service and our life as a congregation:

Here are just 4! The readings and theme for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Pentecost, that is, the Essence of Wellbeing centring on understanding the meaning of the Sabbath. Then the 27<sup>th</sup> May to 3<sup>rd</sup> June is National Reconciliation Week – is there anything more important in Australia than the question of reconciliation between First Peoples and Late Comers? But also, we have World Environment Day this Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> June. And finally, last Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> May, one of the truly great teachers and persons of faith of our church had a Thanksgiving Service, at Camberwell Uniting Church, namely The Rev Professor Norman Young. Norman died on May 19<sup>th</sup> – the day of Pentecost.

However, I really believe that the most pressing issue we face as a local community, Australia and the whole World is the environmental issue of Climate Change. So today I would like to invite you to take a journey with me on the subject of creation, including some of the thoughts and understandings from Norman Young's book on Creation: 'Creator, Creation and Faith.'

### **CALL TO WORSHIP:**

O Divine Voice, you sing and the universe comes into being;

**O Divine Breath, you breathe and all things spring to life;**

O Divine Word, you call and creation is sustained;

**O Divine Flesh, you are born among us, and the Creator is clothed in creation;**

O Divine Spirit, you contain all that has been formed;

**O Divine Life, you are the pulse of all that is;**

And so, in faith and expectation, in wonder and celebration we gather to remember this mystery - that:

**In you all things live and move and have being,**

**In all things, you live and move and express your Divine artistry;**

And so, we join with creation in the eternal song of worship and devotion.

**Amen.**

## HYMN TiS 100: All creatures of our God and King (v 1, 2, 4, 5 & 7)

### PRAYERS: ADORATION, CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

#### ADORATION

O God who gives birth to all that we see, all that we know, all that we dream,

**and all that is unseen, unknown and unimagined,**

We celebrate your life that holds and nurtures the universe,

**we celebrate your love which joins creation as one and unites all things with you;**

We give thanks for your life which is incarnated in Christ

**and which is revealed in every created being;**

We savour your presence which is limitless and welcoming,

**and your Spirit which fills every moment of time and every fragment of matter.**

#### CONFESSION

But even as we receive again your vision of life,

**we recognise that we have been blind to its universal heartbeat.**

Even as we remember the connectedness of all things,

**we acknowledge that we have divided and separated ourselves,**

**and forgotten our part in your creation.**

Even as we are energised by your breath within us

**we confess our destructiveness,**

**and repent of the harm we have done to ourselves and our world.**

For the sake of Jesus, the firstborn of all creation, who, in death, disarmed all that is evil, and, in resurrection, stripped death of power,

**We ask you to recreate us, to reconnect us, and to restore to us the vision of your life in creation, and the power to live it. Amen.**

*Silence is kept*

#### ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Those who are in Christ are a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ

*2 Corinthians 5: 17-18*

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us and all creation:

**Our sins are forgiven. Thanks be to God**

## HYMN TiS 175: Did you ever see a kookaburra..

### THE SERVICE OF THE WORD: Karen Roberts

Your Word, Oh Lord, is a lamp to our feet;

**A light to our path**

#### GENESIS 2:4-22

<sup>4</sup>These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, <sup>5</sup>when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; <sup>6</sup>but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— <sup>7</sup>then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

<sup>8</sup>And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. <sup>9</sup>Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. <sup>10</sup>A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. <sup>11</sup>The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; <sup>12</sup>and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. <sup>13</sup>The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. <sup>14</sup>The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. <sup>15</sup>The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

<sup>16</sup>And the LORD God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; <sup>17</sup>but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

<sup>18</sup>Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” <sup>19</sup>So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner.

<sup>21</sup>So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup>And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

#### ROMANS 8:18-26

<sup>18</sup>I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; <sup>20</sup>for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; <sup>23</sup>and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

<sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.

#### JOHN 1: 1-14

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

<sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. <sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

The gospel of the Lord

**Praise to you. Lord Jesus Christ**

## SERMON:

Today we celebrate World Environment Day – this Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June in the actual day.

Well, unfortunately as I am sure I have no need to tell you, the Creation has been, and is still being, corrupted and violated by us creatures! The Creator's heart must be broken!

And of course, Climate Change (CC) initiated by us humans, is at the heart of that violation of the created order! We have become enslaved to many things, at all levels of society, which have led to significant degradation of the environment. And unless we, as individuals and as a world community take decisive action, humanity and the environment of our terrestrial mother, Earth, is at huge risk. I might add, we are NOT putting the planet at risk – it will survive – we might not!

So, instead of cataloguing the causes of Climate Change, first, let me share with you the theme of this year's World Environment Day 2024 (WED): 'Journey to a Greener Future,' and one of the objectives of WED: ie, to address "land restoration, desertification and drought resilience.' There are reams of information about causes, effects and possible solutions to the problems created by Climate Change, available. Look no further than our own UCA Synod's Justice and International Mission Unit.

The problem of CC is daunting and fearful, and demands urgent action, however, there is a more powerful imperative, demanding action.

A personal story:

While visiting my Ophthalmologist, he shared, that I have developed cataracts and offered 'we'll give it a year and then see how things are going, but I am pretty sure you will benefit a lot from having the cataracts removed at that point.'

Following this declaration, I was not feeling brilliant about my eyes, OR my ears, OR my life in general - and now I had to pay for feeling rotten! AHHHH!

So, I walked across to the reception desk to pay, and then something remarkable happened, that metaphorically speaking, smacked me in the face.

I made my next appointment with the receptionist, then came the 'suffering' bit – the young lady said, 'that will be \$150 today sir, and you will get '\$x' back from Medicare.' I took out my Credit Card and tapped the machine to pay and started to put it away when the money machine 'asked me' to put in my pin.

Ahhhh! At this point, because I had not needed to use the pin for a while, I had forgotten my pin!!!! I knew the numbers, but I could not get the order right and panicked. I was stammering, 'I can pay, I can pay, I've got a Debit card!'

Then GRACE happened!

A gift – A complete surprise – unmerited favour – undeserved generosity - even mercy - happened!

A middle-aged man of Sri Lankan appearance suddenly appeared alongside me, gently pushed me to one side, presented his phone to the payment machine and instantly, paid... my... bill.

He remarked, 'It's OK mate, I got this!' I was stunned and said, 'No, you can't do that!' 'It's fine mate, just say one for me!' And disappeared out the door. I went to follow but the receptionist called me back to finalise the transaction and give me the receipt. I then ran outside but there was absolutely no sign of the man.

What happened in that encounter that day was an episode of KHANUN. KHANUN is the anglicized Hebrew word for GRACE.

In the Bible, the most KHANUN 'person' is God her/himself, who is UNCREATED and above all created things, including humanity.

But God consistently looks upon humans with favour, grace, khanun. God treasures us because God is the creator artist who made every one of us. This despite the story of the Bible revealing humans constantly messing up, corrupting creation and one another through violence and fear, deception and greed, power and status.

St Paul in Romans talks about the corruption of the wonderful gracious gift of creation, as being in 'bondage to decay.'

Paul wrote this over 2,000 year ago! He adds that the Creation, is still 'groaning in pain!' And it STILL is!

Our own, recently deceased, Prof Norman Young, wrote in his 1976 book 'Creator, Creation and Faith,' about the apparent complete inability of society to 'liberate humanity,' in the following terms:

*'...the obvious breakdown of existing social, political and economic systems and their incapacity to deal with the overwhelming problems of national and racial tension, spreading poverty and famine, and destruction of the environment that gives us life, allows for a re-assessment of what is really realistic.'*

I love that, what is REALLY REALISTIC! He, then writes that there is only one thing which is 'really realistic.'

'The revolution of Jesus' (a term he borrowed from Jurgen Moltmann.) 'The revolution of Jesus.'

'The revolution of Jesus' is the revolution of pure love expressed through Khanun - GRACE - the same Khanun or grace which gave birth to the original CREATION - including us!

This is how Norman describes the revolution of Jesus ....

*... '(it) began with the revolutionary proclamation of (the KHANUN,) the grace, of God to sinners, which continued in a life that steadfastly resisted the temptation of falling victim to the vicious circle of legalism, of violence and counter-violence, of guilt or retribution, which came to its climax in a death inevitably provoked by a radical rejection of the ultimacy of the worldly powers of religion and state, and which is seen, not as the end of hope but as its beginning through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.'*

This is the only 'really realistic' hope for CREATION and abundant life. St Paul asserts this is the hope by which we are saved - and not only the children of God but the whole created order.

Therein lies our Hope!

All things HAVE BEEN made new in Christ! Grace, upon grace, upon grace - through JC our Lord who completes the NEW CREATION through his own death and resurrection! But wait a bit! 'It's not like that now!' I hear you say! 'If that is true, how come the world environment and human life are still in a such a mess?!

Well, you are in good company in that assessment – Norman, himself, also suggests, our hope in this ‘Jesus revolution’ might, indeed, be seen as totally unrealistic!

But he proposes ‘two considerations which may enable us still to point to the perspective offered by the cross.’ (ie, the only really realistic option!)

First, he points to the personally costly faithful actions of significant world Christians and others and highlights 2 prominent characters of that time (mid 1970’s), namely, Helder Camara in South America and C.F. Beyers Naude in South Africa (during entrenched Apartheid in South Africa). Young says:

*‘(they) see the way of the cross as the way of obedience that holds out the only real hope of the future.’*

Secondly, Norman makes the point that in accepting the gift of new life, through the death and resurrection of Jesus - offering the only **REALLY REALISTIC WAY FORWARD**, does not release us from action. He says:

*‘Second, to follow this way must not be seen as an alternative to action, a do-nothing stand in which we remain aloof and call on others to do the suffering. It means finding ways of identifying in our situation with the poor and oppressed in theirs. In Australia, for example, it means standing against and refusing to profit from the counterparts in the institutions and forces that keep other people poor. It means facing and exposing the powers in our midst, showing up and denouncing the racial violence that has been with us ever since white people arrived, giving up the use of power as a means of self-aggrandisement, renouncing the right to gain and keep all we can for ourselves, thus releasing our resources and capacities for the wider benefit of humanity.’*

This is what the KHANUN-GRACE of God implants in the disciple. The faith to live the way of gracious love, despite our inevitable suffering, with joy and hope, both in our lives and in the life of the world. And where our life and the life of the world are not ‘in tune’ with the NEW CREATION in Christ, then as Christ’s disciples, we are empowered, by faith, to challenge and question and demand and work for change which reflects that new creation in Christ.

All praise be to the One who has made all things new. The New Creation in Christ.

Amen

## STATEMENT OF FAITH:

Let us proclaim together our conviction of, and commitment to, God's purpose in creation: Together...

**We believe that God gave birth to the universe and all that is in it, and we proclaim that God's life and love is beyond and within it all.**

**We believe that, in Jesus, God was revealed in human flesh, and we proclaim that all is recreated through Christ's saving work.**

**We believe that God's Spirit energises the created order, and we proclaim that all things are one, and everything lives in God.**

**We also believe that we are called as ambassadors to proclaim and live the New Creation, until God recreates heaven on earth, and calls us home.**

**Amen.**

## SONG: Our view of the stars

1. Our view of the stars fosters wonder, through grandeur:  
the sense of a cosmos within God's embrace;  
from infinite chaos we've grown on this planet  
to learn, live and care, an inquisitive race.
2. We thrive as God nurtures our fragile existence,  
our life is related to all life on earth,  
and each generation must deepen in knowledge,  
yet guard against arrogance in our own worth.
3. God give us compassion to live with our neighbours,  
to value each species, conserve, and renew;  
to challenge those actions that lead to destruction,  
to cherish and never take more than our due.
4. And these are the gifts we must share with our children,  
compassionate love and a God-given grace,  
this love with no limits pervades all creation  
from oceans and forests to infinite space.

*Words: Andrew Pratt, 14-6-21 © 2021 Stainer & Bell Ltd.*

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: Mardie Townsend

"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.*

Let us pray.

Let us open ourselves to the grace of God,  
to the brokenness of our world,  
and to the call to be agents of healing and recreation.

Where human greed has stripped the world of beauty and life, and robbed people of dignity and subsistence,

We pray, O God, for a new vision of abundance, and a new commitment to nurture the world that feeds us and share with those who do not have.

We think especially of the homeless, the stateless, the helpless and the hopeless of our community, our nation and the world.

Where human hatred has severed relationships, and broken the connection that unites creation,

We pray, O God, for love to be renewed, and compassion to draw us back into union.

We think especially of those living in war-torn countries and those experiencing domestic violence.

Where human loneliness, weakness, sickness and grief, and the suffering of our planet and its inhabitants hide the signs of your life,

We pray, O God, for healing, comfort and strength and for the courage to keep hoping in the renewed creation to come.

We think especially of the people of Papua New Guinea, as they desperately try to recover the bodies of those buried by the huge landslide.

O God, restore our faith,  
revive our hope,  
rekindle our love,



And hear our prayer;  
For we offer it in Christ's name. **Amen.**

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

## SENDING OUT

**HYMN TIS 668: Touch the Earth Lightly**

### DISMISSAL:

In this moment and this meal, we have remembered  
That the whole creation is held in the hand of God  
**and that the whole creation is filled with the life of God;**  
That the whole creation has been restored by the work of God  
**and that the whole creation is flooded with the Spirit of God;**  
That the whole creation will be renewed according to the promise of God  
**and that the whole creation reflects the glory of God from eternity to eternity.**

So now we go from this place back into the world,  
**to proclaim the saving message of God,  
in word and action, in challenge and compassion, to all creation.**

### BENEDICTION:

And we go in the confidence that comes from knowing that.....  
**Christ's limitless grace,  
God's infinite love,  
and the Holy Spirit's relentless companionship,  
always encompass us,  
and are always within us.  
Amen.**

## WORD OF MISSION: Karen

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen**

*The Call to Worship, Prayers of adoration, confession and forgiveness; the PoP; the great prayer of Thanksgiving; the dismissal and Benediction (c) adapted from 'A Liturgy of Creation and Communion,' John van de Laar © Sacredise 2007. [www.sacredise.com](http://www.sacredise.com)*

## 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 Ron Townsend

Music: Peter Hurley

Church Office

Tuesdays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Thursdays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Fridays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Phone: 0411 958 127

[office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au](mailto:office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au)

Website: [www.ormondunitingchurch.org](http://www.ormondunitingchurch.org)

## NEWS & NOTICES