

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



15 SEPTEMBER 2024

PENTECOST 17

WEEK OF ACTION

MULTIFAITH WEEK OF CLIMATE ACTION

From the 14th to the 24th of September people of all faiths around Australia will publicly call for a clear plan to get us out of this climate crisis and move boldly and rapidly away from coal and gas and towards a sustainable future.



SEASON OF CREATION THREE
CLIMATE CHANGE

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.

Go to your prepared place OR prepare a space in the house; a comfortable chair, a lit 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.

“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”

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Welcome – it is great to have you as part of this special community – our church family – and to give praise to God.

Now today is a bit different. Today we focus on LAMENT in our worship. And we do that because, while on the one hand we acknowledge the wonder and preciousness of Creation, on the other hand we acknowledge how we humans have abused and misused that wonderful gift which is our amazing planet Earth. In this Lament we are joining with millions, perhaps billions of others involved in communities of faith who are saying: 'Enough is enough, no more degradation of our beautiful home,' AND asking the world community to take up sustainable and life-giving ways of living on earth.

We need to urgently champion renewable energy – and stand up against the forces in our world that hang on to fossil fuels as our main source of energy.

CALL TO WORSHIP:

We enter worship:

- in the name of the Creator, the fountain of life,
- in the name of Christ, the pulse of life,
- and in the name of the Spirit, the breath of life.

Holy! Holy! Holy!

Earth is filled with God's presence.

Christ, we come into your presence today
to worship in this sanctuary called Earth,

A planet filled with your presence,
quivering in the forests,
vibrating in the land,
pulsating in the wilderness,
shimmering in the rivers.

God, reveal yourself to us in this place
and show us your face in all creation.

Holy! Holy! Holy!

Earth is filled with God's presence.

HYMN TIS 100: All creatures of our God and King (v 1, 2, 3, 4, & 7)

PRAYERS OF ADORATION / CONFESSION / ASSURANCE OF PARDON:

ADORATION

Let us pray

Hail to the Maker, the Ancient One,
Mother and Father of all that was, and is, and will be!
Today we join with birds and trees and animals,
with rocks and rivers and mountains and the whole creation
to offer you our worship and honour.
Come to us, God of Life! We invoke you!
Come to fill us with your creative power,
with the pulsing lifeblood of ages.
Make us alive with celebration and with rejoicing!

Hail to the Christ, the Compassionate One,
who was alive and was dead and now lives in the heart of all things!
In the midnight of sin, you heard the cries of your people.
For us and for our healing,
you embraced that darkness with its loneliness and despair;
you surrendered to the crack which rends the cosmos.
Come to us, Suffering One! We invoke you!
Renew our yearning for emptiness and for silence.

Hail to the Spirit Holy, messenger of God's Wisdom,
primal fire of creation and breath of life!
From the time of dreaming you made your home with holy souls,
making them friends of God and prophets.
You invite us to join with you in the circle dance of trinity,
to die and be reborn in the whirling wheel of God.
Come to us, Spirit of Life! We invoke you!
Renew your people in the passion of the ancients:
make of us mystics and poets and prophets,
that the earth may be rekindled in love.

Blessed be God—Maker, Christ, and Holy Spirit—

As in the beginning, so now, and for ever. Amen.

(from the Liturgy in the Forest © 2002 Garry Deverell)

CONFESSION

Human sin disfigures the whole creation,
which groans with eager longing for God's redemption.
We confess our sin in penitence and faith. (cf Romans 8.22,23)

We confess to you
our lack of care for the world you have given us.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

We confess to you
our selfishness in not sharing the earth's bounty fairly.
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

We confess to you
our failure to protect resources for others.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS
May the God of all mercies
cleanse you from your sins,
and restore you in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **AMEN**
'Season of Creation' website

SCRIPTURE: Heather

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

GENESIS 1:27 - 2:4a

²⁷So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

²⁹God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.

³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

²Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ³And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

⁴These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

MARK 8:27-38 Ron

²⁷Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" ²⁸And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." ²⁹He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." ³⁰And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

³¹Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

HYMN TiS 166: Sing a New Song

SERMON: 'For Food...'

A Question: What two coupled words, a preposition followed by a noun, occur twice in our reading from Genesis, and have huge theological significance?

You see, often some words in this story of Creation are used by folk to shape an exploitative theology – an unsustainable theology: that is, words and phrases like **'subdue it' and 'dominion over,'** In reference to the created order.

*fill the earth and **subdue it;** and have **dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."*

To that 'subduing' and 'having dominion over' God adds:

'every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit;' every beast of the earth, and every bird of the air, and everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant.

The writer of the Genesis story has God adding but ONE CONDITION to the 'subduing' and 'having dominion over' the created order and it is explained by those two words which I omitted from the previous reading of the text

ONE CONDITION ONLY!

Any thoughts on those two words are?

Take suggestions

Let me read those verses again with those two sustainability words in place.

*'every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit;' **[you shall have them for food.]** every beast of the earth, and every bird of the air, and everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant **[for food.]**' And it was so. ³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.*

- The two words? FOR FOOD!
- Yes, that is, 'have dominion over and subdue the eco systems to feed us what we NEED – that is, to sustain us with what we need – NOT what we may want - Not what we can pile up, hoard, keep, not that which accumulates power of creature over creature, Not to cause extinction of species because of our grasping for more – that is NOT GOOD in the eyes of and in the heart of God
- THAT is NOT the 'GOOD' God sees in the act of creation
- that is not sustainable
- the only GOOD way in God's eyes is for all his creatures to be given the food they need, the food of body, mind and soul they need. Anything more is sin – ie, contrary to God's way, God's intended GOOD for the Creation.

AND - What does Jesus teach his disciples to pray?

NOT 'Lord, give us bread in abundance!' NO – rather: 'give us TODAY our DAILY bread.'

The phrase 'For Food' in the creation stories is a limiting and focusing metaphor for how creation is meant to be sustainable! A gift from God to all God's creatures to be used, appreciated, wondered at, treasured, maintained, shared equitably and enjoyed by all – there's plenty here in the Creation for all!

'For food.'

Jesus calls all his disciples to take up their cross and walk the talk in the whole of life and not least in the ways of sustaining the Creation. He challenges his disciples to follow his way which will take him to a cross, to death... .. and astoundingly, to resurrection – that is, RECREATION, yes RE-CREATION, the Creation made new and whole through him alone – and he invites us along for the journey: The Challenge for us? No Cross - No Resurrection – no RE-CREATION

"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

I want to conclude with two stories of where this journey of RE-CREATION took two old men of faith. And the crosses they had to bear!

We saw a video clip in church (which, unfortunately, we can't share here with you) from last November of an interview with the Rev Alan Stuart, a 97 year old UCA Minister, who felt compelled to join a protest blockade of a coal ship leaving the largest coal exporting harbour in the world – Newcastle, NSW. In the interview he said:

'I never would have guessed that, at 97, I would be arrested on a small boat blockading the world's largest coal port for a climate protest. But last Sunday, [at Rising Tide's People's Blockade](#), that's what happened.

Along with more than 100 other people, I was arrested at the end of a 32-hour flotilla blockade of the Newcastle coal port, with hundreds more supporting us from the beach.

I did this for my grandchildren. I did this because I was inspired by my two granddaughters, [Jasmine](#) and [Alexa](#), who are working so hard to address the climate crisis we face. I have been so proud watching both girls try so hard to get their voices heard for so many years. They've signed petitions, written letters, organised rallies, visited politicians, and educated the community. Jasmine has studied hard and is now a renewable energy engineer, working to be part of the solution.

They have tried asking nicely, and their voices have continued to be ignored by our government. And then, in the past year, I have watched both my granddaughters get arrested for climate protests. It was hard to watch. I was scared for their safety and I wished they didn't have to do it.

But more than anything, the fact they were standing up for what they believed in deeply inspired me. So, I felt it was up to me to show them I am willing to do all I can to help protect their future and the future of other people. I have never done anything like this before. I have always been a law-abiding citizen, but I decided I needed to stand with my family and do what I can to help stop new coal.

As a Uniting Church minister, I have spent all my life caring for people. Taking this action was just another way of showing that love and care, not only for my loved ones, but also for people who are already being impacted by climate change and for future generations.

"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

The other old man is Dr Ken Elliot who is now 88yrs old.

He and his wife featured in the Foreign Correspondent episode on ABC TV a couple of weeks ago, entitled KIDNAPPED.

It was very compelling. A human example of true discipleship that is nothing short of unbelievable, remarkable, and scary. Real Cross carrying stuff!

After he graduated, in Perth, he and his wife determined that, 'Australia has plenty of Doctors, so we ought to go somewhere where they have a real shortage of Drs.' So, they did.

They went to the land locked West African country of Burkina Faso with a population of 23 million. It is surrounded by Mali, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Niger.

They quickly found and settled in the northern part of Burkina Faso in a town called Djibo.

They stayed there for 40 years. 40 years! Ken was the only Dr for thousands of kilometres. They quickly established a hospital and he performed 1,000 upon 1,000s of surgeries – particularly obstetrics and gynaecology. Not once did they accept any resources from Government. When asked how they got all the medical resources they needed, he replied that they prayed, and they came.

Without exception, the people of Burkina Faso who were interviewed about Ken, spoke glowingly of their treatments and how many owed their lives to him.

He and his wife would still be serving there I think, if they had not been kidnapped by 4 members of the Mali based Al-Qaeda terrorist group in 2016 and held for ransom. Ken's wife was released after 3 weeks, but Ken was held captive for 7 years. Yes, 7 years! During that time, he underwent extreme suffering and deprivation. But never lost faith.

In the interview he was asked, 'so, your God abandoned you for 7 years?' He smiled and took his wife's hand and said, 'Oh no, never, not once, there was never a time when I did not know that the Lord was right there with me!'

"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Let us pray

GROUP SHARING: Questions re: 'Taking Up Our Crosses' – you might like to have a go at answering these for yourself and if you like I am happy to have a chat with you on the ph about your ideas on them, if you would like to do that: My ph number is 0438 404 104 – Rev Ron Townsend

'What does it mean for me, as a disciple of Jesus, 'to take up my cross and follow him?'
AND

'What does it mean for me to 'take up my cross and follow Jesus, particularly in regard to Climate Change?'

HYMN TIS 583: Take up your cross

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH:

**We believe that God creates all things,
renews all things and celebrates all things.**

**We believe Earth is a sanctuary,
a sacred planet filled with God's presence,
a home for us to share with our kin.**

**We believe that God became flesh and blood,
became a piece of Earth,
a human being called Jesus Christ,
who lived and breathed and spoke among us,
suffered and died on a cross,
for all human beings and for all creation.
We believe that the risen Jesus
is the Christ at the core of creation,
reconciling all things to God,
renewing all creation and filling the cosmos.
We believe the Holy renews life in creation,
groans in empathy with a suffering creation
and waits with us for the rebirth of creation.
We believe that with Christ we will rise
and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: Prepared by Heather

"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:

God of the small breeze that whisks our hair around and sends us the smells of Spring, we pray for the wonderfully diverse flora of the earth – the tiny flowers no bigger than our small fingernail, right up to the tall mountain ash in our National Parks. We pray that people will have a growing understanding of the importance of each of your created plants.

God of the crashing waves and silent streams, we pray for the waters of the earth, and the creatures which call these waters home. We pray that we will have a concept of “fresh water available for all” on our minds when we use this precious resource – using wisely and carefully even when it isn’t a drought in our area. We pray for the creatures at risk in the water because of our rubbish, that wise people will find ways to deal with the build-up of rubbish in our waterways and that all people will have a care when disposing of their waste.

God of the red earth and golden sands, we pray for hearts that will wisely consider the use of ground resources – in particular, our use of coal and gas as a major export opportunity in Australia ensuring that although Australia may reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions, other countries emissions will rise. We pray for wisdom and clear minds for those in positions of power discerning the best way forward.

God of the intricate web of life, we pray for your created order including ourselves. Often we fail to feel your breeze, hear your silence, see your presence and so we are blind to the effect we are having on the web of life itself. Nudge us into your presence so that we again stand in awe of what you have created and are reminded of our responsibility to leave this world in a better place than when we were born.

Amen

Let us join together 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.
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 TiS 203: Fairest Lord Jesus

DISMISSAL:

Christ calls you to be his disciples,
to serve him with love and compassion
and to serve Earth by caring for creation.
Hold again the fragrant symbol in your hands
as you go forth to serve.

We will remember the forest!
We will groan with creation!
We will sing with the trees!

Will you care for creation?

We will care for creation!
We will nurture the forests!
We will celebrate life!

BENEDICTION:

May the Spirit of God,
who is above all and in all and through all, fill you:

- with the knowledge of God's presence permeating all the Earth
- and the abundance of Christ's all-sufficient love enlivening you.

WORD OF MISSION: Heather

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen

RECESSIONAL HYMN TiS 755: You shall go out with joy and be led forth in peace (x2)

*Most of these resources were compiled for this service by Rev. David Pitman
on behalf of the Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly Working
Group on Worship. Several items have been adapted for this particular
worship service*

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

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NEWS & NOTICES