

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



10 NOVEMBER 2024

PENTECOST 25



Sunday before Remembrance Day (11/11)

WORSHIP AT HOME

WE ARE GATHERED

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.

Focusing ... As we pause to contemplate the growth and dispersion of the Christian communities, we consider the stories which highlight the God who calls out and accompanies on journeys towards unseen and undreamt places and peoples. We hear of and are invited to name our own experiences of the generous grace and mercy given for the whole creation, the richness of life unearned and undeserved. In the quietness and stillness of this time, be grateful to the loving creator/parent, who faithfully travels with us through the storms of our lives, especially when we feel alone, confused and despair.

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, with the community gathered on Sunday, we celebrate 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 look forward in 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.

Invitation: Listen! God will be to you a restorer of life!

We come ready to be refreshed by the Good news of God's love.

This promise can be trusted: God will be to you a restorer of life!

We bring our deepest friendships and our broken relationships.

And God will be to you a restorer of life.

We bring our hopes and our dreams, our frustrations and our failures.

And with all that we are and all that we have.

God will be to us a restorer of life.

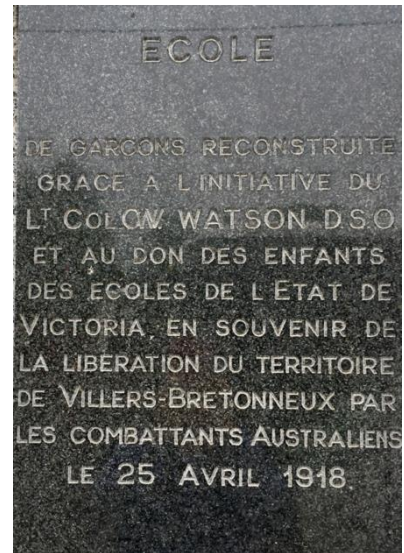
This promise can be trusted – this is a God to worship!

Hymn/Song – TiS 227 When morning gilds the sky

Remembrance Day ...

11/11/24 – “Lest we forget!”

A memorial stone at the primary school in Villers Bretonneux, in France, twice saved by Australian troops, and in special thanksgiving for the Primary School children of Victoria who raised the funds to rebuild the school. Every Anzac Day the children are taught this story, and have their own memorial times.



In our thanksgiving today we give thanks to God whose power sustains the world. On this Anniversary of the end of the “War to end all wars” in Europe, we also remember with thanksgiving all those around the world and across the centuries who lived and died in the service of freedom and justice. We also ask for God’s help and blessing that we may learn from the past and work to develop new ways to deal with internal and international differences and disputes and injustices.

Listen to the prophet Isaiah: Those who look to the Lord will win new strength, they will soar as on eagles’ wings; they will run and not feel faint, march on and not grow weary. (40.31)

Let us remember the loving-kindness of God and God’s presence in every time of need.

Let us remember the courage, devotion to duty, and the self-sacrifice of the women and men in our defence forces; the toil, endurance, and suffering of those who were not in uniform; the support of those who sent help from other countries and to whom we were able to send help.

Let us remember those who were wounded, who died far from home and their families, buried now in some corner of a foreign land or under the sea, and especially those we have known and loved whose place is forever in our hearts.

Let us remember those who were our enemies, whose homes and hearts are as bereft as ours, whose dead lie also in a tomb of everlasting remembrance.

Let us remember those who returned to home, family and nation; those whose lives still bear the scars of war; those whose minds have still not recovered; those who lost faith in God and hope for humanity.

Let us remember the hundreds of millions who still suffer war and all its deprivations, the women and children, the innocent and unsuspecting on every continent and place.

Let us remember still the continuing grace of God, whose love holds all people in life and to whom none is dead but all are alive forevermore.



Silence for 1 minute

‘They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old; age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.’

We will remember them.

Prayers – God of power and of love, bless all nations of this earth and especially this Commonwealth of ours, all our leaders and elected officials, grant that together we may fulfil our service for the welfare of all people and for your praise and glory.

Bless all members of our defence forces. Defend them in danger and give them courage to meet all occasions with discipline and loyalty. We are especially mindful at this time of

Australian personnel in East Timor, Bougainville and the Solomon Islands, may they continue to serve well the cause of justice and peace to the honour of your name.

Bless our young people. May they never see the flames of war or know the depths of cruelty to which men and women can sink.

Bless our friends and those who were our enemies, save us all from that kind of bitterness that takes away their humanity and ours. Grant that your love and forgiveness may reach out to heal lives and to mend relationships.

Bless all victims of war – declared and undeclared – those who are hungry and homeless, those who have lost their livelihood and security. Help us to pledge ourselves to comfort, support and encourage others, that all may live in a world where evil and poverty are done away and where human life reflects the peace and prosperity that are your promised end.

Bless all those whose skills and energies work for peace in Indonesia, East Timor, the Middle East, Northern Ireland, nations in Africa and trouble spots throughout the world. Grant that all those who bear your Son's name may be instruments of peace and justice in our homes, our nation and throughout the world.

Accept this day, loving God, our prayers of praise and thanksgiving in the name of Jesus Christ your son, our Lord. **Amen.**

With sorrow we confess that in our hearts we often keep alive the passions and pride that lead to bitterness and misunderstandings in our families, and between families and nations. We are not worthy of your love, nor of the sacrifice made by others on our behalf.

Have mercy on us, forgive us all that is past and grant us grace to renew our lives through Jesus Christ.

Almighty God, pardon and deliver us from all our sins, confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and keep us in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen!**

Then a response of praise ...

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise God all creatures here below
Praise God above you heavenly host
Praise Father, Son & Holy Ghost. Amen**

WE LISTEN for GOD'S WORD

Readings from the Biblical Witness – Robyn Mulder

Lord, your word is a lamp for our feet, a light for our path!

Ruth 3.1-5 - Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. ² Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. ³ Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do." ⁵ She said to her, "All that you say I will do."

and 4.13-17 The Genealogy of David

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. When they came together, the Lord made her conceive, and she bore a son. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin,^[a] and may his name be renowned in Israel! ¹⁵ He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him." ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom and became his nurse. ¹⁷ The women of the neighbourhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Mark 12.38-44 - Jesus Denounces the Scribes

³⁸ As he taught, he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces ³⁹ and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets! ⁴⁰ They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

The Widow’s Offering

⁴¹ He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. ⁴³ Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴ For all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

In this may we hear the Word of God – **thanks be to God**

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Song: TiS 122 What shall I do my God to love

Contemporary Word: Tony Floyd

The stories which we heard: one set in the period of Israel’s history about from over 3,000 years ago and the other from Jesus’ ministry about 1,970 years ago, were stories about risking. They are stories about stewardship. They are about the faithful discipleship of women.

The women in both stories had much in common. They were widows. They were women without status in the society of their day. They were women who were poor, they were women who had little but risked what they had as an act of faith. We saw a snapshot of each of their stories. They are stories about risks and a warning. They are stories that exemplify a quality known in Hebrew as **Hesed**; what John Wesley translated as loving-kindness.

Hesed is about loyal love, faithfulness, binding two parties together in a covenant (a two-sided commitment and relationship). Such *loyal love* has a ‘more-than enoughness’, a ‘only-everything-is-enough’ sense about it. **Hesed** is a word used first of all to describe God’s way of relating to humanity and creation, but also to describe those who are God-like in their response.

Hold that thought!

Ruth and Naomi are now two widows one native to the country in the story (Naomi), the other an outsider, a despised outsider (Ruth). She is not despised because of anything she has done. She is despised because of memories of long, long ago events. Memories only kept alive because some people need to hate or dislike someone or someplace else who are different from them.

Not a lot seems to have changed in over 30 centuries!

But notice what happens in that story - who it is that benefits and at risk to whom. It is Naomi who benefits. It is Ruth, the despised foreigner, who takes all the risks.

Boaz had much and risked nothing. Naomi had nothing and risked little.

Ruth risks everything. She risks being sexually used, abused and discarded. She risks rejection. She risks humiliation and shame. And when it is all over all the fuss, the child and the focus of the blessing which are received are Naomi’s.

In what is almost an aside in ending of the story, Ruth is spoken of as a greater blessing than seven sons. And there is the rub. In that comment is the most astonishing insight for those of us who are quite sure we know the mind of God and are certain we can predict

just how certain individuals or ethnic groups will act, or how they should be treated, assimilated, made to 'fit in' to 'belong'.

The most amazing blessing are those people - women and men - who take risks each day to provide for the life and well-being of others: sometimes family, but often strangers, foreigners, even detested foreigners.

Those two stories remind us that it is especially important to understand Jesus' teaching that his messianic reign is particularly for the poor.

Jesus in the Mark story does not romanticize the poor in general, or this widow in particular. Rather, he seems to indicate her self-abandonment in giving.

The widow, in her giving, turns the whole system of accumulation and acquisition on its head. As a victim, the one without a main means of support who might most readily be justified in keeping what she could for her own basic wellbeing, the widow gives all. In so doing, like Ruth the alien in our other story, the widow becomes a judgement on the cautious, self-centered cultures where most people live the majority of the time. In so doing the widow shows a way to a very different world. Jesus, being in his life and words a representative of that **other world**, praises her, she has truly become a generous giver, a trustee of life and all its goods as gifts of a generous God.

Prayers of the people – 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.

Lord God,
we thank You today for Your loving mercy.
Time and time again,
we have been unfaithful and undeserving,
and yet time and time again You have gone the extra mile.
When we have wandered off, You have sought us out,
when we have been in the pit, You have lifted us up,
when we have trusted in things that are fleeting,
You have been constant, watching and waiting,
longing for Your children to hear, and see, respond, and return.

You have sought us out through Your Son Jesus Christ,
living, and loving,
challenging and inspiring,
healing and leading.

He expressed a love that would not let us go,
once and for all.
A love that three days later rose again from the grave,
a love that is stronger than death,
and opens the doors to life –
life now and life forever.

Lord today we remember with gratitude
all those who give, so that others may have life especially soldiers, peace keepers, nurses and civilians.

We remember especially those who have expressed a selfless love,
laying down their life for a friend.

We remember with gratitude
those who are not content with the broken status quo of this world,
but rather stick their neck out to bring about peace,

and in doing so face the consequences
that Your prophets and Son have faced before them,
Lord, have mercy; give strength and resilience to those who care and serve at great cost.

We remember with gratitude,
that You keep coming after us,
again and again in the nature of Your constant loving mercy.
Always beckoning us back to You, and to Your ways,

We bring before You today our broken world,
a world at conflict and war.
We pray especially for those who are caught in the middle,
lives and livelihoods lost, or never to be the same again.
Futures stolen from young women and men,
hearts broken in those who grieve.

We bring before You today our unequal world,
a world divided between haves and have-nots
where the rich get richer, and the poor don't seem to matter.
We pray especially today for those who are displaced by war –
seeking out home, a safe refuge, a place to rest and have a future.

We pray today for our governments,
and the difficult decisions faced, where there are no easy answers.
We pray for wisdom, discernment, boldness, and action.
We pray for world leaders to hear and abide by Your word,
for whom power is not about self-serving, but serving the needs of others –
especially for the sake of the least, the last, the lost, and the lonely.

We pray for Your Church,
that we might not just speak of peace, but actively seek it,
among ourselves and in this world.
That we trust in You and Your ways,
and forever encourage others to do so to.
That we might not just pray for those most in need,
but put our time and talents, and our money at Your disposal,
as acts of worship and service to You and for our neighbour.

Touch our lives afresh with the good news of Jesus and your Spirit.
That Your Church may continue to worship, praise, and serve You
from the heart of Your people.
Lord in Your mercy hear our prayers, for we ask them in the name of Jesus, the Lord of Peace.

Amen.

(Adapted from The Church of Scotland Worship Resources)

The Lord's Prayer – please pray this in whatever version you are
most at home 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.

WE ARE SENT

Song: TiS 187 Let all creation dance

Blessing: God's own Heseid for the world.

Look at your feet, see the path and the direction:

God's own lovingkindness for the world.

Look at your heart, see the fire and the love:

God's own Heseid for the world.

Look at the cross, See God there in Jesus:

God's own lovingkindness for the world.

All around us is God's world, and God at work in it: in all your living and relating be God's
Heseid for that world.

And the blessing of God almighty: Father, Son & Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you
all. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: in the name of Christ!

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 Dr Tony Floyd

Music: Peter Hurley

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NEWS & NOTICES