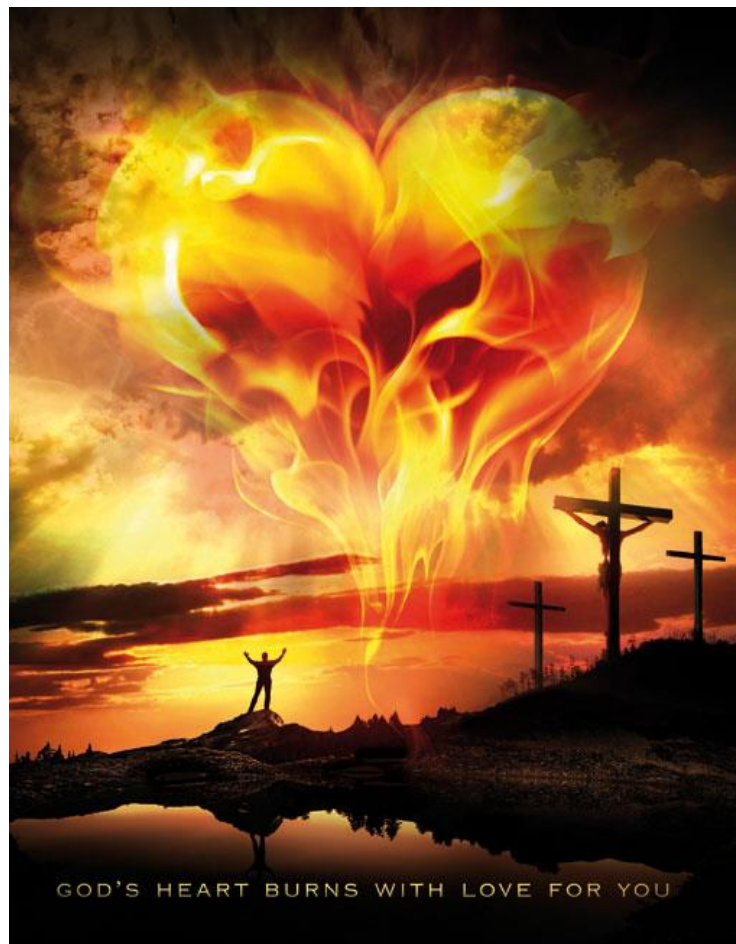


# ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



5 MAY 2024

EASTER 6



# 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.*

## GREETING:

Christ is risen!

**He is risen indeed!**

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:

Hi! Great to be sharing Worship with you. Ormond UCA is a lively and welcoming faith community. A community which is broader than just those who meet together on Sunday for Worship. This is a community which has stood the test of time and more importantly the tests of caring, loving and faithfulness. We find it such a privilege to belong to this community - connected! Thank you all!

This is the sixth Sunday and the second last Sunday of the Easter Season before the day of Pentecost.

Week by week since Easter Day on 31<sup>st</sup> March we have unpacked what Easter means for the church and for the disciples of Jesus. I am not going to re-visit that progression today, but I am going to invite you at home to think of a word or short sentence that describes what Easter means for you – particularly what it has meant for you this year during the Easter Season.

As we begin our worship, take some time to think about what Easter means for you and when we come to the proclamation of the Word before you start to read the sermon record your word or sentence on what Easter means for you.

## CALL TO WORSHIP:

We gather to worship the One  
who crafted creation out of chaos,  
**our cries of joy join the anthems of the universe.**

We gather to lift our praise  
to the God who gives us voice,  
**we bring the songs which have echoed  
in our hearts all week long.**

We gather as the children of God,  
our joy unbroken in God's love.  
**young and old, tone deaf and perfect-pitched  
lift the new, new songs of faith.**

(c) Thom M. Shuman

## HYMN TiS 164: The great Love...

1. The Great love of God  
is revealed in the Son,  
who came to this earth

to redeem every one.

2. That love, like a stream  
flowing clear to the sea,  
makes clean every heart  
that from sin would be free.
3. It binds the whole world,  
every barrier it breaks,  
the hills it lays low,  
and the mountains it shakes.
4. It's yours, it is ours,  
how lavishly giv'n!  
the pearl of great price,  
and the treasure of heav'n.

*Daniel Thambyrajah Niles 1908-70*

## PRAYERS: ADORATION, CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

Dear Lord,  
You raise your hand  
and gently begin  
the concerto of creation:  
birds carry the melody  
while stars keep the beat;  
mountains dance in merriment  
and little children clap  
their hands with joy.  
Love's Composer,  
our new songs are lifted to you.

The old, old song  
is made new in our hearts:  
Christ is Risen!  
Sing Alleluia!  
You invite us to sing to a world  
deafened by despair  
and haunted by the tunes of fear.  
Lord of the Dance,  
our new songs are lifted to you.

Believing we cannot  
carry a tune,  
we hesitate to join in  
the chorus of praise  
sung by all creation.  
So, you softly and gently  
hum the melody in our hearts  
until they burst with you,  
raising a rousing chorus  
of Amazing Grace.  
Music-making Spirit,  
our new songs are lifted to you.

Every song, old and new, is offered to you,  
God in Community, Holy in One,  
Amen

### **Call to Reconciliation**

Beautiful music, every note perfect, joining together in graceful harmony - this is what we imagine our lives to be. Yet our love is flat, our anger often sharp. Let us confess how we struggle to keep the measured beat of God's life-giving melody in our lives, even as we pray together saying,

#### UNISON PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS

**Joy-giving God, we know who we are: people who hear the harmony of your grace and love in our souls, but sing off-key so often. We want to learn new songs, but those haunting tunes of our past mistakes run through our heads. We long to make a joyful noise to you, but the hurts inflicted on us, and the pain we have caused others, silence our voices.**

**Sing to us, Conductor of Grace: sing of your forgiveness, your hope, your love for us. Strike a chord of humility in our hearts so our eyes can see all you have done for us; and in seeing, we might believe how much you love us; and in believing, we would echo that new song of hope and life composed through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.**

*Silence is kept*

#### ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Listen to the melody of the good news: Christ is risen, bringing joy into the world. The One who was dead now lives, and wraps us in the delight of life forever with our God.

**Now, our dirges have turned to joy;  
our requiem has been rearranged as a hymn of hope;  
our laments are lost in a cantata of praise.**  
Christ is risen! **Christ is risen indeed! Amen.**

(c) Thom M. Shuman

## THE SERVICE OF THE WORD: Read by Gary Richter

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

PSALM 98 (to be read responsively)

<sup>1</sup>O sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvellous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory.

<sup>2</sup>**The LORD has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.**

<sup>3</sup>He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

<sup>4</sup>**Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises.**

<sup>5</sup>Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody.

<sup>6</sup>**With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD.**

<sup>7</sup>Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it.

<sup>8</sup>**Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy**

<sup>9</sup>at the presence of the LORD, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

1 JOHN 5:1-6

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. <sup>2</sup>By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. <sup>3</sup>For the love of God is this, that we obey his

commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, <sup>4</sup>for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? <sup>6</sup>This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

JOHN 15:9-17

<sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup>"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup>I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

The gospel of the Lord

**Praise to you. Lord Jesus Christ**

## HYMN TIS 641: This is my will

1. 'This is my will, my one command,  
that love should dwell among you all.  
This is my will, that you should love  
as I have shown that I love you.
2. No greater love can be than this:  
to choose to die to save one's friends.  
You are my friends if you obey  
what I command that you should do.
3. I call you now no longer slaves;  
no slave knows all his master does.  
I call you friends, for all I hear  
my Father say you hear from me.
4. You chose not me, but I chose you,  
that you should go and bear much fruit.  
I chose you out that you in me  
should bear much fruit that will abide.
5. All that you ask my Father dear  
for my name's sake you shall receive.  
This is my will, my one command,  
that love should dwell in each, in all.'

James Quinn 1919-

## SERMON: Oh, NOT 'LOVE' AGAIN! *(need hand held roving mic.)*

Let me share my contribution with you about the meaning of Easter. But let me stress, my answer is no more important or correct than yours. We are sharing our understanding because the reading from the Gospel today lays emphasis for all disciples on what lies at the heart of the Easter event. As a disciple of Jesus, I am (and I quote from the reading), 'no longer a servant or slave but a friend' of Jesus.

Thus, for me, this Easter, as I have led worship and participated in services, sang hymns, prayed, taken communion, shared with others etc, I have become even more strongly convicted on the central meaning of Easter: 'I am loved now and evermore!'

Then I hear you saying: 'Oh the preacher is on about love again!' And I reply, 'Yes I am!' And I feel like saying, 'Oh, I'm sorry,' but I am not going to, because the God, the one God, who created the Universe and all that is in and beyond it, who created life, you, me, this wonderful home of Mother Earth, IS PURE LOVE! How can we not be LOVERS!

So, if Easter is about anything at all – it is supremely about that love – God's extraordinary love for every single part of his creation, not least, his human children – every last one of them! Every last one of us.

But lest we get too maudlin and oversentimental about this word love, which has, over the centuries, had many popular overuses and misuses, we should note that the Greek word used in our gospel passage today is AGAPE which has nothing, or very little, to do with loving feelings, nor is it a synonym for "like!" AGAPE love is love for another and to act for another, even at cost to oneself. (repeat)

One of my much-loved (there's that word again) authors is Charles Dickens. It is a long time since I read any of his books, but one of them remains a strong favourite of mine: "A Tale of Two Cities." And for a good reason! Let me explain.

'A Tale of Two Cities' is a very complicated love story set in London and Paris during the French Revolution in the 1780 and 90s. Charles Evremonde teaches French in London but has a secret. He is a member of the French aristocracy and fled Paris for London to save his life at the beginning of the French Revolution. And so, for his own safety he changed his name to Charles Darnay. Eventually he meets Lucie Manette, daughter of Dr Manette, and they 'fall in love' and marry. Sydney Carton is a friend of the family, a London barrister, and a derelict reprobate and drunk! But he, too loves Lucie Manette, though he never declares that love for her. He feels unworthy of her love. Lucie doesn't love him in the way she loves Darnay but loves him as a long-standing friend of the family. One astonishing feature of Darnay and Carton is that they are extremely alike in appearance and about the same age. So, all is well until Darnay decides to return to Paris to rescue a friend from the clutches of the French revolutionaries. But he is betrayed, captured, sentenced to die by the guillotine and imprisoned. Now as it happens, Sydney Carton, has contacts in Paris and arranges to take the place of Darnay in his cell – he drugs Darnay and orchestrates a plan for him to be taken back to Lucie in London, while he, the next day, is guillotined as the aristocrat Charles Evremonde by the French revolutionaries. Dickens has Sydney Carton (as Charles Evremonde) engaging in self-remembrance in a long soliloquy, the night before he is guillotined. He concludes his reminiscence with these famous words:

*'It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known.'*

Now that is AGAPE. AGAPE love. To love is to be for another and to act for another, even at cost to oneself.

I'll repeat that. Now that is love. AGAPE love. To love is to be for another and to act for another, even at cost to oneself.

The primary norm by which this love for one another is measured is God's love for the world (Jn3:16) and Christ's faithful love for the Father, no matter what! To love is to be for another and to act for another, even at cost to oneself. This is how the divine and human meet – in love poured out for the other – for you and for me!

Easter is love – love freely shared with and for all!

It is THE love story of love stories, from the One who is pure Love: God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And let me stress this is a love founded in action, not just in feelings – of course, God had and has the deepest of loving feelings for his children and their world.

God is love, but that love was and is expressed in action – love in action, surrendering his own life for the life of the other – we and the created order being 'the other!'

Always love - NO MATTER WHAT! Always love - the source of Creation and the source of re-creation, through his Son – Always love, NO MATTER WHAT!

This is OUR Easter calling – to live in and by that love, and always to act in love, no matter what.

<sup>12</sup>“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>17</sup>I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Veronica Lawson, the Roman Catholic Nun and scholar reflects on the understanding of love shared in this passage, in the following way:

*‘Remaining in the love of God or of Jesus and doing what God or Jesus commands seem to be one and the same thing. In other words, love is not just an emotion: it is always expressed in action that is in tune with and for the sake of the other. The disciples need no further explanation. Jesus’ whole life and his courage in the face of impending death have shown them what it means to love one another.*

I love that: *‘in tune with and for the sake of the other!’*

We are Easter people, as individuals and as a community, we live and move and exist because He first loved us, died and rose for us, and commanded us to do likewise. It follows then that we are Easter people who care and who love – always care and always love, for there is no other way to be, as a friend of Jesus! And in fulfilling Christ command to care and to love lies the real joy of living!

Amen

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: Prepared by Dianne Richter

"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 a candle.*

Most merciful God, the generosity of your love is astounding to us. In confidence and trust we bring you our prayers for your people.

Your love extends to all your children: hear our prayers for your world and all its people.

We pray for all those in positions of authority and responsibility. May they lead with integrity and wisdom, demonstrating your love in their actions and decision-making.

We pray:

- for those who are hungry, homeless, dispossessed
- for victims and perpetrators of hatred, violence and injustice

Teach us how to love each other as you love us regardless of race, family background, sexual preference and life experience

Ever-loving God, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

The gift of your Spirit is for all your children. Hear our prayers for your church, for all who believe in you and for all who long to know you.

We pray:

- for our leaders here in our community in Ormond
- for religious leaders, theologians, pastors, teachers, administrators in the broader community
- the continuance of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue
- victims and perpetrators of religious fanaticism and intolerance

Teach us to love each other as you love us, without regard to creed or practice.

Ever-loving God, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

You came among us, born into a human family. Hear our prayers for the people of this community, for our families, friends, neighbours and for ourselves.

We pray:

- for all who seek to advance the welfare of this community, including those who contribute so generously to the Free Little Pantry
- for all who are in relationships that are bitter, violent or destructive and those who seek to address the immediate and underlying issues
- for those who are victims of economic greed

Help us to understand the impacts of trauma and poor social culture on our community and the world. Teach us to love each other as you love us, welcoming both friend and stranger.

Ever-loving God, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

You lived among us, sharing with us our griefs and pains. Hear our prayers for the sick and those who are suffering.

We pray:

- for all who spend their lives bringing care and comfort to others
- for those in sadness, anxiety, despair, pain
- for all who feel excluded, forgotten, unheard, unvalued, unloved.

Teach us to love each other as you love us, caring for both the vulnerable and the strong.

Ever-loving God, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

You laid down your life for those you loved. We remember your friends of every place and age, those who have given their lives that others may live, the saints, the martyrs and all your faithful people.

Teach us to love each other as you have loved us, that following your commandments, we may be numbered among your friends and abide forever in your love.

Ever-loving God, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

Based on prayers by Janet Nelson

Let us pray.

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.**



## HYMN TIS 676: A Spend-thrift Lover....

1. A spendthrift lover is the Lord  
who never counts the cost  
or asks if heaven can afford  
to woo a world that's lost.  
Our lover tosses coins of gold  
across the midnight skies,  
and stokes the sun against the cold  
to warm us when we rise.
2. Still more is spent in blood and tears  
to win the human heart,  
to overcome the violent fears  
that drive the world apart.  
Behold the bruised and thorn-crowned face  
of one who bears our scars,  
and empties out the wealth of grace  
that's hinted by the stars.
3. How shall we love this heart-strong God  
who gives us everything,  
whose ways to us are strange and odd:  
what can we give or bring?  
Acceptance of the matchless gift  
is gift enough to give;  
the very act will shake and shift  
the way we love and live.

*Thomas Henry Troeger 1945-*

## DISMISSAL:

As God has loved us,  
**so we will go to love those despised by the world.**  
As Jesus has forgiven us,  
**we will go to forgive everyone who has hurt us  
and to bring healing into their brokenness.**  
As the Spirit calls us 'friends,'  
**so we will go to befriend the outcasts,  
the lonely, and the lost of our society.**

© Thom M. Shuman

## BLESSING:

Christ is risen!  
**He is risen indeed!**  
The deathless joy of Christ Jesus will uplift you,  
the everlasting love of God will embrace you,  
the inner warmth of the Spirit will encourage you, today and ever more.  
**Today and evermore. Amen!**

## WORD OF MISSION:

Go in peace to love and serve the Risen Lord.  
**In the name of the Risen One, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

*Prayers of adoration, confession and forgiveness; the dismissal (c) Thom M. Shuman*

## 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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Tuesdays, 9.30am-2.30pm

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## NEWS & NOTICES