

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



16 FEBRUARY 2025

EPIPHANY 6



WORSHIP AT HOME

The 6th Sunday in the season the church calls 'Epiphany' – which means uncovering or showing what was hidden

God calls you and me ... all peoples ... to life beyond known horizons!

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.

Focusing ... *As we pause to contemplate this ongoing season of Epiphany – unveiling, seeing, making known - we hear of and are invited to name our own experiences of the ministry of Jesus as revealed through the Gospel of Luke.*

Acknowledgement of Country: We come to meet today 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.

Call to Worship

Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, **or take the path that sinners tread,**

or sit in the seat of scoffers; **but their delight is in the law of God and on God's law they meditate both both day and night.**

They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, **and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.**

So, gather, come, and sing praises to the name of the Most High God. **Come, let us worship together.**

(From Psalms)

Hymn/song: (TiS) 569 Guide me, O thou great Redeemer. (Please sit)

Prayers of thanks and time for confession of our brokenness, of our need for healing and to listen to God's word of loving forgiveness.

Creator of the ends of the earth, everlasting God, you speak our world into being with your Wisdom Word welling up from the source of life. We praise and worship

you. Renew our strength today, that we may rise with wings like eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint.

God of transforming justice and peace, you come to us in Christ for the sake of the world, pouring out the living water of your grace. We worship and honour you. Give us this water always, gushing from the spring of eternal life, that refreshed in spirit, we may rise in Christ to live out the abundance of his grace.

God of abiding love, you have given us of your Spirit that we may abide in you, loving one another as you have loved us in Christ. We honour and adore you. Flood us with liberating hope that we may rise to proclaim the healing salvation of the world, embodying the perfect love that casts out fear. **Amen.**

Let us open our hearts to God in confession.

When we dishonour your creation, and look away from you our Creator, seeking other sources of life and hope. God have mercy: **have mercy on us.**

When we block the flow of your grace drawing refreshment from the wells that leave us thirsty. Christ have mercy: **have mercy on us.**

When we fall short of your love for the world, failing to love you with all that we are and turning our backs on our neighbours. God have mercy: **have mercy on us.**

Call us again as your children to return to you through the abundance of your grace along the liberating highway of hope. **Amen**

Declaration of Forgiveness: Sisters and Brothers, God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. We love because God first loved us.

Hear Christ's word of abundant grace, and drink deep from the well of his hope. We are loved, We are forgiven, We are free. **Thanks be to God.**

THE LISTENING TIME

Readings from the Bible – Lorraine Denniston

Your Word O Lord, is a lamp for our feet – **a light for our path!**

Jeremiah 17.5-10: Thus says the Lord: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord. ⁶ They shall be like a shrub in the desert and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. ⁷ Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord.

⁸ They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. ⁹ The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse - who can understand it? ¹⁰ I the Lord test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.



and Luke 6.17-26: ¹⁷ He came down with them and stood on a level place with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸ They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases, and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹ And everyone in the crowd was trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them. ²⁰ Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

²² “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you^[a] on account of the Son of Man. ²³ Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven, for that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

²⁴“But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

²⁵“Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

“Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶“Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

In these readings may we hear the Word of God

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Hymn/song: (TiS) 549 God be in my head

Prayer before the Word – Tony Floyd

Some notes on the Word – Tony Floyd

Segundo Galilea, the Chilean liberation theologian says that the first three Lukan beatitudes are all addressed to the same persons: the poor, the hungry, and those who weep. These are not separate ‘pick and choose’ categories into which we might slip and slide ourselves and our friends, or various categories of social workers, by sleight-of-hand or canonical dispensation. If you are poor, you are hungry, and if you are hungry, you have something each night to cry about:

“My tears have been my food,” cries the thirsty soul. (Ps. 42).

“You have fed your people with the bread of tears; you have given them bowls of tears to drink.”
Psalm 80

“My enemies revile me all day long, and those who scoff at me have taken an oath against me. I have eaten ashes for bread and mingled my drink with weeping.” (Ps. 102.)

“Give us each day our daily bread” is answered one scrap of food at a time in the vastness of most of the world’s peoples, with a little salt for flavour. Spiritualise that!

All the beatitudes in both the lists show brilliantly the kingdom of God in a kaleidoscope of exultation, in a bouquet of different images and signs: comfort, satisfaction, laughter, mercy, the beatific vision, enlightenment, inheritance, adoption, everlasting reward. But

Galilea writes that Luke’s blessing is simply to say this, *“that the Kingdom of God is theirs means concretely that the gospel, the Christian message, and hence the church, belongs to them,”* the poor-hungry-weeping. Any postponement of those blessings to somewhere *“in heaven”* voids them and omits them from the good news, from honest preaching and authentic ministry. To preach *‘pie in the sky’* or even holiness on earth is an insult to the poor-hungry-weeping, who need bread now for today’s lunch. (Jesus didn’t multiply the holiness’ or perform a miraculous catch of pocket testaments.)

The Christian community early on discovered that Jesus IS the Good News that changes life precisely and only because Jesus lives his gospel among us and always has. We cannot isolate his teachings and separate them from him, as with the authors of proverbs and nice sayings, and still have good news. When you move there, you move to the astrology column.

Any ministry by religious organizations or religious people to the church of the poor - the real church - must work to make these hopes of Jesus come true in our lifetime, in our global village. It isn’t only Christians who have enlisted in this project of Jesus (and he himself recognized that in Matthew 25) for the God of Jesus is the God of universal hope. We share our commitment to the Gospel of Jesus, and not to the divergent opinions about him that the world has made up on its own.

Churches are trying the market-driven “church growth” style of what they blasphemously call “evangelism”, and Charles Handy says, “Everything is thought of as a business of a sort. We are all ‘in business’ these days, be we doctor or priest, professor or charity-worker.” Jesus and his friends - the only true church - will not be welcome now, amidst the perfumed odour of this elevated piety. This is the Church of the Beatitudes, the Home of the Blessed, which Jesus called into being when God raised him from the grave the woeful had put him in. He is raised, blessed forever, in the poor-hungry-weeping Ones, and in our sisters and brothers persecuted and perishing, dying and being raised, in the Struggle.

THE RESPONDING TIME

Hymn/Song: (TIS) 288 Not the powerful (John Bell)

Prayers of concern for others: Prepared by David Northwood

In our cycle of prayer for peoples around the world, we pray for the leaders and people of Austria, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland

"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.

Rev. Marianne Budde addressed some issues that are fundamental to Christianity in her sermon at the recent US presidential inauguration. She said:

“Let me make one final plea, Mr. President. Millions have put their trust in you and, as you told the nation yesterday, you have felt the providential hand of a loving God. In the name of our God, I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country who are scared now.

These are the people who pick our crops and clean our office buildings, who labour in poultry farms and meat packing plants, who wash the dishes after we eat in restaurants and work the night shifts in hospitals. They may not be citizens or have the proper documentation, but the vast majority of immigrants are not criminals.

I ask you to have mercy, Mr. President, on those in our communities whose children fear that their parents will be taken away and that you help those who are fleeing war zones and persecution in their own lands, to find compassion and welcome here.

Our God teaches us that we are to be merciful to the stranger for we were all once strangers in this land. May God grant us the strength and courage to honour the dignity of every human being, to speak the truth to one another in love and walk humbly with each other and our God for the good of all people in this nation and the world”.

The response from the president and his Christian acolytes was swift, uncompromising and characteristically unchristian. Trump labelled Bishop Budde’s remarks as “a disgraceful attack from the radical left disguised as faith. She is a phony Christian who seeks to divide Americans by pushing political agendas from the pulpit”.

The theme of our prayer for today follows the theme of the Reverend Budde and places an emphasis on responsibility and care for others and pastoral care.

Let us pray. This is our pray today for others and for ourselves.

As we pray, we reflect on what pastoral care means in practical terms, within our own church community and within the broader community.

Examples of pastoral care are:

Caring through healing - not just the doctors and nurses, but also the hospital administrators and the cleaners.

Caring through listening - psychologists and social workers. Those who work with mentally disturbed patients.

Caring for the elderly - the sometimes apparently thankless task of feeding, cleaning and providing emotional support for the elderly.

Caring for the very young - support for newborns, babies and toddlers provided by paediatricians and childcare workers.

Caring expressed by those who protect us - emergency workers, police, ambulance officers, firemen, security workers.

Caring as an expression of managing our communities - politicians, public servants, bureaucrats.

Caring for the oppressed - Amnesty International, pro bono lawyers, aid workers and those who expose injustice.

Just as the prophet Amos rebuked the Israelites at the time for turning away from God, similarly, we ask that our Jewish brothers and sisters in Australia and in Israel will realise that oppressing Palestinians is not in the long-term interest of Israel.

Finally, caring as expressed in our own church community - for each other, and our own Pastoral Link Network.

The principal reason that the Homo Sapiens species is the dominant species on earth (for better and often for worse) is that it is the most cooperative species. No single person invented or developed or constructed a motor vehicle, an aircraft, or an MRI. We thank you for the gift of human cooperation and care for others.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer – please feel free to pray that translation 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 for ever. Amen.**

**Final hymn/song: (TiS) 376 I know that my redeemer
lives**

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)

Go in peace ... **to love and serve the Lord!**

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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NEWS & NOTICES