

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



16 MARCH 2025
LENT 02

*The
Season
of
Lent*



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.

Focusing ...

From the splash of the stone the ripples move out, wider and wider until they touch the edges: all the edges, and some bounce back. Memories entered and trusted can ripple through our lives, to the edges and sometimes back, and in the ebb and flow memory nurtures hope, becomes living water – gifts of a loving and bountiful God. Thank you God!

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 we begin 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 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.

Focusing for worship

Christ be with all who gather today. Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe, and all its peoples.

Greeting: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Call to Worship: Glory to God: Our strength & our redeemer.

The looming shadow of the cross makes real your claim: that love which suffers is love which saves.

So fill your people with anticipation & your Church with thanksgiving: that the world may know that your holy child Jesus is not a dead hero we commemorate, but the living One we worship.

Bless, guide and keep us as we remember and give thanks for the worship, witness and service of this congregation during 2024 and begin to experience your faithfulness in 2025. In the name of Jesus to whom with you & the Holy spirit be our praise for ever. Amen!

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Hymn/Song: TiS 125 The God of Abraham praise

Prayers of Gathering, Thanks, & Confession

- A time for saying "Thank you!" to God, for recognising those acts that hurt us and others, and for hearing again of God's love and forgiveness – the 'new start' God makes possible. *Take a few moments to look back on the highlights of the week past ... however small or insignificant they seem ... then consider what you might be looking forward to in the week ahead ... thank God for those moments, people, occasions ...*

Confession: Glorious God, your thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are your ways our ways. You look at the ugliest soul and see, still unstirred, the wings of an angel. We scan the finest of our neighbours, often seeing only flaws.

You view time in the context of eternity, and so find a place for waiting, for yearning, even for suffering, and even dying. We demand instant results; and look for tomorrow before savouring today.

You know that only one who suffers can ultimately save, that is why you walk the way of the cross. We fear that vulnerability which defies our power; that is why we allow for callous behaviour, responses, even death and destruction.

Your thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are your ways our ways.

So we pray ... Forgive in us what has gone wrong, repair in us what is wasted, and reveal in and to us what is good. And God, nourish us with better food than we could ever purchase: your word, your love, your inspiration, your daily bread for our life's journey, in the company of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

In the words of the apostle Peter, I declare to you the good news: *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people God claims for God's own to proclaim the glorious works of the One who called you into his marvellous light. Once you were no people, but now you are God's people; once there was no mercy for you, but now you have received God's mercy. Amen. Thanks be to God.*

Readings from the Bible: Suzie Fergusson

Reading from the ancient Scriptures: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18 - God's Covenant with Abram

15 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." **2** But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" **3** And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." **4** But the word of the Lord came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." **5** He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." **6** And he believed the Lord, and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

7 Then he said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." **8** But he said, "O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" **9** He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." **10** He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other, but he did not cut the birds in two. **11** And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. **12** As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him.



¹⁷When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates,

Reading from the Gospel: Luke 13:31-35 - The Lament over Jerusalem

³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” ³²He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³Yet today,



tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’ ³⁴Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say,

‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’ ”

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Hymn/Song: TiS 703 As the deer pants for the water

Reflection: Tony

Revd Dr Mercy Oduyoye, a Methodist, Ghanaian by birth and Nigerian by marriage, senior lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies in the University of Ibadan, Nigeria tells of this sacrifice of love and devotion by the church: -

“When the church adopts a posture of sacrificing, it will not be doing so only for the sake of mission; it will find herself actually in mission.

...The church in mission has a message of good news to the poor, the oppressed, the shackled, and the physically and spiritually handicapped. How is this message to be delivered? Some risk-taking is involved . . . In Africa (it couldn't be so in Australia!!!) . . . churches are found hoarding God's gifts.

Mercy goes on . . . “A ‘Christ-bearing’ church will have to empty itself of all pride, self-seeking and, above all, of the fear of death . . . The churches must be like the young girl who braved the ignominy of bearing an ‘illegitimate child’ and, I imagine, the loss of a ‘society wedding’ she had dreamed of during all her maiden days, assured only by the words of an angel that she was in the employ of God!” “New eyes for reading” selections from pages 77-78

The actions of today, speak of God's love for us, and our love for God. Like the others - of Jesus' and every generation since - we do not understand the nature of the journey that he invites us to share with him. But some do! Those who recognize the cost of kindness and redemption are those who love most freely and most generously.

I read about a pastor, she and her husband live near the church. Periodically, there is a knock on the parsonage door on Thursday night. A local chapter of AA meets at the church on Thursdays, and they pay a small monthly rental for the use of the room. When the rent is due, one of the members will come over to the house on the meeting night carrying an envelope with the rental money collected from the group. Many of the members of this AA group have had very difficult lives. Some have lost jobs, some have lost their families, all have struggled with addiction. None

of the members are wealthy, and they pass the hat for the rent, tossing in ones and twos and change until they scrape up enough.

One Thursday night, a week before Thanksgiving, there was the usual knock, and when the pastor went to the door, indeed, there was a member of AA holding an envelope. The man handed it to her and said, "There's a little extra in there this time." Sure enough, the envelope was crammed with wrinkled bills and an assortment of coins, almost double the usual amount. A note was found with the money, "With thanksgiving to God and to the church for all the blessings we have received." Some said the envelope was fragrant with costly perfume.

Eager for a more comfortable way to glory without pain and power without suffering we cannot see or feel the suffering of the poor nor the violence of the oppression in which we have a stake.

Perhaps such insight only comes from understanding and accepting our own suffering - not as inevitable, but as redeemable because of the One who has shared it with and for us.

Out of such passionate love and response can then come a service to the poor such as Judas and the others - us - are concerned with. For it is a characteristic of this gospel named John in particular that Jesus' command is to **LOVE** - not to "give"

Does it make sense? Not clearly for me yet. But it does more and more as I am able to offer the most precious parts of my life in love and devotion to this one, whose passion and death are obscene, but God embraced; absurd but in the manner of God's own nature and purpose. I'm not sure even yet that it makes all the sense with all the power and immense freedom that it could and might. But it will, one day!

Hymn/Song: TiS 233 I will sing the wondrous story -
Offering during the singing - Prayer

Announcements/News

Prayers for Others & Lord's Prayer: Prepared by Heather Baxter

"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.

Father

As we reflect on our need for your Spirit in our lives we pray for peace

- Peace between nations – the Middle East, Ukraine and Russia, the posturing leaders of nations interested in their own power.
- Peace in the court system in Australia – a chance to hear and understand from those accused and from those affected by crime
- Peace in our own hearts – help us to put aside those parts of our lives that are distracting us from you.

As we reflect on our need for your Spirit in our lives we pray for Ormond Uniting. We pray for:

- New and emerging ideas that are bubbling forth for the use of our developing building
- The possibility of a new Minister and the work of the Joint Nominating Committee
- New and renewed connections and relationships with the community in Glen Eira

As we reflect on our need for your Spirit in our lives we pray for your wonderful creation. We pray for:

- A sense of urgency by the world community in responding to changes in the climate
- A sense of wonder for your creation and a passion to restore and replenish that which has been harmed.
- The people in Queensland and New South Wales who have been severely impacted by floods from the cyclone

Father, you are always more ready to give than we are to receive. Open our lives up to the healing powers of your Spirit that we might find energy to work for justice and peace in your creation.

In Jesus' name we pray
Amen

And now let us join in 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 and 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

Affirmation:

We have laid our burdens down – **in the presence of the living God**
We have been nourished for our journey – **by the grace of the living God**
We have taken on the gifts of the Spirit – **as gift of the living God**
Now lead us, guide us, defend us – **in the way of Christ in the world. In your name and for your sake, living and loving God!**

Hymn/Song: TiS 547 Be thou my vision

Blessing

Bless to us, O God, the doors we open,
the thresholds we cross, the roads that lie before us.
Go with us where we go and welcome us home
Go in peace – **to love and serve the Lord!**

Music as we transition to fellowship time

You are warmly invited to stay after service to share in morning tea/coffee

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

Church Office

Tuesdays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Thursdays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Fridays, 9.30am-2.30pm

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