

# ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



11 MAY 2025

EASTER 4



WELCOME ... to this celebration of the mystery and joy of the presence of God. Whether you are a visitor or a part of this faith community, may God bless your visit and our time together.

## 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.*

### **Focussing ...**

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.

### **Focussing 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.

### **Call to Worship**

From every nation across the world, peoples of all cultures and languages raise their voices in prayer and worship. God is amongst us all!

Together, with them, and for all, let's celebrate the love of God that flows across every land and nation, through all things and every people. With all those voices, we raise our own with thanks and great joy.

Let us worship God!

### **Prayer**

God of all we reach out to you. Come, share your word of life in our hearts transforming our minds into the likeness of Jesus.

**Song (Together in Song) 152 Joyful, joyful we adore you**

# Opening prayers of thanksgiving and confession – we then hear a word of Assurance of God’s loving forgiveness.

How wonderful is your world, Creator God - so intricate and delicate. So vast and rugged. Breathtakingly beautiful and unexpected, yet with complex patterns and cycles. The seasons sing out your praise through their unfolding colours and new life. Life and death are entwined in a never-ending wave of renewal. We thank you for your wonderful creation – for the sun and moon, the complexity of constellations and planets, and the deep inner workings of Earth.

Pause

Please forgive us for the times we fail to notice and appreciate these things and for the times we have wandered from you, distracted by our own thoughts.

We forget to offer concerns to you and share in the openness of prayer. We lay them down before you now.

Jesus, good shepherd, help us to take time and to make space to hear your call to us – the call to empty ourselves of all that is contrary to your life within us so that your goodness and mercies are enjoyed – not as rewards to be hoarded, but as gifts to be shared.

We ask these things in Jesus’ name and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen

## **Words of Assurance:**

God’s never-ending love will reach you everywhere – so rest easy in God’s peace.

Drink deeply from the living waters of care that forever flows.

Feed your soul and be nourished by the feast of life with God. **Amen**

## **The Service Of The Word** – Heather Baxter

Your word, O Lord is a lamp to our feet

**A light to our path**

### **Good news from Scripture – Revelation 7.9-17**

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. <sup>10</sup> They cried out in a loud voice, saying,

“Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb!”

<sup>11</sup> And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup> singing,

“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom  
and thanksgiving and honor  
and power and might  
be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

<sup>13</sup> Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?” <sup>14</sup> I said to him, “Sir, you are the one who knows.” Then he said to me, “These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

<sup>15</sup> For this reason they are before the throne of God and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. <sup>16</sup> They will hunger no more and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat, <sup>17</sup> for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

## Good News/Gospel named John 10.22-30

**Jesus Is Rejected:** <sup>22</sup> At that time the Festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, <sup>23</sup> and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. <sup>24</sup> So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah,<sup>[a]</sup> tell us plainly.” <sup>25</sup> Jesus answered, “I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name testify to me, <sup>26</sup> but you do not believe because you do not belong to my sheep. <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, in regard to what he has given me, is greater than all,<sup>[b]</sup> and no one can snatch them out of the Father’s hand. <sup>30</sup> The Father and I are one.”

This is the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

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## THE LISTENING TIME

### Contemporary Word – Tony Floyd

Revelation 7:9-17 A great multitude that no one could count

John 10:22-30 It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the Porch of the Temple

What qualifies Jesus to be the Shepherd? Jesus is qualified to be the Shepherd because he is engaged in the care, love, and tenderness of attention to real sheep. That was the same ministry handed over to Peter in last week’s gospel story, a breakfast BBQ on the beach at the lake.

The book of the Revelation of John, tells us that the way to find a good Shepherd is to start with a Lamb. The wonderful paradox, the Passover Lamb, in John’s strange coded vision, is the occupant of the Throne of Heaven that is the centre of the universe. He has become the Liberator, the Pastor, the Ruler of all peoples everywhere. John’s vision is a vision of Holy Eucharist in heaven, and what John’s vision looks like is Eastern Orthodox Easter Liturgy - the Eucharist or Holy Communion.

You know, the Eastern Churches don’t read the Book of Revelation at worship, they use it only for private reading. One writer suggested that they don’t need to read this book, because what they actually do in church in their ornately beautiful and endless liturgies, looks and feels like what the Apocalypse of John describes, right down to the directions and notes. So to read Revelation in worship would be as if you went to the very best French restaurant you know, picked up the elaborate menu, and then sat down to read your copy of the Good Food Guide or Epicure instead of eating and drinking the glorious banquet on offer.

John shows us a spectacular vision of liturgy with everyone standing crowded around the throne, clothed in gorgeous vestments, with palm branches in hand, and all the robes bleached of their bloodstains in the clorox of the Reign of God - all baptismal robes from way back, and all clean now. This reminds us that in the ancient church there was no kneeling for prayer in the season of Easter, and only those who committed grievous sins were allowed to kneel even in Lent. But at Easter all were admitted back into the fellowship of Love, and all were once more ‘*in good standing.*’ Around the throne are angels, and Old Folks, and creatures, just like Sunday morning. This book, after all its strange coded visions and images, finally promises resurrection to Christ’s faithful, even in the middle of their sufferings and death. With imagery of resurrection and victory, it testifies to the trials of those martyred for their faith.

And someone asks, ‘*Who are these in white robes, and where did they come from?*’

And the answer is given: “These are they who have come out of the Great Tribulation: out of the Lamb’s War, out of the Struggle, out of the final Revolutionary Battle. There’s to be no more homelessness for them, no more evictions, no more wandering, no more hunger for them, no more hungering even for justice, because we are to have a banquet of justice. It’s to be the main course for our supper. And there’ll be no more thirst.”

In John’s vision, any sort of personal discomfort and agony are now forgotten - all tears are wiped away from all eyes. And the one who himself has been a victim, an outcast, hung upon a cross, himself the One who knew what it is to be thirsty, to be hungry, to be homeless - this is the One who has become liberator.

Christ the Passover lamb and the suffering servant is also the Shepherd who guides his witnesses to the living water. John communicates like an artist, mainly with images – remarkable, unlikely, towering images. Blood or no blood, they’ve come through and are singing now, and each of them has a right to sing as God’s redeemed and forgiven peoples!

## THE RESPONDING TIME.

**Song: (TiS) 693 Come as you are, that’s how I want you – Offering during singing**

**Announcements ...**

**Prayers of the People –** Prepared by David Northwood

"As we prepare for our prayers for others, we light a candle to remember all those who are part of our church community."

*Light a candle.*

I have let a fortunate life.  
My wife Liz and I have been graced by many blessings  
Lord has provided for us and for this we are grateful  
We try to live each day with a grateful heart

The Lord has blessed me and kept me  
The Lord has made his face to shine upon me and be gracious unto me  
The Lord has lifted up the light of his countenance upon me  
And given me peace

But like all people there have been times in my life when I have suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

Like everyone in this church today there were times when I suffered from anxiety and doubt  
Like everyone in this church today there were times when my faith was challenged  
Like everyone in this church today I have metaphorically walked through the valley of the shadow of death

Around that time I came across a poem which gave me some comfort. The poem is called Footprints and is a modern allegorical Christian poem by Carolyn Carty who claims to have written the poem when she was six years old based on an earlier work by her great aunt, a Sunday school teacher.

It's not good poetry it's a bit schmaltzy but I like it and our prayer today is based on that poem.

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

Lord in times of trouble we ask that you walk with us, guide us, and carry us when we need support.

He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord.  
Across the sky flashed scenes from his life.  
For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand:  
one belonging to him, and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him,  
he looked back at the footprints in the sand.  
He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints.

He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.  
This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it.

"Lord, You said that once I decided to follow you,  
You'd walk with me all the way.  
But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life,  
there is only one set of footprints.  
I don't understand why, when I needed you most, you would leave me."

The Lord replied,  
"My son, My precious child, I love you and I would  
never leave you. During your times of trial and  
suffering, when you see only one set of footprints,  
It was then that I carried you."  
It was then that I carried you."

Amen

#### **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 forever. Amen.**

## ***Song: TiS 531 Sent forth by God's blessing***

### **Blessing and Benediction**

Mothering shepherd, compassionate carer, lead us on beside still waters, cover and  
companion us in the dark valleys.

Keep us in the company of makers and gatherers.

Lead us with a whisper, call us on with a shout.

Let us know your voice from the sound of sheer silence to the thunderous storm. And, help  
us to follow!

And may the blessing of God, One in three, three in one, be upon you and remain with you  
today and in all your days to come.

Amen

Amen

Amen

## 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