

Worship At Home • May 24, 2020

Acknowledgement to Country

We all gather on the lands and by the waters of the First Peoples of this place: And we pay our respects to their elders; past, present and emerging. We commit ourselves again to seek healing and reconciliation in this Nation and in this land.



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress*

Call to worship

Here we gather,
each from our individual weeks.
We carry into this place
the joys and the worries of the week,
the weight of our personal matters,
the anxieties of all that the future may hold.
**Here we gather,
in prayer and preparation.
Here, we connect ourselves into community,
here we hold one another in compassion;
Here we remember that the work you have
called us to do: we do not do it alone.**

Light your Candle



613 Lord of All hopefulness

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy
whose trust ever childlike, no cares could destroy,
be there at our waking and give us, we pray,
your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.
Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith

whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and
the lathe
be there at our labours and give us, we pray,
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of
the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace
your hands swift to welcome, your arms to
embrace
be there at our homing and give us, we pray,
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm
whose voice is contentment, whose presence is
balm,
be there at our sleeping and give us, we pray
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the
day.

Joyce Placzek (Jan Strutherí)1901-53 CCLI 241 739

Opening prayer

Holy God, listen to your people praying
for your presence with us,
as we gather in worship and praise,
Holy God, listen to your people praying.
For your encouragement when we go out
Safely into the world, faithful to be you
people,
Holy God, listen to your people praying.
For the unity that we find, as the many
members of one Body,
Holy God, listen to your people praying.
For the guidance of your Holy Spirit in opening
our hearts to hear one another in love,
Holy God, listen to your people praying.
Amen.

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Prayer of confession

God of glory, your grace has surrounded us
from before the beginning, and by your
grace we know that we are yours.
God's grace in Jesus Christ
Reminds us of the broken-ness of our world
The broken-ness within ourselves.

And so we make our confession
And we say to God the things that need saying.
<time for reflection>

Words of affirmation

In Christ we are forgiven
And empowered by the Spirit
To live the Grace we have received
And to Live in Grace.

***“Cast all your anxiety on him,
because he cares for you.”***

Sin is forgiven
Thanks be to God.

The Readings

Acts 1: 6-14
John 17: 1-11

For these words of Faith
And Jesus the Word
Thanks be to God.

Reflection

We are living in strange times.
Ravaged by bushfires and locked down by a global
pandemic, we've been confronted by death and
destruction more intensely than most of us would
have known in our lives. Loss of life and livelihoods,

destruction of habitat and creatures, mass graves,
tent hospitals, masks, gloves, social distancing,
washing hands, staying home ...

Here on the Sunday before Pentecost, in the
reading from John's gospel we are invited to
eavesdrop on Jesus' prayer to the Father before his
arrest, and in Acts, to glimpse his ascension into
heaven and hear his parting words. The theme is
not of death and destruction but of death and
glory. How do we make the jump? How do we take
assurance from these words? How do we live into a
different understanding?

Listen, listen to the words of Jesus' prayer – ... *he
looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has
come; ... I glorified you on earth by finishing the
work that you gave me to do. So now, Father,
glorify me in your own presence with the glory that
I had in your presence before the world existed.*

Did you hear that? Jesus described death, not as a
catastrophic loss, but as going back into glory.
Those words in no way undervalue the devastating
grief that we feel in losing someone we love, of the
tragic deaths of friends, family and strangers, but it
can help us to re-frame our own living and dying.
When we are born, the umbilical cord is cut. At
that moment we are separate, detached, distinct,
and our disconnected life begins. The ongoing task
of living is to reconnect, in love, with each other
and with the God who brought us and all we know
into life. We have a longing, a spiritual
homesickness to be drawn back into the unity we
knew before our separate lives began. As John
Shea, poet and theologian, puts it; "We are all on a
mission of love, meant to stir love in others, when
this happens, God is glorified, the work is
accomplished, and life is complete."

Jesus prays for us to know that connection, that
indwelling with each other, that same unity that is

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with the Father and the Son, bound together, inextricably connected in love: *All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.*

Our mission in life, as followers of Jesus, is to release the divine love that we have experienced; the love that will not let us go, the love that doesn't count the cost, the love that forgives over and over, the love that unites us to each other and to the source of life ...

We are living in strange times. We can identify with the disciples standing still, stuck to the spot, looking up into the skies in the story of Jesus' ascension in the reading from Acts. Looking up for a sign, a clue, something to make sense of the loss that they are feeling, something to make sense of the grief and confusion, the emptiness. Then beside them the angels speak. Beside them, not up in the heavens, or deep in the earth, but beside them, and they say, "*Why do you stand looking up?*"

Dr. Mae C. Jemison, the first woman of colour to travel to outer space, urged graduating University of Arizona students in 2019 to "live deeply and look up."

"I believe that life is best when you live deeply and you look up," she said.

"It's really important that we recognize we are connected – that this world will not go anywhere, that we will not have a future if we don't recognize our connections with other peoples, if we don't recognize our connection with this Earth and our universe," she said.

In a time when we are often consumed by screens and things that make us "look down," it's especially

important to do just the opposite, Jemison said. "By looking up, we see a bigger picture," she said.

Looking up is important, fixing our gaze on the shining glory of God in the world around us, seeing deeply into the eyes of each other, sensing wonder in the life and breath of plants, and the magnificent and mysterious ocean. But the angels around us are urging us not to stand still. He is not here, he is risen.

Jesus' work was finished, but ours is not. Our work is to love, in the midst of death and devastation, strange times and separation, to make our lives an outpouring of the love that makes us one. May it be so.

Prayers of the People



741 O Lord hear my Prayer-

O Lord hear my pray'r,
O Lord hear my pray'r:
when I call answer me.
O Lord hear my pray'r,
O Lord hear my pray'r.
Come and listen to me.

We come to you in prayer because we are your beloved, and you are ours.

This moment in time we remember how much we need you and need each other.

We bring you each person in our church family and the issues they face in this moment.

Just as the early church were constantly praying, devoted to prayer, so also we take this time to soak ourselves in your presence.

O Lord hear my pray'r,

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O Lord hear my pray'r:
when I call answer me.
O Lord hear my pray'r,
O Lord hear my pray'r.
Come and listen to me.

Things may be very different from the times of the early believers, but you still gather us as humans together, with our names, identities and our hopes and dreams, to wait for the coming of your Spirit. We pray for your Spirit to be present in our lives and in our churches, and for us to open ourselves to that Presence, aware and awake to the Divine in our lives. It is in our togetherness as church, even when we are dispersed, that we best hear and know you. Jesus prayed for us, (wow), that we would be held in unity and the same oneness with all things that Jesus had with the One who sent Him. In this, we make known your love.

O Lord hear my pray'r,
O Lord hear my pray'r:
when I call answer me.
O Lord hear my pray'r,
O Lord hear my pray'r.
Come and listen to me.

You are our loving Parent God, you are especially Protector of the widows and the orphans, those who represent the disadvantaged and the struggling. You give the desolate a home and so we think of those who are cold and hungry and homeless, the unsheltered.

O Lord hear my pray'r,
O Lord hear my pray'r:
when I call answer me.
O Lord hear my pray'r,
O Lord hear my pray'r.
Come and listen to me.

You lead the prisoners to prosperity! Help us to make the reversals in our head that we see in the Scriptures. Your values are not always our values and it is hard sometimes to make the change. You

with love from & for SHEARWATER CONGREGATIONS: Toora: Foster: Fish Creek: Tarwin Lower: Inverloch: Wonthaggi: Phillip Island: shared with our neighbouring congregations in Gippsland & beyond Uniting Church in Australia Synod VicTas Presbytery of Gippsland

teach us that those who our society puts out to the edges are central in your Kingdom. We pray for those on the edges this day O God.

And when words are just too hard and we fall silent before you, when we have to rely on your Spirit to do the praying, we know the surrender of our own agenda and trust in your love. That is when faith in you is all we have, and so we rest our hearts in you. Your grace and mercy are steadfast and we can cast our brokenness, our cares and anxieties on you.

Lord hear our prayer.

AMEN

741 O Lord hear my Prayer-

Taize Used with Permission CCLI 241 739 Psalm 102: 1 Words by permission Ateliers et Presses de TaizÉ Ltd

OFFERING

Take our gifts and our talents to make known to others the love of God. We give thanks for all we have and all we can share.

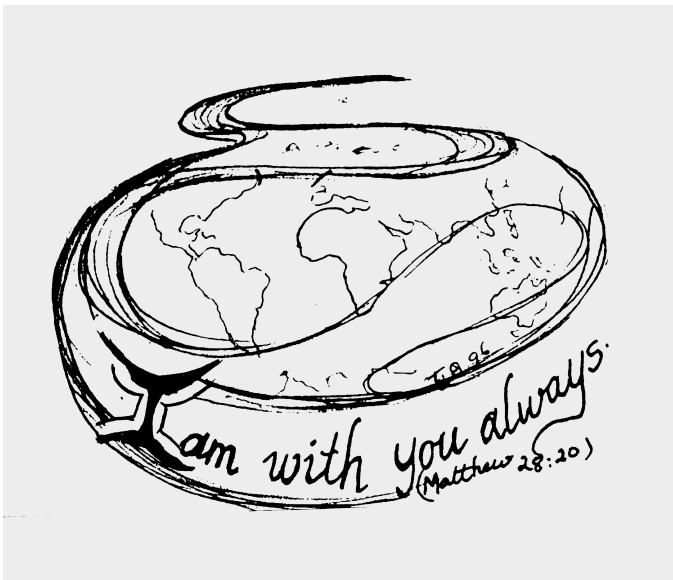
TiS 590 What a Friend we have in Jesus

What a friend we have in Jesus
all our sins and griefs to bear
what a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer:
O what peace we often forfeit
O what needless pain we bear
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations,
is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged:
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful,
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness:
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Jesus is our only refuge:
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise
forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
in his arms he'll take and shield you
you will find a solace there.

Joseph Medlicott Scriven 1819-86 alt. Used with Permission
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Blessing

Go out from this space full of the tenderness of Jesus' care for each one of us.
Go out into the world, carrying with you the abundance of God's grace and love, and letting it overflow as blessings to the world.
Go; for Christ is out in the world, still calling us to life and love.

May the Grace of Christ Jesus, and the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you, today and always. Alleluia! Amen.

Aldersgate Day is a commemorative day celebrated by Methodist Christians on 24 May or the nearest Sunday. It recalls the day in 1738 when Church of England priest John Wesley attended a group meeting in Aldersgate, London, where he received an experience of assurance of his salvation. This was the pivotal event in Wesley's life that ultimately led to the development of the Methodist movement in Britain and America. According to his journal, Wesley found that his enthusiastic gospel message had been rejected by his Anglican brothers. Heavy-hearted, he reluctantly attended a group meeting that evening in a Moravian chapel on Aldersgate Street in London. It was there, while someone was reading from Martin Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans, that he felt that his heart was "strangely warmed". He describes it as: "I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

PENTECOST IS NEXT SUNDAY

**Light a Red candle.
Wear a red scarf.**

