



## Worship in Spring, Season of Pentecost week 23, Sunday Nov 8th, 2020

### Gathering



As you light your candle this morning,  
hear these words from the Wisdom of  
Solomon 6: 12-16.

*"Wisdom is radiant and unfading, and she  
is easily discerned by those who love her,  
and is found by those who seek her. She  
hastened to make herself known to those  
who desire her."*

The Wisdom of Christ is here.

### Call to worship

Listen;

**Listen to the Wisdom Way of God**

Listen;

**Listen to the Wisdom Way of Parable**

Listen;

**Listen to the Wisdom Way of Spirit.**

Come and hear afresh, a Word of  
Hope

Come and hear anew, a Word of Peace  
Come and hear again of God's love

### Acknowledging

We breathe in the fresh air around us.

We look to the land outside our  
window. This is a sacred place.

We live in God's world, and we  
acknowledge the First Peoples of this  
place: their elders past, present and  
those who lead on into the future. We  
seek reconciliation and healing in this  
nation.



**Uniting Aboriginal and Islander  
Christian Congress**

*Always Was, Always Will Be* - the NAIDOC  
theme for 2020 recognises that First Nations  
people have occupied and cared for this  
continent for over 65,000 years.

### Singing Take my life, & let it be

Take my life, and let it be  
consecrated, Lord, to thee.

Take my moments and my days  
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move  
at the impulse of thy love.  
Take my feet, and let them be  
swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing  
always, only, for my King.  
Take my lips, and let them be  
filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold  
nothing, Lord, would I withhold.  
Take my intellect, and use  
every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it thine;  
it shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart, it is thine own;  
it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love: my Lord, I pour  
at thy feet its treasure-store.  
Take myself, and I will be  
ever, only, all for thee.

*Used with Permission CCLI 241 739 Frances Ridley  
Havergal 1836-79 alt. CHARLTON or NOTTINGHAM*



### Prayer

Loving God

You surround us with the web of life  
The new day begins with your promise  
of life.

The old day ends with your promise of  
presence.

In these days, open our hearts that we  
might find life in your world

In our hearts, open us that we might  
find you at work in our world

In our world, open our eyes to your  
Spirit in all we encounter.

Enmeshed in your web of life  
we confess to where we have lived as if  
we were independent of our  
responsibilities to You, one another and  
our world:

*<silent prayer of confession>*

*Spring is a season of New Life:*

*Where in Toora, Foster, Fish Creek, Tarwin Lower, Inverloch, Wonthaggi, or Phillip Island can you see it?  
The Uniting Church in Australia Synod VicTas, from Shearwater Team Presbytery of Gippsland.*



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Hear these words of Faith and Hope  
Sin is forgiven: **Thanks be to God.**

### **Listening**

**Read** 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18

**Read** Matthew 25: 1-13

For these words of faith

& Jesus the Word: **Thanks be to God.**

### **Reflecting - Rev. Jennie Gordon**

*"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this,"* is the first sentence in today's reading from Matthew's gospel. We'll explore that in detail soon. Before we do, I'm inviting you to tell me the first sentence of the story of your life.

This invitation was offered in an online conference I attended recently. Thankfully I didn't have to think of something on the spot, I was participating by listening only. It's a great challenge though. *Tell me the first sentence of the story of your life...* Have a go, now if you want to, or later if you'd rather give it more time. If you feel like sharing, email it to me at [pastoral.ucagipps@gmail.com](mailto:pastoral.ucagipps@gmail.com) - I'd love to know what you write.

The speaker was Padraig O'Tuama, Irish poet, theologian and peace-maker. He talked about the way that we begin our stories reveals much about the story that is to follow and even more about ourselves.

Think about *'Once upon a time'* - ok, here comes a fairy tale.

Or *"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,"* - be prepared for the tough times of Dickens.

Or *"Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself."* - as Virginia Woolfe begins the tale.

The way Jesus began the stories he was telling, to teach those around him, revealed some things about him and spoke powerfully of his mission. There

are a number of stories that Jesus begins in this way; *"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this."*

*Then*, is the first word. We wonder, when? What does Jesus mean when he says *'then'*? It's an interesting first word for a chapter. Reading back in Matthew chapter 24, Jesus is talking about the signs of the end of the age. He is talking about what we might call the apocalypse, when, literally, there will be an unveiling of what is not yet known. But Jesus knows it, because he's beginning his story from here. So Jesus has knowledge beyond our own.

*Then, the Kingdom of Heaven will be like this.* Jesus is drawing an image of the promised future to help people understand what he is inviting them into. He already knows what it looks like, because he is the embodiment of the Kingdom of Heaven and, in his life and death, is unveiling, revealing it to earth, and so begins the story.

We listen to the story, having taken in the beginning. This beginning has prepared us to find something in the story of truth about what is to come, something we don't know already. Jesus is telling us that this time is coming, but also, may already be here, because he is here.

As the story unfolds it becomes a tale of being ready, of staying awake and of missing out if you don't. It's a tale with a warning. Jesus alerts his followers to a time when things will change, when the waiting will be over and, from the beatitudes we explored last week, a time when things will turn topsy-turvy and the meek will inherit the earth. You have been woken up by this story. Stay awake, he says, stay awake. You have been told. *Then, the kingdom of heaven will be like this.*

Come with me to today, now, in this place we call Australia. When I was a child in school, the dominant narrative of the history of this country would have started with a sentence like this: *On 26*

*Spring is a season of New Life:*

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*January 1788 Captain Arthur Phillip sailed into Port Jackson on HMS Supply and raised the British flag to proclaim the colony of New South Wales.*

Now, if you were to tell the story of this country, what would your first sentence be? It's more than 40 years since I was in school, and in that time I have heard other stories. Many, many of us have been shaken awake by the truth of the history of this country. "We need to find deliberate ways to de-center the dominant narratives," says Padraig. Now, more than ever, because we have been shaken awake by what we have learned, it's important to keep awake and tell the truth about this country by beginning our stories in a different way. Today marks the start of NAIDOC week. Here's the story from the website.<sup>1</sup> It's a long story, stay with it. Be open and let it speak to you.

*Always Was, Always Will Be.*

*Always Was, Always Will Be. recognises that First Nations people have occupied and cared for this continent for over 65,000 years. We are spiritually and culturally connected to this country.*

This country was criss-crossed by generations of brilliant Nations.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were Australia's first explorers, first navigators, first engineers, first farmers, first botanists, first scientists, first diplomats, first astronomers and first artists.

Australia has the world's oldest oral stories. The First Peoples engraved the world's first maps, made the earliest paintings of ceremony and invented unique technologies. We built and engineered structures - structures on Earth - predating well-known sites such as the Egyptian Pyramids and Stonehenge.

Our adaptation and intimate knowledge of Country enabled us to endure climate change, catastrophic droughts and rising sea levels.

*Always Was, Always Will Be.* acknowledges that hundreds of Nations and our cultures covered this continent. All were managing the land - the biggest estate on earth - to sustainably provide for their future.

Through ingenious land management systems like fire stick farming we transformed the harshest habitable continent into a land of bounty.

NAIDOC Week 2020 acknowledges and celebrates that our nation's story didn't begin with documented European contact whether in 1770 or 1606 - with the arrival of the Dutch on the western coast of the Cape York Peninsula.

The very first footprints on this continent were those belonging to First Nations peoples.

Our coastal Nations watched and interacted with at least 36 contacts made by Europeans prior to 1770. Many of them resulting in the charting of the northern, western and southern coastlines – of our lands and our waters.

For us, this nation's story began at the dawn of time.

NAIDOC 2020 invites all Australians to embrace the true history of this country – a history which dates back thousands of generations.

It's about seeing, hearing and learning the First Nations' 65,000+ year history of this country - which is Australian history. We want all Australians to celebrate that we have the oldest continuing cultures on the planet and to recognise that our sovereignty was never ceded.

*Always Was, Always Will Be.*

*Then, the kingdom of heaven will be like this.* Jesus' story of being awake and staying awake speaks to us in this moment of history. Across the world we have seen a new chapter of the story of humanity unfolding in the Black Lives Matter movement. We have been woken up to the reality of white privilege and the systemic violence and oppression

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aidoc.org.au/get-involved/2020-theme>.



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inflicted on people of colour. Now we must stay awake: 'stay woke' as Jesus might say today.

We are called to carry the light, a light that has been present in this land for longer than we know. This light is a light for all of us, for all nations. Having 'oil in our lamps' might be about knowing how to begin our stories when we have a chance to tell them. Staying woke, might be about how to speak with words that come from deep within our heart of faith, stories of a time of truth, justice and peace; *then, the kingdom of heaven will be like this.*

### ***Responding: Affirmation of Faith***

*From the UCA Assembly resources<sup>2</sup>*

**We say** God created the universe,  
and the world we live in,  
and every living thing on this earth.

**We believe** the Creation shows us  
the power and presence of God,  
and makes us want to praise  
and give thanks to God,  
and take good care  
of the earth God has made.

**We are full of joy**  
that across the world  
different peoples have their own  
culture and language,  
and that in God  
we are all united together as one.

**We say** God is Spirit, breath of life,  
who is always working  
to bring people to life in God.

**We believe** the Spirit has been alive  
and active in every race and culture,  
getting hearts and minds ready  
for the good news:  
the good news of God's love and grace  
that Jesus Christ revealed.

**We are full of joy**  
that from the beginning

the Spirit was alive and active,  
revealing God  
through the law, custom and  
ceremony  
of the First Peoples  
of this ancient land.

**We say** Jesus is Saviour and Lord,  
and that he began the church  
and prayed that the church  
might be together as one.

**We believe** that in the risen Jesus  
we are all brothers and sisters  
in the one great family of God,  
and that God calls us  
to live in faith, hope and love  
for the sake of the Kingdom of God  
here on earth.

**We are full of joy** that we can learn,  
grow and serve together  
as a pilgrim people  
in the name of Christ.

### ***Prayers for World & Community***

We sense your Spirit moving, gracious  
God. You are never static, but you are  
dynamic movement itself. Everywhere  
we go, we meet you.

You are there,  
When we watch the news and see the  
despair. When we are tempted to think  
you have left us and gone somewhere  
else. There in stories of murder, drug  
addiction, road tragedies, even when  
you seem to be absent in politics!

You are there,  
You are the grieving parent. You are in  
the warzone. In the eyes of our enemy,  
and our neighbour. You are medics  
and the firies and the police. The tears  
of the broken are your tears.

<sup>2</sup><https://resources.uca.org.au/cudw/worship-resources-and-publications/item/861-prayers-liturgies>





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You are there,  
In the day to day struggles associated  
with ageing, with ill health (mental or  
physical or spiritual). Perhaps in  
struggles with disability. Perhaps with  
the biases of others. You are in the  
advocates and the carers, the teachers  
and the social workers.

You are there,  
In the midst of broken and fragmented  
relationships. There also in the joy of  
shared celebrations and achievement.

You are there,  
In the re-emergence and new birth. In  
the friendships and the  
companionship. You are there in the  
shared tears and the joy of our  
laughter and pleasure.  
Present with us in all things loving  
God. We meet you in the air. And we  
meet you in the ordinariness of our  
lives.

You were there,  
always there, present in the birth of  
this nation. But long before that you  
were there, your Spirit moving in and  
through this land and its peoples. You  
were there through the tragedies and  
sorrow of our shared history. There  
still, in and through the hope we hold  
of a shared future of listening, of grace  
and truth, respect and peace.

May these words, the words of our  
shared prayers, be our encouragement,  
'God with us'. Wake us up to your  
Presence. Spark our imaginations and  
our dreamings. Bless us as we gather,  
and as we disperse.  
Let it be so.

*As we pray, may we hear again the prayer  
of Jesus' heart:*

### ***The Lord's Prayer***

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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.

### ***Passing the peace***

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When we share the Peace, we are  
sharing in the Peace of Christ.  
May the Peace of Jesus Christ dwell in  
your hearts this day and every day:  
Amen

*Be sure to call somebody this week and  
share the peace with them also.*

### ***Offering***

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We share what we have, so that all may  
have life in all its fullness:  
Bring your gift into your worship  
space/table.  
Bless what we give, and bring your  
kingdom of hope to all in this  
community and beyond.  
In Christ we pray: Amen

### ***Singing Be still, my soul***

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Be still, my soul:  
the Lord is on your side;  
bear patiently  
the cross of grief and pain;  
leave to your God  
to order and provide;  
in every change  
he faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul:  
your best, your heavenly friend  
through thorny ways  
leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul:  
your God will undertake  
to guide the future as he has the past.  
Your hope, your confidence  
let nothing shake,

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all now mysterious  
shall be clear at last.  
Be still, my soul:  
the tempests still obey  
his voice, who ruled them  
once on Galilee.

and Christ dwells in you  
and God goes with us all. Amen

*Shearwater Ministry Team:*  
Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson  
Rev. Jennie Gordon  
Rev. Ian Turnnidge



Be still, my soul:  
when dearest friends depart  
and all is darkened in the vale of tears,  
then you shall better know  
his love, his heart,  
who comes to soothe your sorrow,  
calm your fears.  
Be still, my soul: for Jesus can restore  
the trust and hope  
that strengthened you before.

Be still, my soul:  
the hour is hastening on  
when we shall be  
for ever with the Lord,  
when disappointment,  
grief and fear are gone,  
sorrow forgotten,  
love's pure joy restored.  
Be still, my soul:  
when change and tears are past,  
all safe and bless'ed  
we shall meet at last.

*Used with permission TIS 123 Katharina von  
Schlegel 1697, tr. Jane Laurie Borthwick 1813-97  
alt. FINLANDIA*

### ***Re-Collection***

What you have been praying today,  
What you have been reading today,  
What you have been contemplating:  
how will you live it? *How may you bring  
the Gospel to life in your community  
today? How will you begin to tell your  
story, our story?*

### ***Blessing***

Step out and into the simple  
and difficult path of loving God  
and loving your neighbour,  
Whole-heartedly and soulfully,  
knowing that the Spirit of God  
has already gone before you

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