



Sunday June 6th, 2021 The Fig Tree Worship Resource



Gathering & Lighting the Candle

As the candle is awakened this morning, come with hearts awake and alive, hearts that are renewed and restored. As the candle flickers and gathers strength, remember the God who strengthens your heart.

Call to worship

The steadfast love and faithfulness of God endures forever.
God's hand is stretched out toward you, God beckons you into the presence of the gathered.
Come and worship with a heart that is whole and undivided. Come and be renewed and refreshed.

Acknowledging



In grace and gratitude we acknowledge the First Peoples of our nation, in particular of our local area. We pay respect to their elders, past, present and emerging and commit ourselves to seek justice and right relationship together, in unity with all living things.

Singing 'Come down, O love divine' (Tis 398)

Come down, O love divine,
Seek now this soul of mine
And visit it with your own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
Within my heart appear,
And kindle it, your holy flame bestowing.

There let it freely burn,
Till earthly passions turn
To dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;

And let your glorious light
Shine ever on my sight,
And clothe me round,
the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity
My outer garment be,
And lowliness become my inner clothing;
True lowliness of heart,
Which takes the humbler part,
And for its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong,
With which the soul will long,
Shall far outpass the power of human telling;
For none can guess its grace,
Till we become the place
in which the Holy Spirit makes His dwelling.

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Prayer



When I cry out you answer me, you strengthen my soul.

Living, loving God, our hearts are drawn toward you and we give you thanks. We sing praises to you.

And yet we also turn our backs and question your authority and try to move ahead of you. Sometimes we act as though you are not enough and want what we think others have. We focus on fleeting things, transient, unimportant things, on the things which we can see, while neglecting the unseen things. We make differences and separations where none need to be. Bring us into rich and deep relationship with each other and with you we pray. Fulfill your purpose for us and hold us in your steadfast, enduring and faithful



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love. Your word assures us of your forgiveness.
Grace and gratitude abound, for you are faithful.

Dear ones be assured, you are loved and forgiven.
THANKS BE TO GOD.

Listening

2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1 & Mark 3: 20-35

For these words of faith
& for Jesus the Word: **Thanks be to God.**

Reflecting -

Tribes have their way of maintaining peace. The scene from Mark's gospel is chaotic. The crowd presses. There is not even space for a bite to eat. And people are nervous and calling Jesus mad.

The Scribes have come from Jerusalem. Why are they here in a small rural village? And they accuse: *By the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.*

Now his tribe, his family are there to 'restrain' him. Perhaps Mary is scared for the safety of her firstborn. Perhaps his brothers are fed up with having to carry him because he's a dreamer and wanderer. Perhaps they are all a bit anxious that Jesus is bringing the family into disrepute.

Things are getting ugly. If Jesus is 'out of his mind', we might imagine he will be bound in chains or locked away. Maybe an intervention will see Jesus back home in the carpentry shop? Maybe they can stop him being outspoken, somehow placate him!

We know that Jesus was quite happy to stand up to the smear tactics of scribes or Pharisees. But when the family arrives, his response to them is shocking. In the ancient world you do not survive without family. It is the seat of respect, dignity, authority. It is the place of social care and obligation. Without family you may as well roam

among the tombs in chains. Is that what is at stake in his rebuke to those who would restrain him? Or does Jesus see their offer of care as chains itself – muting his calling, his faithful obedience to God? Family instinct drives us to self-preservation, and Jesus warns this will not end well.

So what does that mean for us? Is this a wake-up call, not to take the easy road that pleases others, but to take our measure or guide from a greater source? How do we stay true to who God calls us to be? How can we speak truth that liberates the chains of oppression rather than adds to them? How can we find a voice or a place of action when those who love us want to quench what makes them uncomfortable?

Jesus does the unthinkable. He dismisses his family – that is anyone who gets in the way. He then invokes a new form of family. Imagine the pain of Mary and his brothers as they hear what he says:

'Who are my mother and my brothers?' 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.'

This takes great courage. Perhaps it is why we admire those who stand up against the tribe for what is right, regardless of cost. Oscar Romero spoke out against poverty, injustice, killings and torture in El Salvador. He paid the ultimate price for that, yet remains an inspiration of strength and conviction, forever remembered as a martyr – gunned down while leading Mass for those who were being oppressed.

No deviation from faithful conviction and calling. That is what Jesus is saying here, no matter what the tribe thinks of it. And isn't that where true gospel power lies in any case? Like the awesome, chain-breaking and restorative power of unbridled love? Isn't Jesus invoking an 'anti-smear' campaign where words like sinner, unclean, and barren no longer stick to ordinary



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people but through the will and love of God reconciliation is found in their place?

In Jesus' new family, retaliation, violence and scapegoating are off the table. Even Jesus' own flesh and blood were invited into that vision (which at least his mother, Mary and his brother James seem to have taken up). We are also invited to follow the call into the way of Christ, regardless of tribe or barriers in our way. As Jesus is our centre rather than contrary voices of crowd or kin, we discover we are tribe or family in a new form, we are the community of Christ.

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

Inclusive, expansive God. You have extended what we thought of as family. Those with whom we share life, those who gather as your people, these are your kin. These are our kin.

United in solidarity we stand together, for divided in our faith we fall away and scatter.

We stand with those who are hurting amongst us this day. Those who are here with us or are of our community but absent this day. We pray for those who grieve or suffer pain or ill health.

We stand with those who are part of our wider community. Those who are homeless, who know the grind of the cycle of poverty. We pray for those who are facing insecurity in food or shelter. We pray for those who just need to have some support and feel that no one is there for them.

We pray for those in our country who are voiceless and powerless. For those in despair, for those facing unemployment or underemployment. For the traumatized and those who feel passed by.

We pray for those across our world who suffer. Those in conflict zones. Those in famine or

suffering the effects of other food shortages. We pray for those affected by the ongoing pandemic.

We pray for our governments and our leaders. Let us always remember the poor and the "least of these", for it is always the vulnerable who suffer when things get tough. We think of programs that are meant to care for the "little ones", programs such as the NDIS and other supports. Help us to keep these programs accountable so that they truly serve those for whom they exist. We pray for those who need support in their ageing, that the supports will be readily available and accessible.

At the end of this Reconciliation Week we commit to pray and to seek reconciliation between First and Second Peoples. We commit to listen deeply, to be respectful and truthful even when it is costly. For truly God, when we stand together in solidarity and in our faith in you we flourish. When we foster division and separation we all are diminished. For we are family, we are kin.

Gracious God we pray for grace, grace and more grace. In the name God, one in community, 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.

Passing the peace

May the Peace of God dwell with you:
and also with you.



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Offering

What is one thing you can offer alongside your monetary offering today? What things do you already offer and share? Commit to using a talent today that will show someone you stand with them.

Notices

There have been recent changes to COVID restrictions. For up to date information: <https://victas.uca.org.au/all-you-need-to-know-answers-to-your-frequently-asked-questions/>

Singing 'Community of Christ' (Tis 473)

Community of Christ,
who make the Cross your own,
live out your creed and
risk your life for God alone:
the God who wears your face,
to whom all worlds belong,
whose children are of
every race and every song.

Community of Christ,
look past the Church's door
and see the refugee,
the hungry, and the poor.
Take hands with the oppressed,
the jobless in the street,
take towel and water,
that you wash your neighbour's feet.

Community of Christ,
through whom the word must sound -
cry out for justice and
for peace the whole world round:
disarm the powers that war
and all that can destroy,
turn bombs to bread,
and tears of anguish into joy.

When menace melts away,
so shall God's will be done,
the climate of the world
be peace and Christ its Sun;
our currency be love
and kindness our law,
our food and faith be shared
as one for evermore.

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Blessing

Go out to be the revelation of God in each and every moment of your lives.

Go out in gratitude to show and to share God's Grace. The faithful Spirit will go with you, enabling you to show up and speak up!

And may you know the renewing, refreshing presence of God surrounding you as you go. Go in peace and in grace to love and to serve in the name of God.

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