



# Sunday June 20th, 2021

## The Fig Tree Worship Resource



### **Gathering & Lighting the Candle**

As we gather for worship, we light a candle.  
The light of Christ shines among us.  
It is light that shines in the darkness,  
light that illumines our path.

As the candle dances to life, we remember Jesus  
Christ is light and life for all who follow him.

### **Call to worship**

Come you pilgrim people,  
folk who journey the way of Christ.  
Come, you who journey  
no matter where you are led.  
Come, you who waver  
wondering where next you tread.  
God our help in ages past  
our hope for years to come.  
Come, let us worship God.

### **Acknowledging**



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander  
Christian Congress*

We acknowledge the traditional custodians in this place and pay our respect to elders - past, present and emerging. As we touch on another anniversary of the Uniting Church, we join our whole of church journey to walk together as first and second peoples.

### **Singing O God our help, Tis 47**

Isaac Watts

O God, our help in ages past,  
our hope for years to come,  
our shelter from the stormy blast,  
and our eternal home.

Beneath the shadow of thy throne,  
thy saints have dwelt secure;  
sufficient is thine arm alone,  
and our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,  
or earth received her frame,  
from everlasting thou art God,  
to endless years the same.

A thousand ages in thy sight  
are like an evening gone;  
short as the watch that ends the night  
before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,  
will bear us all away;  
we fade and vanish, as a dream  
dies at the op'ning day.

O God, our help in ages past,  
our hope for years to come,  
be thou our guard while troubles last,  
and our eternal home.

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### **Prayer**

God of grace, we hear of the gifts and graces you offer and give you our thanks. You are the one who calms the storms, you are the bringer of peace to our struggles. You offer nothing less than our salvation, even though we wonder what that might mean.

In our wondering, hear our prayer:

### **Singing: O Lord, hear my prayer TiS 741**

O Lord, hear my prayer,  
O Lord, hear my prayer:  
When I call answer me.  
O Lord, hear my prayer,  
O Lord, hear my prayer:  
Come and listen to me.

Jacques Berthier/Taizé

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As we pray we recognise that often we are deep in storms of our own making; or storms

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made worse through our confusion or reluctance to let go - things that cause chaos or diminish ourselves or others. And so we call out to you:

O Lord, hear my prayer

As Jesus reminds the disciples, so too we hear and wonder about our faith or lack of it, where fears overwhelm and the peace you offer breaks through as surprise despite our doubts.

O Lord, hear my prayer

As we call, you come to meet us where we are. We hear again your offer of life and wholeness, and respond with hearts open wide.

We believe you know our hearts and hear our prayers, and that through Jesus the Christ we are offered peace despite storms.

As we are made new in his name, we respond with hearts wide open: **thanks be to God. Amen.**

### Listening

Read: 2 Corinthians 6:1-13

Mark 4:35-41

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

### Reflecting - Rev. Jennie Gordon

The first story in the bible is about God overcoming chaos and bringing order. In the beginning, the world was *tohu wa-bohu*, a poetic Hebrew phrase for what is translated as formless and void. And a mighty wind swept over the surface of the waters... I'm writing this in the middle of our first big winter storm, and, as you know, it's a ripper. From the front windows I can see wild, rolling waves churning menacingly towards the beach. Along the foreshore, trees are

bending, tops swirling, waving surrender in the force of the wind. Birds fly sideways, sometimes backwards, making no headway, returning to shelter. It's warm in here with the fire lit. The gospel reading for this week is about Jesus calming the storm. Or is it?

Miracles invite us into mystery, so what seems like a surface story of the stilling of a storm on Lake Galilee, goes much deeper, if we're willing to be open to the wonder. Come with me, let's get into the boat. Jesus is moving to the other side, leaving the crowds in the predominantly Jewish part of Galilee, to go to the predominantly Gentile coast. The living word is on the move. It's evening and he's tired from the day's demands, so he settles to sleep on a cushion in the stern.

This little boat is the church and in the time of the writing of Mark's gospel, it's suffering persecution. This tiny community is being buffeted by forces within and without; the storms are very real. What storms are threatening us in the church today? Changing culture, consequences of COVID, an ageing population, the secularisation of society ... our lack of faith?

The disciples join their ancestors in making grumbling accusations against the Holy One when the going gets too tough to bear, when fear sets in. We can read the murmurings in Exodus and Numbers, just like we can hear them in this gospel story... "Do you not care that we are perishing?" Outrageous! Here's Jesus, literally spending his life to bring healing and forgiveness as foretold by the prophets and being accused of not caring!

Jesus stands and muzzles the storm, just as he has muzzled the unclean spirits. Using his great force of love, he brings calm out of the storm, order out of chaos, creation out of *tohu wa-bohu*, job done. Then he turns to his disciples, to us, and says with what I hear is a

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note of weary sadness in his voice; ‘Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?’.

Here the story tells us that the disciples were filled with great awe and said to each other, ‘who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him? They’ve been caught up in the miracle and they’ve missed the message, missed the dive into deep mystery, once again. Sure, Jesus can calm the storm, but he can’t fill our hearts with faith if they aren’t open.

What if they had stopped and asked Jesus how they might grow in their faith, in a way that would overcome their fear, in a way that might harness the great power of love over the storms and chaos of their lives and the lives of those around them? What if we did that, what if we could see beyond the surface of our struggles? What if we stop doubting and grumbling and overcome our fear with an open heart to trust the power and the mystery of love? What if we did that now, as disciples of Jesus, as a church both local and universal? ‘Now’, says the apostle Paul in the second letter to the Corinthians, ‘now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation’ Little children, do not fear, open your hearts.

### **Responding:**

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

Loving God, we bring before you the storms impacting the world and the people we know.

Hear our prayers for those overwhelmed by fear - fear of pandemic and its impact. This includes people who feel their health is fragile and wonder about every social contact they have. We pray for those who are lonely through closed borders or doors. Our prayers go out to those who grieve as loss upon loss comes like a raging storm. We pray for those confused by conflicting advice and have concerns about where and how they will

become safe. Our prayers are for those who have not received the care they would hope for. We pray for those in power whose decisions fall short of what we hope for.

May storms be calmed as we reach out to care for friends and neighbours near or far with your peace. May there be calm as leaders find ways to share resources so that those who fear the most are offered wellbeing and calm.

### ***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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May the Peace of God,  
in all the storms of life,  
dwell within your heart:  
**and also within yours.**

### ***Offering***

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Accept these gifts we bring,  
God of calm and storm,  
We bring them with open hearts.  
May they be used for your work  
in the church and in the wider community  
in Jesus’ name, Amen.

### ***Notices***

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How will you celebrate the UCA’s birthday on Tuesday? What were you doing in 1977?

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### **Singing: Make me a channel TiS 607**

Sebastian Temple

Make me a channel of Your peace.  
Where there is hatred  
let me bring Your love;  
Where there is injury,  
Your pardon, Lord;  
And where there's doubt,  
true faith in You.

*Oh, Master, grant that I  
may never seek  
So much to be consoled  
as to console;  
To be understood  
as to understand;  
To be loved  
as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of Your peace.  
Where there's despair in life  
let me bring hope;  
Where there is darkness,  
only light;  
And where there's sadness,  
ever joy.

Make me a channel of Your peace.  
It is in pardoning  
that we are pardoned,  
In giving of ourselves  
that we receive,  
And in dying that we're  
born to eternal life.

1967 Sebastian Temple/OCP Publications/Adm. by Calamus  
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### **Blessing**

Go with hearts open wide  
to the peace, love and life  
offered us by God.  
Go and offer open hearts  
to a world in need of  
peace, love and life.  
And may the blessing of God  
who offers calm to the storms  
be with you now and always,  
in the name of the  
Creator, Redeemer & Sustainer, Amen.

*Presbytery of Gippsland*  
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Reflection: Rev. Jennie Gordon  
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