



Sunday July 4th, 2021

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

If you have three minutes and twenty three seconds and an internet connection, light the candle and begin worship today by watching Judith Durham sing 'Just a closer walk with thee': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrXur4qBrwc>

Or light the candle and dwell on these words from the song: *I am weak but thou art strong, Jesus, keep me from all wrong. Daily walking close to thee: let it be, dear Lord, let it be.*

Call to worship

Call us in, God beside us,
**call us in from our daily doings
to be your grateful, gathered people.**
Be with us, Spirit of life,
**inspire, enthuse and encourage us
with your abundant presence.**
Then lead us out, Jesus of the dusty roads,
to walk your way, in your footsteps,
**where your grace is sufficient
and our weakness is strength.**
May it be so, Amen

Acknowledging



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

As we gather at the beginning of NAIDOC week, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, this country deeply in need of healing. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging and to all First Nations people reading or listening to this worship resource. We commit ourselves again to honor the covenant between the UCA and the UAICC and continue to engage locally and nationally in truth-telling, justice-seeking and walking together.

Singing - Stand up and bless the Lord TiS 449

Used with permission CCLI 206 729
Stand up and bless the Lord;
all people now rejoice:
stand up and bless the Lord your God
with heart and soul and voice.

Though high above all praise,
above all blessing high,
who would not fear his holy name,
give thanks and glorify?

O for the living flame
from his own altar brought,
to touch our lips, our minds inspire,
and wing to heaven our thought!

God is our strength and song,
and his salvation ours;
then be his love in Christ proclaimed
with all our ransomed powers.

Stand up and bless the Lord,
the Lord your God adore;
stand up and bless his glorious name,
both now and evermore.



Prayer

Psalm 48: 1, 2, 9, 10 & 11:

We pray these words from Psalm 48:
Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised
in the city of our God.

**His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation,
is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion,
in the far north, the city of the great King.**

We ponder your steadfast love, O God,
in the midst of your temple.

**Your name, O God, like your praise,
reaches to the ends of the earth.**

Your right hand is filled with victory.

Let Mount Zion be glad,

**let the towns of Judah rejoice
because of your judgments.**

We ponder your steadfast love, O God,
in the midst of your faithful people.

From generation to generation
our ancestors in the faith have served you,
bringing their strengths and weaknesses
in humble service and in joyous praise.

Under starlit skies, through Dreaming stories,
in houses, in sheds, in paddocks,
by lakes, rivers and oceans,
in churches and cathedrals,

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on top of mountains and deep in the forests
their voices have lifted
in praise and petition, in story and song.
We join our voices to those gone before us.
(sing or say together)

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God, all creatures here below.
Praise God, above, ye heavenly host.
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost!**

Here these words from the apostle Paul,
"but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you,
for power is made perfect in weakness."

Our prayer continues:
We bring our confession before you,
God of grace,
because we often believe we are not enough.
We are too few, too old, too young, too busy.
We are small in faith and big in unbelief.
We doubt your power in us.
We know we are not worthy,
not ready, not brave or even very wise.
We count our weaknesses as failures
and our failures as weaknesses.
Hear the prayers of our hearts...
(time of quiet)

Forgive us,
reach into the darkness of our unknowing
with your touch of life.
Bless our weakness with your grace,
so that, through our cracks,
we might shine with the light
of your healing love.
Bless our faltering footsteps with your power,
so that, when we are welcomed,
we are not afraid to stay and to show
your abiding, forgiving, loving presence.
Hear again these words from the apostle Paul:
but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you,
for power is made perfect in weakness."
Sisters and brothers in Christ,
we are loved and forgiven, healed and sent out.
**Great is God; Creator, Spirit, Word made flesh,
all that was, all that is, all that will be,
evermore, Amen**

Listening

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:2-10

Mark 6:1-13

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

Reflecting - Rev. Jennie Gordon

Jesus sends the disciples out two by two, not alone. He sends them out after he's been teaching to great acclaim in his hometown, but he is unable to do any 'deeds of power' here. He can't do any deeds of power because people just can't see beyond who they already know that he is; the son of..., the brother of... etc. They have limited the work that Jesus can do amongst them, by their own limited visions and ideas, so he sends out the disciples and they go with clear instructions.

What a relief it must have been for Jesus to come home. Back to the people he grew up alongside. Back to familiar places and faces, armed with the authoritative teaching and the amazing healing power he has been sharing across the countryside. Now, finally, he can help those who are closest to him. But he can't, because they refuse to accept what he can offer. It's a challenging thought, that even the greatest power of love, from the essential creative force, Emmanuel God-with-us, can only be effective if the recipient is open, willing and ready to receive. What a disappointment it must have been for Jesus to come home.

He doesn't stop though, he goes out again, to the villages, and finds people and places that are longing for the light and brings it to them, dispelling the darkness. Then he sends the disciples to do what he has been doing and tells them to be discerning, to be aware of places of welcome and places of rejection and to act accordingly, relying on the goodness of others.

Often, we identify with the disciples in their sending out. We do well to encourage each other in finding and keeping companionship; none of us should travel this path of discipleship alone. We



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need pilgrims to journey alongside, we need to be both guide and guided, leader and listener, healer and holder of the stories. We hear Jesus saying to us that we should not burden ourselves with excesses, should not carry more than we need and should not be overprotective of ourselves or set ourselves apart: wear sandals and get dusty feet just like everyone else. He tells us to be wary of what kind of welcome we receive, and to quickly and completely shake off our rejections, to remain strong and steady in the places of hospitality, until we leave.

What happens though, if we identify with the people in the villages where the disciples are visiting? What if we are the households that are being offered the healing power of God's creative love? Maybe it might come to us in the form of someone who we instantly reject, because we know who he is and where he's from and what he's done; and he couldn't be up to any good – could he? Maybe it might come to us in the form of someone who is so different from us that we are afraid of not knowing how to behave, how to communicate or which pronouns to use? Maybe it might come to us in the form of someone we have rejected because of their opposing political or theological points of view? Are we willing to be open? Are we brave enough to let someone from 'outside' bring us the blessing of the gospel? Are we open to welcome the stranger in that way?

In today's reading from 2 Corinthians 12, the apostle Paul talks about his weakness, his 'thorn in the flesh'. After asking three times for it to be removed, he hears the word of the Lord say to him *"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."* My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness. As the late, great Leonard Cohen put it, *'there's a crack, a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in.'* God bless our weaknesses, our cracks and our lack of welcome to the one who brings your love. Let those cracks flood light into our darkness and make our hearts a place of welcome, where your grace finds a home and stays. For Jesus' sake, and the sake of the world. Let it be so. Amen.

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

God of our breathing, we pray today for people and places knowing that you animate our each and every breath through your Holy Spirit.

So we pray for all who struggle to take another breath, especially those impacted by the COVID pandemic. We pray for countries that face unimaginable challenges. Through our world partners, may the gifts we share assist people seeking oxygen to breathe, and masks and vaccines to offer hope for the future.

We pray for people in Gippsland, and the Dandenong and Macedon ranges who have been hit by the recent storm and still face the fear of trees falling around them, or the ongoing impact from flood waters or loss of power. We pray for those who have lost houses or other property, for those facing challenges on dairy farms through not being able to milk, for others who find themselves isolated or not quite knowing which steps to take. Guide us as we offer love and practical care where possible.

We pray for the churches of Australia, and especially the Uniting Church as she enters her 45th year. We talk of being pilgrim people on a journey, but there are many challenges on the way together. Guide our congregations, especially those small and isolated, and those who have found drought, bushfire, COVID or flood have stretched resources and capacity to stick to our pilgrim way.

We pray for the relationships our churches have - those places of cooperation with other church partners such as our Anglican-Uniting congregations across Gippsland. We pray for community relationships, in particular churches or faithful individuals who have relationships as first and second peoples that are witness to who you call us to be. As we enter NAIDOC week, we remember our commitment to the covenant we have to walk together.

As we take breath upon breath, remind us again of the Spirit that breathes life into us, and

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encourages us to follow Jesus the Christ, and reach out to all with his love and grace.

And as we continue to take breaths in a time of silence, we offer our personal prayers to you, God of our journeys ...

And we now pray together as Jesus taught us:

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 for ever. Amen.

Passing the peace

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

Offering

Gracious God, bless what we bring and put in the plate, and what is directed to the bank account, and what is offered from our time, skill and capacity. Bless all these gifts and use them to bring your healing hope and life-giving love through the doors where it is needed most, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Notices

The beginning of NAIDOC week is a good time to ask what your congregation might do to further engage in healing country and in seeking justice for First Peoples. There's a great new Covenant resource on the Synod's website: <https://victas.uca.org.au/resources/covenanting/> along with lots of other links to explore.

Singing- We are your people TiS 468

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We are your people; Spirit of grace,
you dare to make us, to all our neighbours,
Christ's living voice, hands and face.

Joined in community, treasured and fed,
may we discover gifts in each other,
willing to lead and be led

Rich in diversity, help us to live
closer than neighbours, open to strangers,
able to clash and forgive.

Glad of tradition, help us to see
in all life's changing, where you are leading,
where our best efforts should be.

Give, as we venture justice and care
(peaceful, resisting, waiting or risking)
wisdom to know when and where.

Christ, as we serve you in different ways,
may all we're doing, show that you're living,
meeting your love with our praise.

Blessing

May the love of Christ enfold you,
wherever he may lead you.

May he guide you through the wilderness,
protect you in the storm.

May he bring you home, rejoicing,
at the wonders he has shown you.

May he bring you home rejoicing,
with a welcome, at the door.

Go in peace, to love and serve God,
in the name of Christ, Amen.



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