



# Sunday July 18th, 2021 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

## Gathering & Lighting the Candle



As we gather, the meeting of the 16th Assembly of the UCA is underway, online. We light the candle and pray that the light of Christ will be present amongst them, that the Holy Spirit will inspire and guide them and that they will dwell in God's love for all.

### Call to worship

Come, light of life, shine on us.  
Shine through the walls and barriers we build.  
Shine through the cracks and doors left open.  
Shine through the murky dark of our unbelief,  
with the power of your life-giving light.  
**Come, light of life, shine on us,  
so that we might shine for you. Amen.**

### Acknowledging



At the end of NAIDOC week we pause to recall the images, songs, stories and conversations that we've shared to celebrate our First Nations' peoples, their vibrant presence and culture. *You might invite people to share something.*  
**We acknowledge that we are here on the lands of the traditional custodians. We pay respect to them and also to elders and other First Nations people who are reading or hearing these words. We commit ourselves to walking together in love and truth, for the healing of country and us all.**

### Singing *Lord of earth and all creation* TiS 672

MR & HMThwaites Used with permission CCLI 206 729

Lord of earth and all creation,  
let your love possess our land:  
wealth, and freedom, far horizons,  
mountain, forest, shining sand:  
may we share, in faith and friendship,  
gifts unmeasured from your hand.

People of the ancient Dreamtime,  
they who found this country first,  
ask with those, the later comers,  
will our dream be blessed or cursed?  
Grant us, Lord, new birth, new living,  
hope for which our children thirst.

Lord, life-giving healing Spirit,  
on our hurts your mercy shower;  
lead us by your inward dwelling,  
guiding, guarding, every hour,  
Bless and keep this land Australia:  
in your will her peace and power.



### Prayer

God of earth and all creation,  
we come to you with grateful hearts.  
As we dwell in you, we grow more deeply aware  
of your endless and continuous love  
that dwells in us.

**We pause to dwell in your love,  
surrounding and sustaining all of creation.**

*time of quiet*

We bring our thankfulness for the life of Jesus,  
for his compassion that reaches out to all,  
for his teaching, opening minds and hearts  
and for his healing presence in the marketplace.

**We pause to dwell in your love, made flesh  
and alive with us in Jesus.**

*time of quiet*

Our praise is offered on each breath  
for the gift of the Holy Spirit,  
for the way she renews and sustains her church  
through generations of the faithful,  
through stormy seas of change,  
through stress and strife and struggle.

**We pause to dwell in your love,  
uniting, enlivening and soothing us in the Spirit.**

*time of quiet*

For the times we have forgotten  
the love in which we dwell  
**Forgive us**

For the times when we have forsaken  
the path we walk together  
**Forgive us**

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For the times when we have failed  
each other, ourselves, and your fragile creation

### **Forgive us**

Siblings in Christ, we are blessed, forgiven and bound together in love. Hear these words from St Paul's letter to the Ephesians chapter 2 verses 9-22: *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.*

**Thanks be to God, Amen.**

### **Listening**

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Read: Ephesians 2:11-22;  
Mark 6:30-34, 50-53

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

### **Reflecting** - Rev. Sandra Houghton

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Humankind has been very good at building walls. Huge walls like the Great Wall of China, and the stone walls around ancient cities. But also, millions of more modest walls around factories, estates, farms, schools and homes.

What is it about the human race that we need to build so many walls? Well, most walls are built with some sort of protection in mind – for example, to keep invaders out, and to keep the elements out.

Walls are useful, but they can also be used for sinful purposes. Walls can embody our hatreds, our fears, and our perceived superiority and give them form. In Europe, many Christians feared, and even hated the Jews. So, they isolated them in walled ghettos. This in turn, made it easier for the Third Reich to round the Jews up to send to concentration and extermination camps.

In colonial Australia, many Aboriginal people were rounded up and effectively imprisoned in missions, orphanages and training schools. In the

world today, refugees are often confined in camps whilst waiting for re-settlement.

The early Christians knew all about walls. Many were rounded up and imprisoned behind high walls. They also lived within the walls of a very striated and divided society. You only mixed with those who came from the same strata of society and same religion. There were invisible walls through which you didn't pass.

Becoming a Christian put a wall between that person and most in the community, but even within the church there were barriers that needed to be broken down between those from Jewish and gentile backgrounds. Those from Jewish backgrounds often thought that all in the church should obey the Old Testament law.

Paul, and the other leaders, had to continually remind the church community that Jesus came to break down the barriers that separated people from God, and from each other. Through Christ Jesus **all** could come to worship God and become God's children.

As Paul writes, **“For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.** He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.” Ephesians 2:14-16

For the gentiles, this was good news. No longer were they excluded from God's kingdom. Through faith, by God's great gift, they were equal members in God's family, the church. For the Jewish members, it was also good news. They were freed from the impossibility of obeying all the Old Testament law and from the guilt that entailed. The church was a new “People of God”, a people united in faith, who were called to treat each other as equal and all as dearly beloved by God. The Church was to be in the business of pulling down the walls that divide and separate.

Somehow the church has often lost sight of this, or at least been poor in living it out. Walls have

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been erected that take many forms. Race, language and culture instead of enriching our lives, have sometimes led to divisions and prejudice in the church, based on difference.

Walls have been erected between protestants and catholics, between liberals and conservatives and fundamentalists, and between numerous other groupings. Churches have excluded (or at least made unwelcome) those who have different faith understandings or who didn't share their religious, moral or social beliefs.

This cuts right across the Gospel message of loving God and loving our neighbour as ourself. And it cuts right across Paul's message of our calling to be fellow members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, with Christ as the cornerstone, building together a holy temple. This is about co-operation and mutual dependency, holding together like bricks in a wall, with none being superior or inferior, but all being necessary to the life of the body.

This understanding invites us to reflect on whether we are a truly inclusive, welcoming and accepting congregation. Do we encourage one another and build each other up in the faith? Are we open to other faith understandings? And with NAIDOC week just gone, and remembering the church's complicity and involvement in dispossession and worse, are we participating in reconciliation with our indigenous brothers and sisters?

Let us ponder how we might be a church without walls, one body in Christ. Amen.

### **Responding:**

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

*Mark 6:56 And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.*

Healing Jesus, walking through the marketplaces of life, be present in the places of pain and suffering across the world.

**Heal country, heal people;  
restore them to dwell in your love.**

Healing Jesus, be present in the places of power and leadership at this critical time.

**Heal country, heal people;  
restore them to dwell in your love.**

Healing Jesus, trail the fringe of your cloak close to those we know, those who need the restorative power of your presence.

**Heal country, heal people;  
restore them to dwell in your love.**

We remember the meeting of the 16th Assembly and we pray for our new President Rev. Sharon Hollis and give thanks for the work of our past President, Deidre Palmer. We pray for all Assembly members including Deb Bye and the Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson from the Gippsland Presbytery, as we pray together in the words that Jesus taught the disciples:

### **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**

*Ephesians 2: 17: So he came  
and proclaimed peace to you who were far off  
and peace to those who were near  
Peace be with you, and also with you.*

### **Offering**

Whatever we have comes from you, God of abundant blessing. Take these gifts we bring and use them to shape a dwelling place for the healing power of your love, where it is needed most, in Jesus's name, **Amen.**



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### Notices

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*UCA's 16th Assembly theme - 'dwelling in love'.*

This Assembly will bring together 200 members from Synods and Presbyteries, with office holders, Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress members, youthful members and others to form a national decision-making body. Elected members come together to discern the guidance of the Holy Spirit in a meeting that encourages community and listening to one another in openness and humility.

The Uniting Church in Australia believes that we hear the voice of God through the councils of our Church, so time is also set aside for prayer, worship and Bible studies.

Some sessions will be livestreamed and open to you.  
- have a look! <https://uniting.church/16thassembly/>

### Singing - Kneels at the feet TiS 640

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Thomas Stevenson Colvin & people from Ghana *alt.*  
Used with permission CCLI 206 729

Kneels at the feet of his friends,  
silently washing their feet,  
Master who acts as a slave to them.  
*Yesu, Yesu, fill us with your love,  
show us how to serve,  
the neighbours we have from you.*

Neighbours are wealthy and poor,  
varied in colour and race,  
Neighbours are near us and far away.  
*Yesu, Yesu, fill us with your love,  
show us how to serve,  
the neighbours we have from you.*

These are the ones we should serve,  
these are the ones we should love,  
All these are neighbours to us and you.  
*Yesu, Yesu, fill us with your love,  
show us how to serve,  
the neighbours we have from you.*

Loving puts us on our knees,  
silently washing their feet,  
This is the way we should live with you.  
*Yesu, Yesu, fill us with your love,  
show us how to serve,  
the neighbours we have from you.*

### Blessing

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Go and live as people who dwell in love;  
and make your life a constant act of worship.  
Break down dividing walls  
wherever and whenever you can,  
building each other up,  
with open hearts and songs of joy.

And may the God of love go with you,  
the laughter of Jesus make you dance  
and the Spirit bless you with peace,  
over and over and over again  
Amen.

Liturgy & Prayers: Rev. Jennie Gordon  
Resource Minister,

Reflection: Rev. Sandra Houghton  
Sale, supply ministry

Presbytery of Gippsland

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