



Sunday August 8th, 2021 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

We light a candle. Even if we are alone or isolated from others, the flame bears testimony to a deep truth.

The light of Christ overcomes the darkness.

Call to worship

Hear these words from the apostle Paul:

be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Let us worship God.

Acknowledging



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

We gather on lands cared for by traditional custodians. We name those places now.

We recall the commitment of the Uniting Church - a church of first and second peoples - to walk together in Christ, to commit ourselves to truth telling and justice in Christ's name.

Singing - Here in this place TiS 474

Used with permission CCLI 206 729

Here in this place new light is streaming,
Now is the darkness vanished away.

See in this space

our fears and our dreamings,

Brought here to you in the light of this day.

Gather us in, the lost and forsaken,

Gather us in, the blind and the lame.

Call to us now, and we shall awaken,

We shall arise at the sound of our name.

We are the young, our lives are a mystery,

We are the old, who yearn for your face.

We have been sung throughout all of history,

Called to be light to the whole human race.

Gather us in, the rich and the haughty,
Gather us in, the proud and the strong.

Give us a heart so meek and so lowly,

Give us the courage to enter the song.

Not in the dark of buildings confining,
Not in some heaven, light-years away,

But here in this place the new light is shining,

Now is the Kingdom, now is the day.

Gather us in and hold us forever,

Gather us in and make us your own.

Gather us in, all peoples together,

Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.



Prayer

O God, we give thanks for Jesus, the bread of life.

We offer gratitude that you feed us with an abundance we cannot really understand.

We hear from the Scriptures about your ways that invite us into fullness of life, but we know it is hard to embrace what you offer.

We look around and we see the mess the world is in. We hear the struggle of faithful people to imitate Christ as Paul invites us to.

King David clearly struggles with a mess of family and relationships, and the struggle to lead in the ugliness of war.

And yet he sought forgiveness for the mess of family and relationships, and you restored him despite everything that had happened. Help us in the mess of our struggles. Help us love those who hurt. Help us acknowledge where we have failed, and find paths to reconcile.

As David found his way again, may we find our way through Jesus, the bread of life. Amen.

Listening

Read: 2 Samuel: 18: 5 – 9, 15, 31 – 33;

Ephesians 4:25 – 5: 2 & John 6:35, 41-51

For these words of faith

and for Jesus the Word: **Thanks be to God.**

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Reflecting - Rev. Ian Brown

David has had a bad run! He took Bathsheba, murdered Uriah, was taught a harsh lesson by the prophet Nathan and now his family has a conflict of biblical proportions. Everyone's families have their troubles at times. Harsh words and entrenched positions are not uncommon, but David's family has it with armies on each side and rivers of blood. His son Absalom is killed.

All losses are different. We've all had some experience of deaths; some of it devastating, some that seems timely, but hurts anyway. All have a process of grieving and dealing with the pain. One of the best ways of beginning is in telling the story. The bible does this with razor-sharp honesty.

This episode of loss for David comes with a backstory. Absalom was troubled; too handsome for his own good and his crowning glory, his head of hair was magnificent. King David was either spoiling him rotten or reading him the riot act.

He eventually led a revolt against his father. On the eve of battle, David was a wreck. He was afraid he might lose Absalom. The boy was the thorn in his flesh, but he was also the apple of his eye.

Given the story, Absalom has an ironic name; it means 'my father is peace'. Our part has the consequence of conflict; with Absalom caught in the branches of a tree by his beautiful hair. Joab finds Absalom hanging there and runs him through with three spears. When they broke the news to David, it broke his heart and he cried out in words that have echoed down the centuries. "O my son Absalom, my son, my son. Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son."

It's a genuine, heartfelt cry of lament. Children are not meant to die before their parents. Nor are they meant to tackle their father's armies. If David could have paid the price for the boy's betrayal, he would have paid it. If he could have given his own life to make the boy alive again, he

would have given it. But even a king can't do things like that.

This is tragic. But the final, irreversible tragedy is not one that arrives out of the blue. How many tragedies must there have been in the house of David for a conflict between father and son to have armies behind each side? How much not facing the issues and letting emotional wounds fester would it take? I guess there was fault on both sides. It's a terrible tragedy, but it has roots in everyday human relationships done badly. David is left in tears.

Mourning was the only thing left. Facing the pain, crying, telling the story; the process of grieving was all he could do and David was honest enough to do that openly. That at least, is a good example. Paul gives his friends in Ephesus some good advice, to help keep relationships healthy and perhaps avoid tragedy of this sort.

He says;

'let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,.. and be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us.'

And the advice on how we use our tongues is just as timely now: "Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up."

'Do not let the sun go down on your anger' are words both David and Absalom needed to hear! It's not that we can get rid of anger. Anger is an emotion. We humans have emotional responses to what happens around us. Anger will happen; it's not a bad thing in itself, the issue is how we deal with the anger. We are not told to never get angry, we are not meant to paper over emotion, conflict or real issues with a 'nice' sunny approach to everything!

Paul gives practical help for living in 'love' – the sort of giving love that God shows in Jesus. It's realistic, wholesome advice, yes, be angry – it's a



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natural response to being hurt, to injustice or abuse, but don't let it lead you into doing something bad, like a fight or a war!

The ecumenist and hymn writer, Fred Kaan pleads to God:

'God! When human bonds are broken and we lack the love or skill, to restore the hope of healing, give us grace and make us still. Give us love to go on learning: God encourage and renew.'

'Amen' is the appropriate prayer at the end of this; Amen – may it be so.

Singing - O God of love TiS 614

Tune Finlandia; Used with permission CCLI 206 729

O God of love, whose heart is ever yearning
that fixed on you our wayward
thoughts may be,
now grant us grace to live
as in your presence,
and help us all our erring ways to see.
May love subdue the ill in every nation,
and all to you as subjects bow the knee.

O Father God, moved ever by compassion
for children crushed by sorrows heavy load
be swift to aid the downcast and the cheerless,
lift up the fallen on life's thorny road.
Give calm and strength to overcome with
patience,
and safely bring them to your blest abode.

O God of peace, whose Son
with our sins laden
died to secure from bondage our release,
help us to banish hate between the nations,
to live as neighbours,
and make wars to cease.
Bring in the reign of friendship universal,
and in your mercy grant to us your peace.

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

God of love, you know our pain, our struggles, our hopes and dreams long before we shape words around them. You know the needs of the world, our community and those we love better than we do.

As we have been inspired through the Olympic games, the games also highlight tensions amongst competitors and countries. They have highlighted the plight of refugees and so we pray for all displaced from their homes, for those persecuted, for those who cannot be with family or kin. We pray that big world events like these help shape a better and more just world. As we pray this, help us understand what we can do ourselves towards creating a better world for all.

We think of people we know who are struggling because of isolation from loved ones. We pray for those who offer love and support, especially those working in physical and mental health services. Help us to be mindful of neighbours who are finding things harder than usual.

We pray for our church family, those we miss through lockdowns or for other reasons, and those who belong to fellowships in other places. We pray too for those we have connected to and with in other ways - through letters or online. Guide us as we seek to be imitators of Christ, and share the love of Christ.

We pray for world leaders, for those who have leadership roles within our country, and for those who lead in the church. Grant all our leaders wisdom, courage and grace as they find challenges exercising their responsibilities.



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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

The apostle Paul calls us to be imitators of Christ.
What offerings might we share with the church
and the world in Christ's name?

Notices

It can be challenging keeping up to date with
health advice and how that impacts on our
church life. The Synod web site has up to date
information at:

<https://victas.uca.org.au/all-you-need-to-know-answers-to-your-frequently-asked-questions/>

Singing - Loving Spirit TiS 417

Loving Spirit, loving Spirit
you have chosen me to be -
you have drawn me to your wonder,
you have set your sign on me.

Like a mother you enfold me,
hold my life within your own,
feed me with your very body,
form me of your flesh and bone.

Like a father you protect me,
teach me the discerning eye,
hoist me up upon your shoulder,
let me see the world from high.

Friend and lover, in your closeness
I am known and held and blessed:
in your promise is my comfort,
in your presence I may rest.

Loving Spirit, loving Spirit
you have chosen me to be -
you have drawn me to your wonder,
you have set your sign on me.

Blessing

The one who calls us in
also sends us out.
Our sending is to the high calling
as imitators of Christ,
to live in love as Christ has loved us.

So go now to live in love
and bear the light of Christ to the world.

As you go the blessing of God be upon you:
Creator, redeemer and sustainer. Amen.

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