



## *Sunday August 22nd, 2021 14th Sunday in Pentecost The Fig Tree Worship Resource*

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

In our places of gathering as one or many, we welcome the light of Christ that shines to overcome darkness.

As we light candles or recall the dancing light that comes from them, we know that Christ gathers with us as well.

### **Call to worship**

How lovely is the place you dwell, Lord of all.  
How lovely are the amazing places of sanctuary and solace, like a sandy beach at sunrise.  
How lovely are places that seem ordinary, the four walls we see through extended lockdowns - yet still infused by your presence.

Happy are those who live in your house,  
ever singing your praise.

Let us worship God.

### **Acknowledging**



The Uniting Church understands that God has been revealing the very nature of God to the first peoples of this land over tens of thousands of years. We listen and journey in Christian faith together. We listen to the wisdom of elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge that we gather on lands of traditional custodians and that Jesus Christ continues to reveal the nature of God to us in this unique continent and through our relationships together.

### **Singing - Joyful joyful TiS 152**

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Joyful, joyful, we adore you,  
God of glory, Lord of love;  
hearts unfold like flowers before you,  
opening to the sun above.

Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;  
drive the dark of doubt away.  
Giver of immortal gladness,  
fill us with the light of day.

All thy works with joy surround you,  
earth and heaven reflect your rays.  
Stars and angels sing around you,  
centre of unbroken praise.  
Field and forest, vale and mountain,  
flowery meadow, flashing sea,  
singing bird and flowing fountain  
call to praise you joyfully.

You are giving and forgiving,  
ever blessing, ever blest,  
well-spring of the joy of living,  
ocean-depth of happy rest.  
You our Father, Christ our brother,  
all are yours who live in love;  
teach us how to love each other;  
lift us to your joy above.



### **Prayer**

Ever loving God,  
We give thanks today for all the places you dwell  
and for your presence with us  
in both astounding and everyday ways.

In the ordinariness of each breath we take,  
the ancients knew it was your Spirit  
that is the breath of life.  
Each breath we take is no longer ordinary,  
but the gift of God-with-us,  
animating our very being.  
For that we offer thanks.  
How lovely is the place you dwell, Lord of all.

Help us remember your presence at all times,  
but especially through times of struggle.  
As the world seems to get more and more  
chaotic, so we face difficulties in ordinary  
moments.

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When we have been less than gracious or loving through the stress of lockdowns and ever changing restrictions, Lord forgive us.

When we have put on protective armour and used it in anger against those we fear, Lord forgive us.

When we have forgotten to pray in the Spirit and relied on a locked-down version of ourselves, Lord forgive us.

In all of this we draw attention again to the rise and fall of the breaths we take. God is with us. The Spirit enlivens us.

As we abide in Christ, so are we restored and renewed in his name. **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

### **Listening**

Read: Ps 84, Ephesians 6: 10-20, John 6:56-69

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

### **Reflecting - Rev. Wendy Elson**

As we begin reflecting today, take a moment to think about the church season we are in. Our current colour is green. Green always says 'verdant' to me, full of ripe possibility. We are in "Ordinary" time in the calendar. Take a moment to think of the place of 'ordinary' in your life. Then remember that ordinary doesn't mean mundane, tedious or boring. Ordinary has some commonality with 'ordained' or set aside, given. Set aside some of your precious ordinary moments today to see where God speaks to you in your ordinary.

When my 3 boys were small, we had a lot of fun with the Ephesians passage about putting on armour. We had a book called "Little Pilgrims Progress" (Helen Taylor- it's still in my bookshelf) and we read about things like the "Slough of Despond" (taken from the other book for adults

"Pilgrim's Progress" (Paul Bunyan). It sounded deliciously scary. We created a fantasy world for a little while, with hand made armour and swords and shields. We made a map with all the signposts and different colours for directions to go and things to avoid. It was great fun, despite my concerns about too much military play in the sword fights and weaponry.

It is quite likely that much of the point of the passage was lost really but it kept them interested and engaged with some of life lessons for a while. Basically, the passage requires us to stand strong in the face of evil systems and structures. We are to stand against but also stand with. We are to pursue justice and truth and to bring peace. In fact, to use the Word of God. Just to make it clear, the Word of God is Jesus. In a way it's also the Bible but ultimately God's word is simple- when all is said and done it is surely LOVE.

The John passage talks about the Bread of Life, eternal and ongoing life lived in this amazing way. Living in God and God living in us. That is eternal life right there. This is not referring to the 'afterlife' as such. Rather this is the hereafter, from this day onward true and abundant life is yours in Christ, the Word of Love. Strangely this is in many ways a hard teaching, too hard for some, like in the John passage.

And so, in the midst of whatever 'ordinary' looks like for you, some of which is easy to bear and some which is not, the Word that dwells in you is the Love for which we all yearn and which yearns for us. This is what the Psalm refers to when it says-

*How lovely is your dwelling place,*

*Lord of heavenly forces!*

*<sup>2</sup> My very being<sup>[a]</sup> longs, even yearns,  
for the Lord's courtyards.*

*My heart and my body*

*will rejoice out loud to the living God!*

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So, walk in integrity. When we are called to resist evil, it's because this longing, this yearning we have, which draws us into God, demands that we stand for justice with others, in solidarity. We resist systems of evil and misplaced power TOGETHER. I can only flourish truly when you flourish too. I can only know true peace when you share it with me. So, when we see something which removes justice and prevents flourishing, we take the Sword of the Spirit and demand something different which allows us all to have wholeness. And we pray. In this we are peace-making.

### ***Responding:*** ***Prayers for World & Community***

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Ever present and indwelling God, you know our thoughts before they form, our concerns before we give voice to them.

As the world we know shifts dramatically under the weight of many things, we offer thoughts and concerns knowing that you hear them.

As our world seems to accelerate towards a volatile and uncertain climate future, we pray for governments and leaders for insight and courage to lead for the sake of all, particularly those who will live for years to come with decisions made now. We pray too for grassroots voices of concern and influence that the whole of creation may be blessed by those who love and care for your gift, our home - planet earth.

We pray for the many places around the world including those nearby where COVID continues to spread. May our prayers and actions offer support to teachers, health-care and essential workers. We pray for those unemployed or under-employed and for those who struggle to find the support they need. We pray for all who find challenge through isolation, and for those struggling with the constant need to pivot.

This includes our church - sometimes we can freely gather and other times we cannot. Sometimes we enjoy fellowship face to face, and other times we make do with a chat over the front fence, a worship resource dropped in the letter box, or contact via a computer screen.

We offer prayers for people and places close to our hearts ...

In all of this, may we know your presence as close as our breath.

### ***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  
dwell with you:  
**and also with you.**

### ***Offering***

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God of our Lord Jesus Christ, may the gifts we offer in your name bring blessing and encouragement to many. As we give, so may we be led to pray and act as your church for the sake of the whole of creation. Amen.

### ***Notices***

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For a good read about what is happening across the Presbytery of Gippsland, check out our latest edition of 'The Gippsland Gardener'.

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<https://gippsland.unitingchurch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/The-Gippsland-Gardener-Aug-2021.pdf>

***Singing - There's a spirit TiS 414***

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There's a spirit in the air,  
telling Christians everywhere:  
"Praise the love that Christ revealed,  
living, working in our world."

Lose your shyness, find your tongue;  
tell the world what God has done:  
God in Christ has come to stay,  
Live tomorrow's life today.

When believers break the bread  
when a hungry child is fed:  
praise the love that Christ revealed  
living, working in our world.

Still the Spirit leads the fight,  
seeing wrong and setting right:  
God in Christ has come to stay,  
we can see his power today.

When a stranger's not alone,  
where the homeless find a home,  
praise the love that Christ revealed,  
living, working in our world.

May the Spirit fill our praise,  
guide our thoughts and change our ways:  
God in Christ has come to stay,  
we can see his power today.

There's a Spirit in the air,  
calling people everywhere:  
praise the love that Christ revealed,  
living, working in our world.

***Blessing***

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Breathe in deeply, breathe out deeply.  
Pay attention to the rise and fall  
of each breath you take.

In all you do, know that God is as near as every  
breath.

Go to bless and be blessed.  
In the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Reflection: Rev. Wendy Elson  
Liturgy: Rev. Arnie Wierenga*

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