



Sunday Jan 16th , 2022 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

As you come into this time of worship, bring to mind the gatherings that you have attended recently, family, friends, church ... or is it too hard because they have been so disrupted by the pandemic and restrictions? Our gospel story this morning places Jesus at an important gathering; a wedding feast, with his mother and disciples.

Take a moment to bless the gathering where you are. Give thanks for the people who are around you, in person or in your thoughts, all with their various gifts. All part of the one body of Christ.

Call to worship

Draw us in Son of Mary,
gather us, in body, mind and soul
to be present to the abundance of your light
and the delight of your presence.

Light the candle.

Acknowledging



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

As we gather, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and these waters. We pause to recall the reality that many, many, many years of sacred gathering that took place in these lands before the colonisers came. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.

Singing Come O God of all the earth TiS 181

Used with permission CCLI 206 729 W& M: Marty Haugen

Come, O God of all the earth;
come to us, O Righteous One;
come, and bring your love to birth:
in the glory of your Son.

*Sing out, earth and skies!
sing of the God who loves you;
raise your joyful cries;
dance to the life around you.*

Come, O God of wind and flame:
fill the earth with righteousness;
teach us all to sing your name:
may our lives your love confess.

*Sing out, earth and skies!
sing of the God who loves you;
raise your joyful cries;
dance to the life around you.*

Come, O God of flashing light:
twinkling star and burning sun;
God of day and God of night:
in your light we all are one.

Sing out, earth and skies! ...

Come, O God of snow and rain:
shower down upon the earth;
come, o God of joy and pain:
God of sorrow, God of mirth

Sing out, earth and skies!...

Come, O Justice, come, O Peace:
come and shape our hearts anew;
come and make oppression cease:
bring us all to life in you.

*Sing out, earth and skies!
sing of the God who loves you;
raise your joyful cries;
dance to the life around you.*



Prayer

The words in Psalm 36:verses 5-10 celebrate the love of God in all places, with abundant feasting and safe sheltering, and so we pray together:

Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.

Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your judgments are like the great deep; you save humans and animals alike, O LORD.

How precious is your steadfast love, O God! All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights.

The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Presbytery of Gippsland, Uniting Church in Australia with blessings and permission to use the content in worship services with acknowledgement.



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For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

O continue your steadfast love to those who know you, and your salvation to the upright of heart!

We pause for a moment to silently recall the extravagance of blessing that we experience in the presence of God around and within us.

(pause)

However we know that we are not pure and blameless, that we often take a wrong turn, make a bad choice and let our shadow side dictate our thoughts and actions.

Psalm 36 begins:

Transgression speaks to the wicked, deep in their hearts; there is no fear of God before their eyes.

For they flatter themselves in their own eyes that their iniquity cannot be found out and hated.

The words of their mouths are mischief and deceit; they have ceased to act wisely and do good.

They plot mischief while on their beds; they are set on a way that is not good; they do not reject evil.

Help us again, forgiving God to reject evil, to watch our words, to look for the wise and generous path, walking in your light.

Help us to cultivate holy fear, trembling in the face of your abundant goodness and to celebrate the blessings you bring to us, day and night.

We pause for a moment to bring you those burdens of fear, guilt and regret that we would rather not carry, and ask you to do as you promise, to lighten our lives with your love.

(pause)

in the name of Jesus, Amen

Listening

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

John 2:1-11

For these words of faith and for Jesus the Word:

Thanks be to God.

Reflecting - Marian Bissett

The psalmist calls out to God and lists the wrongdoings of the wicked and those who follow the wrong path. We then read of the radical and generous love of God, the faithful one; "Your righteousness is like the eternal mountains, your judgements are like the mighty deep; you save humankind and animalkind alike, Faithful One. How precious is your faithful love, O God! All the woman-born take shelter in the shadow of your wings" (Ps. 36:6-7)^[1].

Some say it was a sign and others a miracle, but the beginning of Jesus' ministry was at a wedding. It did not happen in the big city, or with the rich and famous or even with the Rabbis in the synagogue. The Son of Woman listened to his mother and performed a sign. The gospel of John does not have a communion event as the other gospels do, nevertheless this act at the wedding is eucharistic as Jesus points out the direction his life was to take, to be eucharistic for those who believe.

It is Mary who holds my interest as much as the sign Jesus performed. There is no mention of Joseph now; has he disappeared, or did he have to start work again? Perhaps this is an important omission the writer of the gospel made. Mary who gave birth to the Son of God, would then be the one to start the ministry of Jesus, Son of Woman.

I wonder whether Jesus had ever sat with his mother in the middle of the night and questioned his calling, whether he really did want to leave the security of home and set out on his ministry life knowing where it would end, whether he even wanted to be at the wedding. Did Mary know, as Jesus did, of the faithful and generous love of God and the necessity to perform the action and fill the containers with wine? I wonder...

Mary responded to these wonderings simply and expected her son to act appropriately. "They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you'" (Jn. 2:3-5, NRSV). She didn't tell him what to do, but



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she didn't ask him either. She gave him the 'mother look' and he acted. Mary spoke to the staff as well and perhaps there was something in the maternal voice which meant the staff also listened to her. The 'mother look' and the strength Mary showed at the start of Jesus' ministry was the strength she showed at the end of Jesus' ministry when she held him in her arms.

The location of the wedding remains important to be reminded of in our contemporary landscape. When we hear of the church no longer holding a central place in societies, this is to be applauded. For it is then we may be more able to hear the calling of God to be amongst those who do not hold wealth or privilege, or for whom institutional religion may hold traumatic memories. Wherever we are located, whatever our life may look like, let us never forget the radical and generous love of God, described in a simple comment by Mary and performed by the Son of Woman, Son of God.

2022 has begun or rather time has merged from 2021 and we all want this year to bring renewed energy and hopes. Let us never forget God "who is the fountain of life [and in whose] light we see light" (Ps. 36:9).^[2]

[1] Wilda Gafney, *A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church: Year W* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2021), 38.

[2] Gafney, *A Women's Lectionary*, 38.

Responding: Prayers for World & Community

We pray today for those who live without the basic essentials of life:
for mothers who can't feed their children
for children who don't have a home
for fathers who can't keep them safe:

**God of human hearts and hands,
let your fountain of life spring up in their midst
and let there be light.**

We pray today for those who live with crippling fear, torment or pain:
for prisoners without basic rights,
for refugees who have lost it all,
for people bearing chronic illness.

**God of human hearts and hands,
let your fountain of life spring up in their midst
and let there be light.**

We pray today for those who live in the shadow of fear and persecution:
for girls denied education, dignity and respect,
for boys whose hands hold weapons of war,
for children who have seen too much.

**God of human hearts and hands,
let your fountain of life spring up in their midst
and let there be light.**

We pray today for those we hold in our hearts,
the ones whose names we know
and whose struggles we share: - *(time of quiet)*

and the ones who move on the edges
of our daily living,
the stranger in the cafe, at the checkout,
on the road... *(time of quiet)*

**God of human hearts and hands,
let your fountain of life spring up in their midst
and let there be light,
in the name of Jesus who invited us to follow
and taught us to pray saying:**

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 forever. Amen.

Passing the peace

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



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Offering

Jesus, who turned water into wine,
who gathered, as friends, the lost
and the unlikely,
and defeated darkness with eternal life:
bless everything we have
and all that we bring.
Multiply our gifts
so that they may sing of your abundance
in places of lack.
Help us never to hold back
or to reject
any offering of love in your name, Amen.

Notices

Have you made plans for the Uniting Church Day of Mourning next Sunday January 23rd? President Sharon Hollis encourages us all to observe this day. Here is where you can download the resource - a worship service for faith communities to reflect on the effects of invasion and colonisation of First Australia's First Peoples <https://uniting.church/dayofmourning/>

Singing - Filled with the Spirit's power TiS 411

Used with permission CCLI 206 729
W: John Raphael Peacey, M: Walter Greatorex

Filled with the Spirit's power, with one accord
the infant church confessed its risen Lord.
O Holy Spirit, in the church today
no less your power of fellowship display.

Now with the mind of Christ set us on fire,
that unity may be our great desire.
Give joy and peace; give faith to hear your call,
and readiness in each to work for all.

Widen our love, good Spirit, to embrace
in your strong care, all those of every race.
Like wind and fire with life among us move,
till we are known as Christ's, and Christians prove.

Blessing

Send us out, Son of Mary,
send us in body, mind and soul
to be present to the abundance of your light
and the delight of your presence.

Go knowing that you are loved
beyond measure,
and gifted by the Spirit
to share that love wherever you are.

In the many names of God:
Womb, Word and Wonder,
One in three, three in One,
Amen.

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