



## *Sunday May 8th, 2022*

### *The Fig Tree Worship Resource*

#### ***Call to worship - Psalm 23***

---

We come together to worship God.

Saying these ancient words from the psalms  
and hearing them said,  
gathers us, who are present,  
with people in other places,  
with all those who have gone before  
and with all who are yet to come:

**The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters;  
he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.**

**Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil; for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff-- they comfort me.**

**You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.**

**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD  
my whole life long**

#### ***Acknowledging***

---



As we gather, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and these waters. 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 O for a thousand tongues TiS 210***

---

#### ***Listening***

---

Read: Reading: John 10: 22-30

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



#### ***Prayer***

---

*You may choose to have different voices reading this prayer, which has Mothers' Day in mind.*

**The Lord is my shepherd.** I imagine King David in his later years, still holding memories of his work in the fields as a young boy tending his flock like a mother; birthing, watching, feeding, guiding, loving and protecting. Jesus said, 'I am the good shepherd.' So I can say 'the Lord is my shepherd' and I belong to your flock. It's good to remember that. Yes, I know your voice, Good Shepherd; it's the voice that pulls me out of nothing and into life, time and again, it's the voice that knows my name and calls after me when I wander off too close to the edge, restoring me to community. Sometimes I think I don't need a shepherd, or the flock, but I am wrong.

**I shall not want**, which is all very well to say, but I do want. I want all sorts of things, things to have and things to happen, for myself and for others. I'm full of wanting and yet you tell me that you will give me what I need for today, all I need and nothing less. You provide for your flock. Remind me constantly because I forget.

**he makes me lie down in green pastures** even when I don't want to be still. There is a point at which everything has to stop. If you don't make use of the green pasture time, the stopping season appointed by the shepherd, then it's likely you'll find yourself stopped in some other place, that isn't quite as pleasant. I don't like stopping. When you stop there's a risk that things catch up with you, things that you've been running from. That can happen to one sheep or the whole flock. Stopping is risky. Not stopping is worse. Jesus, please make me lie down somewhere safe and nourishing, for as long as it takes. Be The Gate, to protect me as I lie, safely in the fold.

**he leads me beside still waters** and yet I can remember thundering storms and I wonder where you were leading me then Good Shepherd? Were you asleep in the boat or on the hillside? Where was the still water then? We long to drink deeply from safe and living waters, to enjoy the refreshment without the



## Sunday May 8th, 2022 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

fear. So we will go where you lead, holding on to the memory of stillness in the storm.

**he restores my soul** because it needs to be renovated and refurbished, constantly. Restore my soul to wholeness, to the soul of the flock, to sing in harmony with others, to bring peace where it is needed, to bring hope and healing, to bring love. You awaken me to life by bringing me through the gate and into the fold.

**he leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake** which is just as well, because if it were up to me I'd be up the creek. You have chosen good shepherds to lead me along right paths, like mothers they have birthed, watched, fed, weaned and guided me. Thank you for all those who know us by name and lead us into life, in your name.

**even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death** because there is no escaping this passage and there are many dark valleys we encounter in our lives. Sometimes there is a sudden and overwhelming darkness in the middle of the day, complete with a sense of forsakenness and death. Sometimes we see the valley on the horizon and approach with foreboding. Yet, you have been there, Good Shepherd, you offer us, not a way out, but a way through, not an escape but an engagement, even through the shadows, even in the darkest night.

**you are with me, your rod and your staff they comfort me** - you are the one constant, assuring presence. Sometimes I panic, afraid of attack, unsure of the road ahead and retreat within, relying too much on my own inner GPS to navigate life's journey. That never works; my sense of direction is flawed and unpredictable. Help me to be sure of you, to feel safe in your company, to know comfort in your guidance, to listen for your voice amidst the din of a thousand others, including mine.

**you prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies** because we all have a seat at the banquet. Those who would throw stones sit beside those who tend and mend. Who knows which seat is mine and which is my enemy's? At the table we are one, joined in communion, feasting on this lavish life.

**you anoint my head with oil** pouring blessings over me, over and over me, over and over us. You bless us with each other, you bless us with rest and you bless us with stillness and comfort and company. You make us rich in life and love because you are the Good Shepherd and we are your flock.

**my cup overflows** eternally and you will never ask me to leave your flock or your presence, no matter what I do, or don't do. You will keep pouring life into my cup, overflowing with grace unrelenting and unearned.

**surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life** surely, surely, surely as day follows night, because without mercy trailing behind me, picking up the pieces, fixing my messes, goodness would not get a look in very often. Mercy is the overflowing grace of a forgiving and loving Shepherd; goodness is her sister and close and constant companion.

**and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord, forever** because I belong to your flock, Good Shepherd, and I don't want to be far from where you are. Not now, not ever. I want to hear your voice calling down the hall in the morning, waking me from sleep. I want to tend your garden, eat at your table, rest in your presence and walk by your side. When the night finally comes I want to lie down knowing that you will cover me with care, like a mother, singing songs of gentle peace until I sleep.

The Lord is my shepherd. Amen.

### ***Singing Loving Spirit, loving Spirit TiS 417***

---

#### ***Listening***

---

Read: Reading: Acts 9: 36-43

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

#### ***Reflecting*** - Rev. Moira Dodsworth

---

In my church, growing up, there was a "Dorcas Society". The women in the Dorcas society created beautiful items, using whatever gifts they had, sewing and knitting together. I remember sitting and watching as they worked, my mother was a member, and I presumably was too small to



## *Sunday May 8th, 2022*

### *The Fig Tree Worship Resource*

be left at home. These items were then included in parcels for those who came to the church for help. In each of these packages, at least one new item, handmade with love was included. I remember hand-smocked baby clothes and cabled jumpers.

This is what I remember and think of as I read the passage from Acts. It is not the miracle or the importance of a woman and her role in this early community, it is the creation of beautiful items to be included for those who had nothing and the love that went into the creation. In a society which gives from its excess and does its best to avoid taxes and a government which gives the minimum in social security there is a lesson for us.

I know the gifts I receive which are handmade or require some effort on the givers part are the most valuable to me. In giving these items, the women of the Dorcas society were saying to the receiver – you are of value. The people asking for help were often victims of domestic violence or unfair dismissal, their employer no longer had any use for them, so they were discarded. These are the people on the margins of society. Anyone who has ever had connection with an OP shop knows how much junk is left on their doors, things people discard but think maybe the discarded people will still want it or be so desperate.

The widows showed Peter Tabitha's work, they showed how they valued her. We see how she valued the marginalised in her work. We live in a wealthy country, most of us have plenty. Do we hoard the things of value? Do we store up treasure on earth? Do we give from our excess making sure we will be okay to have a holiday, live in comfort for a long time? Do we even think about what it is like to live on the edges? This is a story of women, who were on the margins, widows, even further on the margins but Peter listened to them and noticed them.

How do we react to the story? Do we read the miracle story with wonder? The faith of these women who go and fetch Peter is great, and we recognise it, they felt it was worth calling Peter, perhaps in the hope of a miracle, as people called

Jesus in miracle stories, but no request is made of him. They show him how valuable Tabitha was in her work. For me the raising of Tabitha is a bit of an irrelevance, what I see and want to remember is how she valued the marginalised, how those women who took her name did so much more than give alms. They tried to show people who lived on the margins, all their lives, that they were of value, made in God's image and worthy of new and beautiful clothes, created with love.

***Singing***    *Comfort, comfort ... TiS 647*

---

***Responding:***

***Prayers for World & Community***

---

God, whose arms open wide  
to welcome all your children,  
on this Mothers' Day we meet you,  
with gratitude  
for the mothering we have received  
in many different forms.

**We hold a time of quiet prayer,  
for all the arms that hold  
and all the hearts that love,  
through all of time.**

*(time of silence)*

Jesus, who longed to gather the chicks  
under your wings, we meet you  
in the mothers whose arms are full,  
sometimes beyond capacity  
and in the mothers whose arms are empty.

**We hold a time of quiet prayer,  
for all the mothers that ache  
from grief, from loss, from overwhelming fear,  
from not having enough for hungry children.**

*(time of silence)*

Holy Spirit,  
who knit us together in our mother's womb  
who blesses our hands  
and opens our hearts to care for each other,  
we meet you,  
in the delightful smile of a grandchild,  
in the multicoloured memories of mothering,

*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.*



## Sunday May 8th, 2022 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

in the everyday pain and wonder of life.  
**As we join our voices in prayer:**

One in three, three in one,  
be upon you and remain with you  
today and in the days to come. Amen

### ***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.**

### ***Offering***

---

God of abundance, bless the creative work of our  
hands. Let your love be shown in the things that  
we make and offer to others: food, clothing,  
gardens, shelter, fun, companionship. Bless these  
gifts that they too may bring life where it is  
needed, and continue the work of your church,  
for the sake of the world, in Jesus' name, Amen.

### ***Singing Holy Spirit go before us TiS 420***

---

can be sung to: AUSTRIA (TiS 93)

### ***Blessing***

---

**Mothering shepherd, lead us on  
beside still waters,  
in the company of the makers and the gatherers.  
Lead us on with a whisper,  
lead us on with a shout.  
Let us hear your voice,  
help us to follow.**

And may the blessing of God,

*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.*

*Reflection: Rev. Moira  
Dodsworth*

*Wattlebird Ministry Team*

*Liturgy: Rev. Jennie Gordon*

*Presbytery of Gippsland*

*Editor: Rev. Jennie Gordon*

[pastoral.ucagipps@gmail.com](mailto:pastoral.ucagipps@gmail.com)

