



Sunday May 15th, 2022 ***The Fig Tree Worship Resource***

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

We come to worship you, God of all,
gathering as your people
to lift our voices in praise.

Let your spirit be present here,
joining in the joyous chorus,
dancing with delight,
binding us together,
and teaching us to love, as you love us.

We light the candle as a sign of hope..
The light of Christ shines in the darkness.

Acknowledging



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

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 Let all creation dance - TiS 187

Prayer



Psalm 148

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights!
Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!
Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created.

He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,
fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!

Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!
Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!

Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!
Young men and women alike, old and young together!

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven.

He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the LORD!
(time of quiet)

It's easy to find things to bring in praise to you, God of love. Our gratitude overflows for life, for health, for family, for daily food ...

What's harder is to admit where we have failed, or forgotten or simply turned away.

So we bring our confession in confidence, knowing that you love us, despite everything. Knowing that nothing can separate us from you.

For the times when we have not loved you with our whole heart but preferred to spend our worship on the gods of greed, envy and apathy

God who is love, forgive us, **Forgive us.**



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For the times when we have not loved each other, but have chosen to hate, vilify and ignore our brothers and sisters:

God who is love, forgive us, **Forgive us.**

For the times when we have not loved ourselves, judging ourselves as unworthy, holding onto past mistakes, failing to listen, to learn and to grow in love:

God who is love, forgive us, **Forgive us.**
(time of quiet)

Siblings in Christ,
In the book of Revelation we hear: "And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new."

In John's gospel we hear Jesus saying: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.

Hear these words of assurance:
You are forgiven and free,
mandated to love as you are loved,
Thanks be to God, Amen.

Listening

Read: Revelation 21:1-6
John 13:31-35

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

Reflecting - Rev. Arnie Wierenga

I wonder how people in the Ukraine might hear this from Revelation at the moment? The promise of a new heaven and a new earth? "See, I am making all things new"?

The daily news images from Mariupol and other places in Ukraine seem like hell on earth rather

than a place of renewal. I wonder what they and we make of this, particularly when we feel powerless against the ruthless powers of the world – be it dictators, COVID, climate change, elections?

Can we believe, dare we believe that God will wipe away every tear and that death will be no more? I find it hard to hear these words and see bombed out Ukrainian buildings or people wailing in despair. I wonder, 'what can I do, what difference could I possibly make?'

Orthodox Easter was celebrated just a few weeks ago, and images of hope in Ukraine stick in my mind. Amongst the rubble of death and destruction, I bring to mind colourful robes of Ukrainian Orthodox priests as they embody a protest against destruction and death. With them come lines of people impacted by war needing hope, seeking blessing as they recall and remember together that Christ is risen ...

Is there somehow a new heaven and a new earth to be found even in such dark places?

As we live on this side of Christ's resurrection, surely the answer must be yes, even if sometimes it is hard to see. John's vision in Revelation at first seems to be a passing of what we know and understand as God's good creation, but when we look closer it promises a renewal of the one we already know. Does that mean that the city streets of Mariupol will be cleared of shrapnel and rubble, the dead will be buried with dignity and people will rebuild and replant against all the previous destruction?

Perhaps, hopefully one day even. But for John it begins with a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them...'

Renewal comes because God is among us. Maybe that's why we see hope in Easter rituals in a war zone. I know that when things have been dark in my life, that's when I've most strongly sensed the presence of God offering light and hope. That has



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come in mysterious ways, but it has also been present in people who have offered comfort and hope, those who have prayed, especially when there was little else they could do. Isn't it true that a phone call or card, or food left at the door tells us that Christ is risen, that Christ is present among us?

I don't have the power to change the war in Ukraine, and I can't fix COVID or climate change and my one vote won't single-handedly change how our politicians lead. But I can respond to the words of Jesus as we hear them in John's gospel today. A *new* commandment he offers – to love one another. What is new is that Jesus calls us to love *as he has loved us*. How we live and love is what lets others know that we truly follow him.

A prayer for Ukraine, or a targeted donation; a meal for someone isolating with COVID; finding ways to conserve our energy use; encouraging our politicians to lead with courage and vision – these might all be examples of loving as Christ has loved us. We may be able to wipe away tears or ensure death is no more, but we can journey with the one who brings renewal to all.

Let us love as he loves us. Let's do that for the whole of creation, and for ourselves. For Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, allelujah!!!

Singing - A new commandment TiS 699

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

Loving Lord, we come to you, offering our broken world.

We offer countries and nations at war, particularly Russia and Ukraine, the people who feel war is necessary and all those who are hurt and dispossessed. May all people be treated with compassion. May we use your love and example to direct us.

We offer our land and ask that you help us to repair the brokenness and guide us in the care that needs to take place.

We offer other lands where there are natural disasters and everywhere that people lose their shelter and means of livelihood. We offer our own places, that we hold dear, that we will care for them and share their resources.

We offer for our country and her leaders, that the land and marginalised people may be considered by those with power and that resources may be shared equitably, all voices listened to. Help us to use our vote with care.

We offer the people we care for – those ill, in pain and in hospital and needing care, comfort them. We offer those in aged care and those caring for them and all who are still affected by the Virus.

We offer the deepest prayers of our heart, those we dare not say allowed as we pray the words, Jesus taught us:

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

Bless these gifts we bring; money, time, skills and our lives. Bless them and let them show your love, in the places where it is needed most, in Jesus' name, Amen.



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Notices

Tomorrow, May 16th, is the **International Day of Living Together in Peace**. How does today's gospel reading help you to understand how you might live together in peace?

16-22nd of May is **National Volunteer Week**. All our congregations, faith communities, schools and agencies rely on the generous gift of people's time and talents in so many ways. How will you honour and celebrate the volunteers amongst you this week?

Singing - Jesus put this song ... TiS 670

Blessing

We leave, turning again to God,
One in three, three in one,
Alpha and Omega,
beginning and end,
who brings water
from the spring of eternal life.

Go knowing that you are loved,
and show it, by loving others in Jesus' name,
and living together in peace.

We will, Amen!

Reflection: Rev. Arnie Wierenga

Liturgy: Rev Jennie Gordon

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