



Sunday June 19th, 2022 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

We gather as many
in our common desire to follow Christ.
We light a candle to recall
that we are the body of Christ
and the light of Christ shines amongst us.

Call to worship

Paul's message to the Galatians is simple yet
astonishing:

Those in Christ are one in Christ.

Whatever distinctions or divisions
we create or find comfort in
make no sense in God's way.

Let us clothe ourselves in Christ,
Let us worship God.

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 - Praise the one

May be sung to NETTLETON 87 87 D

Praise the one who breaks the darkness
with a liberating light.
Praise the one who frees the prisoners,
turning blindness into sight.
Praise the one who preached the Gospel,
healing every dread disease,
calming storms and feeding thousands
with the very bread of peace.

Praise the one who blessed the children
with a strong yet gentle word.
Praise the one who drove out demons
with a piercing two-edged sword.
Praise the one who brings cool water
to the desert's burning sand.
From this well comes living water,
quenching thirst in every land.

Praise the one true love incarnate:
Christ who suffered in our place.
Jesus died and rose for many
that we may know God by grace.
Let us sing for joy and gladness,
seeing what our God has done.
Praise the one redeeming glory,
praise the One who makes us one.

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Prayer

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God who
offered us Jesus the Christ, God who sends us the
Holy Spirit as comforter and guide, we offer our
thanks and praise.

The Scriptures tell many stories of how you care
for us, how you comfort and shield us when we
feel weak, frail or vulnerable. We give our thanks
that we carry stories of our own - of your love
and presence, of your comfort, of your holding us
through dark times.

We hear anew that we are one in Christ but when
we think honestly about how we live, unity is
often absent.

Forgive our comfort in division. Forgive our
tendency to stick with a tribe of like-minded
people and see others as less than ourselves.
Forgive us when we use racial difference as a
weapon against those we fear or despise. Forgive
us when differences of faith, culture, identity and
more create divisions that tear apart the body of
Christ.

*The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Presbytery of Gippsland, Uniting Church in Australia
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The apostle Paul reminds the early church and our own church that it is a great challenge to live creatively and constructively with difference. Yet that is what we are called to do.

As we sit with the reality of how we live together and our desire to allow your light to shine more fully in our lives and our community, we sit too with the reality of your love and grace.

In and through Christ, we are restored and equipped to continue this journey as pilgrims together on the way. **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

Listening

Read: 1 Kings 19:1-4, (5-7), 8-15a
Psalms 42 and 43
Galatians 3:23-29
Luke 8:26-39

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

Reflecting - Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

No longer divisions of one against the other. We do think like that don't we? It's either this or that, them and us, one thing or the other. It is a tendency we have, this binary, oppositional, thinking. Black or white, town or country, happy or sad, rock vs country, beach vs bush, right vs left, my town vs your town, Catholic vs Protestant. Yes, I snuck the versus sign in there because I think that is often what happens. I read a line by Richard Rohr* this week suggesting that when we divide everything into dualistic opposites, we empower the "vested interests" to "pull against one another", which prevents truth being present in the conversation. He goes on to say that the "us-and-them" lens is at the foundation of all human suffering and violence. Perhaps even the violence we do to the world itself. The Galatians passage tells us that through faith we have been released from legalism and set free to live lives of love. There are no longer divisions which need to separate us one from

another. Sure, we share lots of diversity but through faith we are all one in Christ. The divisions themselves bring death and pain and the elevation of one over another. But we are granted grace and mercy and forgiveness and all the fruits of the Spirit and these enable us to live a response which brings liberation through faith, instead of a legal or exclusive response.

The lectionary this week shows us what happens to those who seek justice and fight for it in the way they live. Jezebel's threats regarding Elijah were very real and he withdrew in fear. God reminded him of the gentle presence threaded in and through the quiet vulnerability of silence rather than in the powerful weather systems. God's quiet reassurance of steadfast presence and care renewed him and he returned, re-empowered, to his mission.

The Psalms are a song of deep grief and lament and they depict an ongoing thirst for justice and righteousness which ultimately leads to a renewed vigour and hope.

The Gospel story tells of someone imprisoned by a distressing affliction. He is granted liberation from this illness which has so impacted his life and wellbeing. This leads to his desire to seek to follow Jesus but the dynamic power of his healing elicits a fearful response from all those who felt threatened by this demonstration of the radical inclusion of the gospel.

As disciples this power is available to us. Do we use it to empower others to seek justice, grace and faith? Do we seek to overcome the divisions between people and diminish limits which function to set one thing up against another? If the great news of liberation which the gospel offers includes even me, it surely must be available to all. It seems that the clear distinctions between 'in' and 'out' are only made by those who feel threatened and believe that they will lose out by such inclusion. There is simply no condemnation, only love and inclusion, in Jesus' gracious Kingdom values which rewrite the book from the bottom up.

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Perhaps as we celebrate the birthday of the Uniting Church in Australia, and the miracles of the unifying work of the Holy Spirit which brought us about, we go about like the man in the gospel miracle and tell everyone what amazing things God has done.

** Richard Rohr daily meditations (Center for Action and Contemplation, June 3rd 2022)*

Singing - TIS 690 Beauty for brokenness

Responding: Prayers for World & Community

Creator, redeemer, sustainer, you call us as your people to find strength in our diverse gifts and love and care for your world as Jesus has shown us.

As we pray, we are aware of divisions, conflict, and troubles within our local communities, our church, and across the world.

We pray for the world and name issues and concerns ...

May love find a way in places of war, amongst powerful ideologies, among those who fight and those who care.

We pray for our country, our community, families and friends ...

We pray for our leaders, particularly in the context of rising costs of living and the pressure inflation puts upon people. We pray for those close to us, and for those who we were once close to ...

We pray for our church and all churches ...

We pray for the Synod as it prepares for the meeting to be held in early July. We pray for Rev. David Fotheringham who will be our new moderator. We offer thanks for the work of our current moderator, Rev. Denise Liersch. Be with all who offer leadership within the church,

especially with those who find themselves overwhelmed with the needs and issues before them.

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 love, you have called us to follow and find our unity in Jesus Christ. As we offer these things in your name we offer again to be clothed in Christ. May it be so, amen.

Notices

The Uniting Church in Australia celebrates her 45th birthday on June 22nd. On that day in 1977, we celebrated the coming together of Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian congregations across Australia as an act of unity in the Spirit.

Singing - TIS 657 God of freedom

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Blessing

As we prepare ourselves to leave this gathered community and offer the light of Christ, we recognise difference and distinction as part of how God has created us.

With one another and with all we encounter, may we find delight in diversity. Let us truly celebrate that all parts of the body are needed and work together as witness to Christ.

We do this in the strength of Christ, clothing ourselves in him. Go and offer his light in all you do.

The blessing of God be upon you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and always. Amen.

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