



## *Sunday July 31st, 2022*

### *The Fig Tree Worship Resource*

#### **Call to worship & Lighting the Candle**

O give thanks to God for such deep goodness;  
for steadfast love that endures forever.  
**You gather us from the east and from the west,  
from the north and from the south.**

We come to worship you,  
hungry and thirsty for the life you offer.  
**O give thanks to God for such deep goodness;  
for steadfast love that endures forever.**

*light the candle:*

The light shines in the darkness  
and the darkness cannot overcome it.

#### **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 Loving Spirit, TiS 417**



#### **Prayer**

*Parts of the prayer in bold are from UIW2*

**God of all mercy,  
give us grace today to make a fresh start.**

**We know we have not loved you  
with our whole heart,  
nor have we loved our neighbours  
as ourselves.**

We have given out of our excesses  
and not from love for the Other.

We have resisted cries for justice  
when they come at a cost to us.

We have held tightly to what keeps us safe  
unwilling to let go and work for freedom.

**As we hope to be forgiven,  
teach us how to forgive;  
and lead us forward into new life  
where neither grudges  
nor resentment have a part;  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.**

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:  
'Your sins are forgiven,'  
**Thanks be to God.**

#### **Passing the peace**

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

#### **Listening**

**Read: Hosea 11: 1-11**

**Responsive Psalm: Psalm 107:1-9, 43**

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

**Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,  
those he redeemed from trouble**

and gathered in from the lands,  
from the east and from the west,  
from the north and from the south.

**Some wandered in desert wastes,  
finding no way to an inhabited town;**

hungry and thirsty,  
their soul fainted within them.

**Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and  
he delivered them from their distress;**

he led them by a straight way,  
until they reached an inhabited town.



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**Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,  
for his wonderful works to humankind.**

For he satisfies the thirsty,  
and the hungry he fills with good things.

**Let those who are wise  
give heed to these things,  
and consider the steadfast love of the LORD.**

**Read: Luke 12: 13-21**

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

### **Reflecting - Rev. Deacon Marian Bisset**

I read a chapter in a commentary by Tânia Mara Vieira Sampaio who looked at Hosea through the eyes of women in the *barrios* in San Paolo. The women who were referred to live in complete poverty and degrading humility and who are left with no options but to become sex workers. These women wanted to gather as a group to celebrate communion and look for answers to some of their questions: "What does the bible say about women like them? Is it true that God does not like them? Would God bless them only if they abandon prostitution?"<sup>[1]</sup>

This was the only message these women had heard from the churches and were excluded from entering their time of worship and prayer. These women were strong and resourceful and were able to keep themselves relatively safe because they chose a profession which paid well, but the social structures were such that they were completely dehumanised and seen for that one purpose only.

I couldn't help but think we remain complicit in this in condemning the one who provides the sexual acts, rather than actively working to address the bigger social issue and those who access the sex workers. But what has this to do with the readings from this week?

The reading from Hosea describes a God who cares, who knows, understands and feels the hurt that God's people are living with and through. God says, "No, I can't do it! I cannot act on my righteous anger! I will not turn around and destroy Ephraim! For I am God, no mere mortal,

the Holy One who walks among you!" (The Inclusive Bible, Hos. 11:9) God cares for the poor, the hurting, the people who are trapped in a system not of their making.

Jesus addressed similar, if not the same social issues, by standing right in the middle of the people. Jesus challenged individual people to reflect on their own behaviour and attitudes whilst himself remaining deeply connected to the Jewish traditions he had been born into. Jesus made no comment about the wealth the farmer had amassed. The farmer, after all, would have worked hard to harvest such a bumper crop. Instead, Jesus addressed the assumption that affluence would garner future security and pushes us to question what a rich life means. Financial wealth means little if there are people who struggle, who are enslaved to systemic violence and poverty or, like the women in the *barrios* turn to sex work as the only option to survive.

In his book *For Good: The Church and the Future of Welfare* Sam Wells asks the church to consider what its place is in a society dependent on a breaking welfare system. Wells prods the church, that is us, to consider the role we play in the lives of those who access social programs offered as church outreach. If we continue to only strengthen the safety net underneath people, then what are we doing different from state provided welfare?

We offer so much in the way of cultivating the Kingdom of God and the genuine safety net which this offers. We seek to give agency to empowering others and ourselves to see what we have and what we can give and share rather than what is missing. We build relationships of trust and friendship and in the new relationship our eyes are opened to see God in the other. We join the journey of building up the Body of Christ where all can flourish and grow into the image of God and answer the women in the *barrios* that God indeed loves them, as God loves all.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Daniel Patte, *Global Bible Commentary* (Abingdon Press: Kindle Edition, 2004), 540.



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### **Affirmation of faith - We are not alone**

We are not alone,  
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and in others  
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.  
In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.  
We are not alone.  
Thanks be to God.

From The United Church of Canada, General Council  
1968, alt 1998 as printed in *Uniting in Worship 2*.

### **Singing- Brother, sister, ... TiS 650**

### **Offering**

Accept these gifts we bring, God of abundant  
love. Accept our money, time, voices, gifts  
and hospitality, not because we have plenty,  
but because we long for justice and know  
that many are hungry. Amen.

### **Notices**

Today is National Tree Day. Do you have a  
favourite tree? You could share tree stories  
over a cuppa after the service. Some Local

Councils will accept offers of tree, bush and  
food plantings on verges, beside footpaths.  
Does your Council? Plant a tree somewhere.  
Give thanks for this beginning, this  
contribution to the planet, and wonder what  
creatures and humans might enjoy the  
shelter and shade in years to come.

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

In our prayers today we hold those who live  
on the margins of life, often invisible,  
exploited and abused.

May they be seen and heard.

May we stand alongside, in support, care  
and kinship.

May all they be tenderly enfolded in the  
wide and generous embrace of your love.

God of justice, **hear our prayer**

In our prayers today we hold the struggling  
planet and all her inhabitants and species.

May there be healing and an end to war in  
the countries under threat from disaster or  
greed.

May we work to live lighter and restore  
the fierce and fragile balance of life.

May all be tenderly enfolded in the wide  
and generous embrace of your love

God of peace, **hear our prayer**

In our prayers today we hold those who are  
suffering through struggles of the heart,  
mind, soul and body.

In the quiet we whisper their names,  
remembering those who care for them.

*(time of quiet)*

May all they be tenderly enfolded in the  
wide and generous embrace of your love.

God of love, **hear our prayer**

*The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Presbytery of Gippsland, Uniting Church in Australia  
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As we pray together in our heart language,  
the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples:

***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 forever. Amen.

***Singing Take my life and let it be, TiS 599***

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***Blessing***

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*from UIW2*

Go in peace,  
may you carry God's Wisdom,  
speak forth God's Word,  
and embody God's Presence  
wherever you are.  
**In the name of Christ, Amen.**

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