



Sunday September 11th, 2022 **The Fig Tree Worship Resource**

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Come and find your place
regardless of who you are
or how you see yourself.

This is Christ's place,
the guy who welcomes sinners
and eats with them.

We light a candle, the light of Christ
and imagine light shining everywhere
in order to lift all who may be lost.

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 - Immortal invisible God only wise

Together in Sing (TiS) 143

Prayer



Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
your great name we praise.
For your welcome to both sinner and stranger,
for your insistence that the table is open,
for the importance of the one in a hundred
we offer our thanks.

While we are called by you
to bring your light to the world
because we are here as your disciples,
it is tempting to forget that
you still seek us out,
you continue to welcome us
as sinner and stranger,

and we may find ourselves as the ones
in dire need of being found anew.

So we pause to reflect:
to remember the chaos within ...
to acknowledge where we are lost ...
to confess our sin ...

The Scriptures remind us of Jesus:
*This fellow welcomes sinners
and eats with them.*

We give thanks that you do,
for in Christ's actions
we are restored and found again
at his welcoming table.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: 1 Timothy 1: 12-17 &
Luke 15 v 1-7

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

Reflecting - Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

"This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15: 2). This verse has come to mean more to me over recent years since I read a book called "Take this Bread" by Sara Miles. Sara, who had no real experience of church, wandered into St. Gregory's Episcopal Church in San Francisco and, surrounded by a painted mural of unlikely looking saints (including some in wheelchairs), Sara took communion. She says this, "The first time I came to the Table at St. Gregory's, I was a hungry stranger. Each week since then, I've shown up— undeserving and needy—and each week, someone's hands have broken bread and brought me into communion."



Sunday September 11th, 2022

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

She began to think about the words inscribed on the very expensive new communion table, "This guy welcomes sinners and eats with them". Inspired by this new table, Sara began a foodbank, the people from the streets gathering in this space to be fed. When faced with the hungry crowd Jesus had turned to disciples to feed them. And so Sara did exactly that, "not as an act of 'outreach' but one of gratitude". (p137) Sara reflects on the words of the priest when she proposed the idea. The table had cost many thousands of dollars and was suddenly being used to do exactly what the inscription indicated, even while knowing that such use would cause it to be scuffed. And so the table that was used for the bread and wine during services was now used for bags of potatoes and boxes of pasta the rest of the time. I wonder how you hear this verse in Luke. What does it inspire in you?

The words in the verse are clearly intended to insult Jesus, what sort of Jew is he that he is consorting with the sinners, the least and the lost, rather than spending his time in piety and religious observance. But Jesus simply tells a story about where he is called to be, and what our mission and ministry is likewise to be. Seeking the lost.

Who are the lost? All of us at times are lost, they are the broken and the vulnerable, the ones society shuns and overlooks.

1 Timothy reminds us that we have all been the lost at times and have been offered God's mercy and grace, if God's grace extends to even me then it reaches to every corner. This God who is the honoured one, the glorious one, has reached out to me in the deepest most amazing love. How am I to respond? Perhaps there is a way that I can also welcome sinners and eat with them. When we have found our own belonging in the church, our place in the 'fold' that is often where we spend our time. How many 'non-faithed' people do you know, people who are outside the church and her activities? Is there a way that you can connect more fully with your community and demonstrate the love that Jesus calls us to? What does this passage ask of you?

Singing - Come as you are

TIS 693

Offering

Loving God, you offer a welcoming table and abundance of life. We offer our gifts - food, hospitality, money, care for others and more as signs that the totality of mind, body, spirit and strength we offer to you. Bless these gifts that they may signal refuge and welcome for all who are lost.

Notices

September 15th is International Democracy Day:
www.un.org/en/observances/democracy-day

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

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
we bring before you our concerns and
wonderings about the world and our local
communities.

We pray for our world. We hear news from many places where it seems despair prevails. We remember that just one is precious to you, even if ninety-nine are safe and sound. We pray for those caught up in conflicts, tensions, power grabs and the self-interest of countries, leaders and corporations. May your table become a place of welcome to the many who are forgotten or discarded.

We pray for our country, in particular our First Nations people and the idea of a National Voice to the Parliament. May your Spirit move and guide all who speak on this matter and all who will cast a determining vote when it comes time for a referendum. May we find ways to listen deeply, to make changes that truly impact on the wellbeing of all. May we as a Uniting Church find wisdom and grace as we continue on our covenantal journey as First and Second peoples.



Sunday September 11th, 2022

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

We offer prayers for our community. May we find ways to open up the table to all who have been isolated and excluded, especially as we navigate the impact of the pandemic and the fracturing of community.

Bless our church as we have been challenged with ideas of safety and what that means for an open welcome - as we have sought to care for the health of those most vulnerable to COVID-19 which has meant excluding others. May those who have felt vulnerable and those who have felt excluded know your loving and restoring presence, and may we find our belonging in you as we pray together:

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.

Singing - Amazing grace

TiS 129

Blessing

Go in the love of God,
Creator, redeemer and sustainer.
Go knowing that no matter if you are one,
or if you are safe with the ninety-nine -
you are invited to Christ's table,
a place of love, inclusion,
nourishment and blessing.

As you go,
Go to bless and be blessed.

Additional song ideas

TiS 179 Praise with Joy the World's Creator

TiS 668 Touch the earth lightly

TiS 712 Create in us a clean heart O God

Reflection: Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson
Liturgy and editor: Rev. Arnie Wierenga
Presbytery of Gippsland
pastoral.ucagipps@gmail.com

