



## **Sunday September 18th, 2022**

### **The Fig Tree Worship Resource**

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

This house of prayer is a house of grace.  
We gather here to learn our needs:

not to justify ourselves  
**but to say we are sorry,**  
not to cling to the familiar  
**but to risk the untested,**  
not to enjoy our own decency  
**but to worship a holy God,**  
not to practice positive thinking  
**but to be caught up in God's joy.**

*(from UiW2)*

We 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 (*please speak the name of the local traditional owners*). 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 - Lord of earth... TiS 672**

#### **Prayer**



Holy One, Holy Three,  
**You are sung in the song of the dawn**  
**lifted in the laugh of the kookaburra.**  
You are heard on the breath of the morning,  
laden with wattle and ti-tree blossom.

**You are glimpsed in the bright clear light of day,**  
**reflected in the moon when night falls.**  
You are present in the darkness,  
mysterious realm of the quiet night creatures.

**You are life, through generation upon generation,**  
**spanning aeons, beyond our imagining,**  
**knowing and loving each one of us.**

In the quiet we bring our hearts full of gratitude,  
(generous time of quiet)

And yet, we confess: **sometimes we forget**  
**that you are the source of life and love.**  
(pause)

And yet, we confess: **sometimes we forget**  
**that you meet us on the road.**  
(pause)

And yet, we confess: **sometimes we forget**  
**who it is that we serve.**  
(pause)

**Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of**  
**your name; deliver us, and forgive our sins, for**  
**your name's sake. (Psalm 79:9)**

Siblings in Christ, just as sure as our breathing out  
and our breathing in, we can be confident that we  
are forgiven and set free to live fully and joyfully in  
the gifts of love and grace. **Thank you God! Amen.**

#### **Passing the peace**

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

#### **Listening**

Read: Luke 16:1-13

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

#### **Reflecting - Rev. Sandra Houghton**

The steward in the Gospel story is clever.  
He saves himself by his wits. His audacity is surely  
to be admired. As does his capacity to bounce  
back from a potentially disastrous situation.

Jesus seems to have had a sense of  
humour which I think is shown in the humour  
contained within the steward's survival story.  
Especially in the way in which the steward was  
able to turn the tables on those with power and



## **Sunday September 18th, 2022**

### **The Fig Tree Worship Resource**

authority. Jesus would have known that telling a story like this one would make everyone sit up and listen, as there's nothing like a bit of controversy for shocking people out of their complacency.

But more than that, I believe Jesus told this story because he admired the way that the steward did not give up when the odds were stacked against him. Rather, the steward put everything he had, and quite a bit of what was his masters, into his survival. When he knew that he was facing the sack, he could have easily given up, sulked, cried or despaired, but instead he sought to salvage something out of the situation. And he applied himself to this task with considerable zeal, determination and enterprise.

Clearly, the steward realised that if he was sacked, he was going to be in a vulnerable position. In order to survive he was going to need people who were well disposed towards him and who might be willing to help him out. And so, he set out to have a few people who owed him favours. This he did by slashing their debts to his master.

All of this is unethical, but surprisingly it worked! And he ended up back in his master's favour.

Now, I don't believe we are meant to emulate the dishonesty or the shady ethics. But I do believe that Jesus wants us to show that sort of zeal, enthusiasm and enterprise in the living out of our faith. After all, if the steward put so much effort into saving his skin; shouldn't we, who have a much more important goal of serving God, be willing to put all we have into being faithful disciples?

For what Jesus complains about a lot is 'lukewarm' people.

This story should, I believe, be interpreted alongside the stories that have gone before it. Remember the call to discipleship a few weeks back in Luke 14 about putting God ahead of everything else, about counting the cost and being prepared to go the distance. And remember last week's stories about the lost sheep and the lost coin. Those two parables focused on the determination and effort of the main characters to

find that which was lost. Jesus celebrates their dedication to finding the lost sheep and the lost coin in the same way that he celebrates the unjust steward's cunning determination to make a future for himself.

And then there is the parable of Prodigal Son in which God is depicted as a loving Father who welcomes home so joyously the son who has behaved so badly. So pleased is he to have him home that he throws a party and invites the whole neighbourhood.

There is a theme in these passages which celebrates and calls for generosity, enthusiasm, and dedication.

I believe that God wants us to share in that generosity, enthusiasm and dedication in the way that we live. In how we use all that we have- our money, our possessions, our time, and our gifts and abilities. The parable is, I believe, a call for us to decide what truly matters in our lives, and whom we should serve. Amen.

### ***Singing - I want to walk ... TIS 643***

---

#### ***Offering***

---

Knowing that each member of Christ's body contributes to the whole,  
we bring our gifts to share  
in the unity and diversity of Christ.

*(from UiW2)*

Bless these gifts and use them, and us,  
for the sake of the world,  
in Jesus' name, Amen.

#### ***Notices***

---

September 21st - International Day of Peace.  
**2022 Theme: End racism. Build peace.**

*Each year the International Day of Peace is observed around the world on 21 September. The UN General Assembly has declared this as a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, through observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire.*

*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 September 18th, 2022**

### **The Fig Tree Worship Resource**

*But achieving true peace entails much more than laying down arms. It requires the building of societies where all members feel that they can flourish. It involves creating a world in which people are treated equally, regardless of their race.*

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-peace>

#### **Responding:**

##### **Prayers for World & Community**

---

These prayers are in the form of lament, using the reading from **Jeremiah 8:18-9:1** - you may choose to have one person read the biblical text and another speak the prayer response.

***My joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick.***

Holy One, whose children are of all creeds and colours, in prayer we bring to you the people in our world who do not know peace and we lament the heartbreak, brokenness and grief: the countries at war, the nations divided and the communities and families in crisis.

(pause)

***Hark, the cry of my poor people from far and wide in the land: "Is the LORD not in Zion? Is her King not in her?" ("Why have they provoked me to anger with their images, with their foreign idols?")***

Holy One, whose children are of all creeds and colours, in prayer we bring to you those people who feel abandoned, lost and isolated through the devastation of disaster, global or personal.

(pause)

***"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."***

Holy One, whose children are of all creeds and colours, in prayer we bring to you all the broken hopes and dreams, the devastating sense that we may have missed our many opportunities to heal and hold the planet, to feed the hungry and to show love to each other, the big regrets and countless disappointments of our time.

(pause)

***For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt, I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me.***

Holy One, whose children are of all creeds and colours, in prayer we bring to you our pain and grief, from things deep inside us, and through empathy with others, as we sometimes struggle to hold on to hope.

(pause)

***Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of my poor people not been restored?***

Holy One, whose children are of all creeds and colours, in prayer we bring to you our plea for peace. Why is it so hard to bring justice to our land? Where is healing to be found? Why does it take so long to hear the stories that need to be heard?

(pause)

***O that my head were a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears, so that I might weep day and night for the slain of my poor people!***

Our tears fall night and day, springing from the wells of compassion within us, pouring together, small tributaries forming a great river of lament, surging onwards to the deep sea of your indwelling.

(pause)

***We join our voices together, knowing that you hear us. Seeking comfort, assurance and peace for all the world in the words that 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.

#### ***Singing - Christ be my leader TiS 624***

---



***Sunday September 18th, 2022  
The Fig Tree Worship Resource***

***Blessing***

---

**Through song and scripture,  
prayer and pauses,  
we worship you,  
Holy One, Holy Three.  
Send us out as peacemakers,  
and let our lives continue to be  
an expression of worship,  
an outpouring of your loving kindness.**

Go knowing that you are not alone.  
We are bound together in kinship  
from the unending source of love.  
Go in peace,  
Amen.

*Reflection: Rev. Sandra  
Houghton  
Currawong Ministry Team  
Liturgy & Editor:  
Rev. Jennie Gordon  
[pastoral.ucagipps@gmail.com](mailto:pastoral.ucagipps@gmail.com)  
Presbytery of Gippsland*

