



Sunday January 29th, 2023 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Prayer from Uniting in Worship 2

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

From Micah 6: 6 - With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high?

With what shall we come to worship you,
God of many names?

In the quiet we reflect on what it is
that we bring with us today,
in our past and in our pockets,
through our dreams and our demands,
as we begin this time of worship.
(time of quiet)

From Micah 6:8 - ... and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Be present with us Spirit of life.
Help us in this hour, this day and always
to see the face of Christ
in each other and the stranger,
and to take the pilgrim path:
doing justice, loving kindness
and walking humbly, with you.

and all the people say: **Amen.**

Acknowledging



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

As we gather, we acknowledge the people, 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 with joy TiS 179

or Come, Holy Spirit, come TiS 422

God, Father of Christ, mothering creation,
we praise you for Jesus,
crucified, risen and reigning.

**We walk in the dignity of Christ,
we leap in the compassion of Christ,
we adore Christ's holy name.**

Christ, Saviour of humanity,
restorer of life and health,
we praise you for dying and rising for us,
for travelling our human journey.

**We walk in the dignity of Christ,
we leap in the compassion of Christ,
we adore Christ's holy name.**

Spirit, Bringer of Christ into community today,
we praise you for making present among us
the dying and risen Christ.

**We walk in the dignity of Christ,
we leap in the compassion of Christ,
we adore Christ's holy name.**

Eternal God, Three yet One,
we adore your holy name. **Amen**

Siblings in Christ, we hear from the prophet Joel:
Return to the Lord, your God:
for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger,
abounding in steadfast love.

Gracious God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word and action.

You have given us love,
but we have returned apathy;
you have provided us with neighbours,
yet we have become self-centred;
you have given us a world to enjoy,
but we have spoiled our home.

**Forgive us for the wrong things we have done,
and for the good things we have failed to do.
Give us time to change,
with the desire and the will to do so. Amen.**



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Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:
'Your sins are forgiven'.

Thanks be to God.

Passing the peace

*The peace and loving-kindness of Christ
be with you all,
and also with you.*

Listening

Read: Micah 6:1-8

Matthew 5:1-12

For these words of faith and for Jesus the Word:

Thanks be to God.

Reflecting - Rev. Deacon Marian Bisset

"O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!"

These two lines come from *To a Louse* by Robert Burns and as this is the Sunday following Robert Burns night it seemed appropriate to share them. But it also seemed appropriate to consider this is also the gift God has given us, that we might see ourselves as others see us, knowing God is in all people. We see God in the other and in ourselves.

Are you living your best life? This is often a tag line in adverts which target health, fitness, cars or food. But how often do we see an advert for are you living your best life relating to the way we live, the values we espouse or the actions we take? The prophet Micah makes clear God knows the positive and the negative of what we have or haven't done, or the way we have or haven't lived.

Yet, as we read this passage the tone is not punitive rather it is positive and gives explicit guidance on what God expects from us. Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. Easy enough to process until we come back to the point that God is in all people and not some faraway being. These are all verbs, words of action which call us to be active participants in our faith sharing.

Do justice – what might that look like in the circle of people we move in, or within our local

community? Is it joining a protest on climate change, or writing to local politicians to amend the age of incarcerating young children? Is it being vocal in our support for efforts to address increasing rates of violence in the home?

Love kindness – remember the 'random acts of kindness' through the pandemic? Care packages, letter drops or visits. During the worst of the Covid lockdowns in Melbourne I was offering chaplaincy in an Aged Care Facility and the local community started to build a 'wooden spoon community' and put them into the garden where the residents could come out and see them. At one level this was cute, but at a much deeper level this was kindness in action. This was God in action. But then the 'random acts of kindness' stopped...why?

Walk humbly with God – Micah shared the thoughts of God, the things God did and then what God required of the people. Jesus did the same except when he spoke to the people gathered around him, he saw people hurting, who lived with oppression and poverty, with little option to improve their lot in life and he walked humbly with them.

We live in a complex and at times dysfunctional world, yet so did Jesus, and his response was to turn the normal way of looking at things upside down. The new person is seen through the eyes of an incarnate presence in us and in the world. So perhaps Burns was onto more than he realised and the insect crawling around the hat of the person in front of him was seeing the world through a new lens. When all this is done, when justice has been done, kindness is love, and love is humility, then we see a transformation of humanity.

O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us
And foolish notion:
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
And ev'n Devotion!
(Oh, would some Power give us the gift
To see ourselves as others see us!

It would from many a blunder free us,
And foolish notion:

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What airs in dress and gait would leave us,
And even Devotion!)

Singing - What does the Lord ..? TiS 751

This is a wonderful three-part harmony song that is easy to sing, especially with this video -

<https://strathdeemusic.com/WhatRequire.html>

or: When I needed a neighbour TiS 629

Responding:

Offering

We bring our offering of money, time and skills to you, God of abundant love, asking you to bless them for use where they are needed. We also offer our renewed commitment to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with you. Amen.

Notices

Feb 1-7 is World Interfaith Harmony Week: <https://worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com>

The World Interfaith Harmony Week is based on the pioneering work of [The Common Word initiative](#). This initiative, which started in 2007, called for Muslim and Christian leaders to engage in a dialogue based on two common fundamental religious Commandments; Love of God, and Love of the Neighbour, without nevertheless compromising any of their own religious tenets. The Two commandments are at the heart of the three Monotheistic religions and therefore provide the most solid theological ground possible.

The World Interfaith Harmony Week extends the Two Commandments by adding 'Love of the Good, and Love of the Neighbour'. This formula includes all people of goodwill. It includes those of other faiths, and those with no faith.

The World Interfaith Harmony Week provides a platform—one week in a year—when all interfaith groups and other groups of goodwill can show the world what a powerful movement they are.

What does Interfaith Harmony look like where you live? What might you do or learn and who might you visit or invite?

In preparation for worship next week you may choose to include prayers for peace from other faiths - there is a great collection here: https://worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2019-03-07_5c8093da95b28_WIH2019Program.pdf

Statement of Faith:

The Beatitudes - Matthew 5:3-12

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you
and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad,
for your reward is great in heaven.



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Prayers for World & Community

You might like to have a tray of sand and some taper candles for people to offer prayers in the quiet spaces.

Loving God,
as your children we offer our prayers,
confident that the Spirit is with us
and gives us words
when we don't know what to say
and draws us towards you and our neighbours.

We pray for our world.
Let peace prevail, and fighting cease.
Let the hungry find food,
the grieving comforted,
and the lost be found.
(time of quiet)

We pray for this country.
May justice be known by all,
may truth be told and heard
and may our leaders be strong
in humility and compassion.
(time of quiet)

We pray for our church.
Bless those who lead
and those who follow faithfully
and all of us who stumble and fall.
Help us to keep our doors and hearts open
to your embodied presence amongst us.
(time of quiet)

We pray for our neighbours.
At the beginning of the school year
bless teachers, students and caregivers,
crossing guards and maintenance staff,
principals, chaplains and canteen workers.
(time of quiet)

We pray for ourselves.
May we be given what we need
to be what we know is good;
to do justice, love kindness
and walk humbly with you,

as we pray the prayer 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 - Make me a channel , TiS 607

or God of freedom, God of justice TiS 657

Blessing

Be present with us Spirit of life.
Help us this day and always
to see the face of Christ
in each other and the stranger,
and to take the pilgrim path:
doing justice, loving kindness
and walking humbly, with you.

and all the people say: **Amen.**

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