



Sunday April 30th, 2023 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

(Rev Deacon Jeanne Beale)

Our shepherd calls us to come
and be seated in the green pastures;
in fact, we are invited to sprawl out
on the grass beside the still waters.

We come to sit with our shepherd.

Our shepherd is preparing to lead us
in right paths;
the journey may be tricky, but rest assured,
our shepherd has a rod and staff to comfort us.

**We trust our shepherd
and are ready to take the journey.**

Our shepherd has the table prepared,
and oil for anointing for those who will follow.

**May we trust that we are worthy
of the goodness and mercy that follows.**

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

As we gather, we acknowledge the Traditional
Custodians (*please include their name*) 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 - Jesus calls us here... TiS 477

Or Come O Holy Spirit / Wa Wa Wa Emimimo TiS 711



Prayer

(from Uniting in Worship)

God our Creator,
our thoughts cannot contain you;
our words fall short of your vastness;

yet you are our God,
God of all ages.
Your breath gives us life.
Your hands shape our being.
Your artistry in creation
leaves us gasping in wonder;
longing to experience that which is of you.
In each person, there you are,
if we could but discern you.
Accept our praise, O ancient yet youthful God,
as we gather to worship and adore you
in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Prayer of Confession (Rev Karen Eller)

When we need proof of you in the world,
you offer your breath.

When we hold too tight to the past,
you offer your grace.

When we cling to old hurts,
you offer your compassion.

When we use our words and actions to
wound others,
you offer your healing.

When we fail to forgive those who hold our
past against us,
you offer your hope.

When we hurt others, with or without
intention,
you offer your peace.

When we separate ourselves from you,
you offer your forgiveness,
redeeming Christ; you bring us back to you.

You make possible the impossible.
It is through your love and forgiveness that
we find healing and freedom.
Amen.

Declaration of Forgiveness

This is the good news.
Christ forgives our sin,
sets us free to live as God's people and calls
us to live in the light.

Thanks be to God.

*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 April 30th, 2023 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Acts 2: 42-47

Psalm 23 (*responsive*)

The LORD is my shepherd, **I shall not want.**

He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;

he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
**for you are with me; your rod and your staff--
they comfort me.**

You prepare a table before me in the presence of
my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the
days of my life,
**and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my
whole life long.**

Read: John 10: 1-10

Reflecting - Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

When I was growing up, I spent a lot of time on my grandparents' farm. In winter the combustion stove would be kept going to keep the water hot, the kettle on and the cooking continual. And to keep us all warm. There were always socks hanging around the hob. I especially remember one of the times when there was a solid covering of snow, and the kids came from everywhere to play in it. When our socks were too wet and our feet too cold, we were given a fresh pair and the others lined

up around the hob. There were often tiny little lambs on the hearth being kept warm as they were coaxed into life. This was shepherding at its cosiest, the provision of precious shelter and warmth. Put simply, Nanna's hob was fundamentally offering life to us all.

I wonder what images come to mind for you as you hear the lectionary passages. God as shepherd? The sheer restful and reassuring presence of God in the Psalm? As we sit with the images, it is usual for us to think about what the Psalm has meant to us. If you have had faith for a while, there will be an overlay of the times you have heard it. Perhaps Sunday school images, likely some funeral reminders. We always come to the text with our past experiences of it. Its rich beauty speaks into our souls accordingly.

But how might the images in the Psalm sit with the John 10 and Acts 2 passages? The John passage tells us that the way to enter is through the gate, not by shortcut but by following the way of Christ and knowing his voice. We are to seek the life-giving way of discipleship, life to the very fullest, and to think about how we might live that life.

When I read the John passage the image I get is of the door in a restaurant kitchen. The door flaps both ways (in my imagination it has a satisfying swingy sound) and it allows us to go both ways through it with our hands full. It is not just a door that swings inward to rich green grass and luscious pastures and deep pools of refreshing water. Instead, it is a place for refreshment in order for us to go back out into our places of living and being. "They will come in and go out and find pasture". We pass through the door on our way in and out.

Perhaps Acts provides a way to do this. The way of Christ is to be devoted to teaching and to fellowship. I notice that preaching is not mentioned but rather us being the truly present, living and breathing Body of Christ, in and among our own neighbourhoods. We are called to have glad and generous hearts, praising God and knowing the goodwill of our neighbours. This is a



Sunday April 30th, 2023 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

how-to manual for being Christ present, and for growing the church, for using the gate and being shepherds to those around us. It's a recipe for how to be a nourishing place just like Nana's hob.

This passage encourages us not to draw lines of in and out, of divisions between genders, generations, sexualities, theological views, functionalities, lifestyles and worldviews. What if our churches were seen as places that connect people? Places that offer life and warmth and welcome. Even a dry pair of socks, and a place to learn to breathe, to be coaxed into life. Surely such goodness and mercy follows abundantly from this sort of living and loving.

Singing - The Lord's my Shepherd Tis 10

Offering

Bless these gifts we bring, Good Shepherd.
Bless the giving and the receiving,
Bless the serving and being served,
Bless the loving and being loved,
in Jesus' name, Amen.

Notices

Next weekend, May 5-7, Queenscliff Uniting Church is again hosting the **SacredEdge Festival** - and it's not too late to be part of it.

From their website: *Sacrededge is our response to a sometimes harsh and fearful world. It is an opportunity to connect with people from diverse backgrounds. Rather than debate and argue about issues Q&A style, this unique festival listens to people from the edge... their stories, music, poetry.*

<https://unitingqueenscliff.org.au/sacrededge-festival/>

May 1st (May Day) is International Workers' Day.
May 3rd is World Press Freedom Day.

Prayers for World & Community (UiW)

We pray for peace, saying:
Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**

We pray for peace in the Church:
Wherever differences in doctrine and custom
create hatred and fear,
Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**
Wherever denominational divides
create social enemies,
Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**
Wherever differences in gender, sexuality,
race and ability divide the Church,
Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**

We pray for peace in our world:
Wherever neighbour fights neighbour
over politics, religion and resources,
Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**
Wherever the needs of many are dominated
by the wants of the few,
Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**
Wherever words of peace are mouthed,
but no action is taken,
Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**

We pray for peace in our homes:
Wherever violence and abuse
imprison vulnerable people,
Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**
Wherever brothers and sisters compete
for the love and attention of parents,
Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**
Wherever parents and children provoke
each other to insult and injury,
Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**
**In the name of Christ, we commit ourselves
to work for the peace of God.
Amen.**

We pray together then as 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,



Sunday April 30th, 2023
The Fig Tree Worship Resource

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

Or - Brother, sister let me serve you. TiS 560

Sending & Blessing (Rev Karen Eller)

Let us go from here
trusting in the Good Shepherd
to lead us toward goodness and mercy.

May we rejoice in Christ who came
that we might have life in abundance.
May we listen to the voice
which leads us into fullness of life.

**Let us follow God's lead
with courage and dignity.
We are Christ's faithful followers!**

May the Creator God inspire new dreams.
May Christ Jesus provoke new courage.
And may the Holy Spirit of truth and justice
stay with us all, evermore,
Amen.

Reflection: Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

Guest Liturgists:

Rev. Deacon Jeanne Beale

Rev. Karen Eller

Editor: Rev. Jennie Gordon

Presbytery of Gippsland

pastoral.ucaqipps@gmail.com

