



## Sunday June 11th, 2023 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

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

*From the gospel of Matthew chapter 9, verse 9:*  
As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

We have come to follow you,  
Jesus the Christ.  
Getting up from our comfortable places  
of complicity and complacency.  
Hearing your call,  
we have come to follow you.

**May it be so, Amen**

*Light the candle - Christ is with us.*

### **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 - Come as you are TiS 693**

OR: Let us sing to the God of salvation TiS 52  
*May the mind of Christ my Saviour* TiS 609;

### **Prayer**



We thank and praise you,  
sovereign God of all that is, was and will be.  
You bring life out of darkness.  
You establish order where there is chaos.  
You disturb us into hope  
with your persistent presence.  
Our words of praise cannot measure your glory,

and yet you weave us into one people,  
generation upon generation,  
bound together in your outpouring love.

We thank and praise you, Jesus the Christ,  
for coming to us, and calling to us,  
and inviting us to follow you.  
The threads of our lives entwine with yours,  
our stories meet and meld,  
as you heal and hold and lift us up,  
so that we can do the same for others.

We thank and praise you, Spirit of Life,  
Advocate, Comforter, Sustainer,  
for being alongside and unsettling us,  
tipping us into truth,  
confronting us with questions,  
showering us with enthusiasm and hope.

One in Three, Three in One,  
God of many names, we adore you.

*From Matthew's gospel chapter 9, verse 13 we hear these words of Jesus; Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."*

And we remember, that we all take wrong turns,  
we fail to follow in the way of Jesus.  
We harm others and ourselves  
and desecrate your world in which we live.  
We gladly receive your love and grace,  
but often fail to show love and grace to others.

**In the quiet we bring those things  
we have done, or not done,  
that weigh heavy on our hearts,  
asking you to forgive us  
and to set us free from these burdens  
of guilt, shame or regret.**

*(hold a time of silence)*

Siblings in love, There is nothing in all creation  
that can separate us from the love of God shown  
in Christ Jesus. Hear then these words of faith:



## Sunday June 11th, 2023 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

our burdens are lifted, our sins are forgiven,  
**thanks be to God, Amen.**

### ***Passing the peace***

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

### ***Listening***

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Readings: Genesis 12: 1-9

Psalm 33:1-12 (*responsive*)

Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous.

**Praise befits the upright.**

Praise the Lord with the lyre;

**make melody to him**

**with the harp of ten strings.**

Sing to him a new song;

**play skilfully on the strings, with loud shouts.**

For the word of the Lord is upright,

**and all his work is done in faithfulness.**

He loves righteousness and justice;

**the earth is full**

**of the steadfast love of the Lord.**

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,

**and all their host by the breath of his mouth.**

He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle;

**he put the deeps in storehouses.**

Let all the earth fear the Lord;

**let all the inhabitants of the world**

**stand in awe of him.**

For he spoke, and it came to be;

**he commanded, and it stood firm.**

The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to  
nothing;

**he frustrates the plans of the peoples.**

The counsel of the Lord stands forever,

**the thoughts of his heart to all generations.**

Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord,

**the people whom he has chosen**

**as his heritage.**

Read: Romans 4:13-25

Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

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

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When the great artist Caravaggio painted 'The calling of St Matthew' for the Contarelli Chapel in Rome, he painted Matthew and his fellow tax collectors, as a group of utterly common, rather rough looking contemporary Italian merchants hunched over a counting table in the back room of a tavern. In the painting, a shaft of light comes through the open door, and across the canvas we see the outstretched hand of Jesus. One of the money counters has lifted his head, squinting against the light, with a shocked expression on his face. It is Matthew, and Jesus has just said to him, "Follow me."

The painter has captured beautifully that moment when someone is surprised by the light of God streaming in his or her life.

But Caravaggio's painting attracted a great deal of controversy and criticism because he didn't dress his subjects in Biblical robes, nor did he make them look respectable. In fact, it is said that the church didn't want to pay for the painting as "it didn't look religious." Caravaggio is said to have replied, "Our Lord loved and called to him the common people. That is the Lord which I paint."

We know that tax collectors of Jesus' time were unscrupulous operators and collaborators with the Roman occupational forces, well known for their practice of extorting the civilian population. Caravaggio's response reminds us that there is no reason for us to believe that Matthew was an exceptional tax collector. Certainly, the Pharisees that observed Jesus eating at Matthew's home had no illusions about Matthew, for they roundly criticised Jesus for eating with such sinners and outcasts. They clearly believed Matthew to be no better than any of his contemporaries. But the reality is that Jesus called him despite his reputation and unsavoury profession.

Jesus gives us no explanation for why he chose Matthew, or for that matter, any of the other



## **Sunday June 11th, 2023**

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

disciples. What we do get to see, is that Matthew responded to Jesus' call, left his ordinary life behind, stepped out onto the road and followed Jesus. He left behind family, job, income and security. It was a risky and brave move.

There must have been something compelling about Jesus for Matthew (and for the other disciples) to respond so willingly to his call. Something about Jesus that enabled people to summon all their faith and courage and do things they would not ordinarily do.

We see this also in the leader of the synagogue who risked ridicule and rejection to seek help for his daughter. He was desperate, but nonetheless, he somehow believed that Jesus could heal his daughter, and his faith was rewarded.

Likewise, the woman with the haemorrhage, who in faith touched the hem of Jesus' garments believing that she could be healed. And because of her faith, Jesus healed her and restored her to wholeness and to her community.

Jesus reaches out in love to all people; and Jesus calls all people, including ordinary people, to follow him. There is nothing in the Biblical accounts that suggests that those whom Jesus called to follow him were perfect in faithfulness and obedience. In fact, as Jesus' ministry continued, we see that the disciples and other followers of Jesus often failed to hear or understand his teaching, often failed to be loyal, and most fled when the going got rough. And yet, Jesus forgave them and called them to keep on following him. Remarkably, many of these flawed people became, through God's transforming power and love, the earliest evangelists and church founders.

Likewise, Jesus reaches out to us, calling us to follow him. Calling us to use our God given talents and gifts, calling us to faithfulness, calling us to service. Just like Matthew, some of us are able to tell of a specific call to a specific ministry (like my call to be a Minister of the Word or someone else's call to missionary service), but all are called.

And not only are all Christians called to service, but Jesus also promises to equip, sustain and empower us for service, promising to be with us always.

A contemporary artist, painting 'The calling of Matthew' could do what Caravaggio did in his day and dress the participants in 21<sup>st</sup> Century clothing and place them in a modern-day setting. He or she could make them contemporary equivalents of Matthew and his mates, perhaps setting them in the bar of a pub, or behind the counter of a Cash Converters, or even in a "bikie" gang headquarters, and have the hand of Jesus stretching out to these 21<sup>st</sup> Century people, calling them to follow him. For Jesus continues to call disciples to action today, just as he did in Biblical times. Calling not just the pious, but rather to all who will respond, calling "Follow me."

Let us like Matthew and be willing to respond to Jesus' call on our lives, freely and wholeheartedly. Amen.

#### ***Singing*** TIS 658; I, the Lord of sea and sky

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OR: Jesus calls us here to meet him TIS 477  
Made in God's likeness TIS 671

#### ***Offering***

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God of abundant and surprising love,  
bless these gifts of love we bring;  
ourselves and our time, money and goods.

**Bless these gifts  
that they might be expressions  
of mercy and goodness,  
where they are needed most,  
in ministry, mission and service to you. Amen.**

#### ***Notices***

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June 12 is the World Day against child labour:  
<https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/campaignandadvocacy/wdacl/lang--en/index.htm>

June 15th is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day  
<https://elderabuseawarenessday.org.au/>



**Sunday June 11th, 2023**  
**The Fig Tree Worship Resource**

**Prayers for World & Community**

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*The refrain can be spoken or sung: TiS 737*

**Lord, Jesus Christ, lover of all,  
trail wide the hem of your garment  
bring healing, bring peace.**

We pray for those who are a long way from home,  
or who don't know where or what home might be:

**Lord, Jesus Christ, lover of all,  
trail wide the hem of your garment  
bring healing, bring peace.**

*(hold a time of silence)*

We pray for our home, this land, this country, this planet;  
help us to find ways of reducing harm and bringing regeneration and healing,  
learning from the deep wisdom of the traditional custodians.

**Lord, Jesus Christ, lover of all,  
trail wide the hem of your garment  
bring healing, bring peace.**

*(hold a time of silence)*

We pray for healing for our friends, family, neighbours and ourselves,  
All who are in distress, in need of your healing touch.

**Lord, Jesus Christ, lover of all,  
trail wide the hem of your garment  
bring healing, bring peace.**

*(hold a time of silence)*

We pray together then as Jesus taught us:

***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 - Be thou my vision TiS 547**

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OR: Guide me O thou great Redeemer TiS 569

**Blessing**

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From UiW2 p184-185

The grace of Christ attend you;  
the love of God surround you;  
the Holy Spirit keep you;  
this day and forever. Amen.

Go out into the world in the power of the Spirit;  
in all things, at all times,  
remember that Christ is with you;  
Make your life your worship  
to the praise and glory of God. **Amen**

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