



Sunday July 2nd, 2023

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Have we ever been in a situation when our loving God seems so far away?
Have we ever felt God has left us alone in despair?
Have we ever walked on the road where the presence of God is silent?
Have we ever been called by God to offer up the precious thing we have?
Have we ever been restored and re-energized by God's unfailing love?

**Let us continue to trust in God's unfailing love
And find the joy of His salvation in our hearts.
Let us sing to the Lord, because He has been good to us. (Ps 13)**

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress*

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 - For the beauty of the earth TiS 137

OR: God himself is present TiS 121 (not inclusive language)



Prayer

Thank you, Lord,

- for being near to us in time when we feel that you are so far away.
- for being within us in time when we feel empty in our hearts.

- for lifting our souls in restoring us from failing to trust you each day.
- for protecting us from our enemies in enabling us to love them.
- for the sustaining faith we have in you to continue moving on with what we have and who we are in this journey of life.

However, O Lord, forgive us if there are times....

... we fail to live out our lives of calling to serve you in serving the community and our neighbours..

... we are afraid of the unseen future in following the instruction of love to show within our families, friends and churches.

... we are blinded and do not see or acknowledge the bright side of our fellow human beings .

... we have lost sight of the power of faith, which your servant Abraham had, that comes through the life of obedience in you.

... we fail to live a life of modelling for the younger generations, including those from our own folks, to trust in you that you are the source of life, providence and provision we need each day.

God of mercy and love, thank you for accepting the humble and undeserved petition of our contrite heart and pardoning us with your forgiving heart through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thanks be to God. Amen

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Genesis 22: 1-14

Matthew 10: 40-42

For these words of faith
and for Jesus the Word

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 July 2nd, 2023 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Reflecting –

'Imagine; a welcome, a reward'

A letter: calling for an exercise of imagination. This one, recently unearthed by archaeologists in what was thought to be a bingo hall near ancient Capernaum. A first century writing in a flowery, old hand on the back of wrapping marked 'Reuben's kosher small-goods', it reads:

"How-are-you Matty? You will always be 'my-little-boy' to your doting old gran. I hope this note finds you well, or at least finds you. If you don't get this please let me know and give me a better contact.

Your aunty Esther and I are getting on tolerably. But my arthritis sufferers' support group can't meet. The governor said we were a front for the Palestinian Liberation Party. Twenty Roman troops; they made a real mess of our bingo afternoon and we haven't been game to meet since. Mind you the funds from the bingo were supporting a group of nice insurgents including Sarah's grandsons from next door. Such a pity! Palestinian lives still matter!

We've been having a few dark skinned Africans here in the Roman garrison; families and all! Causes quite a stir when they go to the market. No one dares be nasty with the soldiers around, but you can hear gasps around the stalls. Why does Rome have to send them here? A dark olive skin is fine. And those poor pale ones from up north, they all go red as soon as the sun comes out. Why didn't God make them all like us? Generations of oppression we've had; the Greeks then Romans! I wish someone would send them all away.

That Jesus lad, you and your friends have hooked up with is really causing a stir. His

mother, Mary, is a second cousin of your father's uncle on his maternal side. And boy, there are some ripples in that family! Sons stirred up against fathers, daughters in law stirred up against mothers in law.

I hear Jesus is doing good for the poor and troubled, but he isn't one for compromises. He'll never make a leader with that idealistic approach. Poor Jeb, the fourth cousin I told you about – he likes Jesus, even been to some of his outdoor meetings and he can't stop talking about Jesus' teaching. 'The kingdom is here, he says, love one another, blessed are the humble, and the peacemakers.' Which all sounds fine, but Jeb can only get work repairing soldier's armour.

I had a chat with Rabbi over tea the other day, just to ask about some of the teachings you were so impressed by. You know Nicodemus, a few grades ahead of you at Synagogue school – he has his head screwed on, and I love his children's addresses!

The good rabbi says teaching about being sent and welcoming God, in welcoming God's messenger is a big theological point. 'Sent ones' or 'apostles' (which means 'sent ones') are known across our world. That makes them a sort of 'email in person.' 'We depend on travelling representatives, authorised to act for their senders', he explained – as if I didn't know! I tried to tell him your grandfather did that for the governor for fifteen years before his knees gave out, but I couldn't get a word in; can you imagine that?

'We rabbis think of this envoy model to explain the role of our prophets, he went on. 'They were God's messengers.' He said it was interesting that the words for 'angels', in both Greek and Hebrew, have the same background; they're sent ones, people who announce. And the same root in the word for gospel. He got so carried away, I think he let

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 July 2nd, 2023

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

slip 'Jesus is God's envoy then'. Do you know Matthew, I think my Rabbi is a sympathiser with your Jesus!

I can't do much to help support you, but I have a sense in my old bones that doing even just the little we can is very important. It shows what ideas we believe in, what cause we side with. Some days we don't have much more than a cup of water to give away, but I'm sure God sees what our support represents. And now I think about it, I think that makes you sort of an apostle, and people who welcome you messengers, are doing something just as important.

I did enjoy your last letter, perhaps you could be a writer one day?

Bye for now, must get back to my knitting, I'll have a new goat hair tunic ready for you next time you visit.

Well, Shalom Matthew, Your old gran has at least a cool drink ready any time you come by and I'm keen to know what you've learnt from Jesus. You are always welcome!"

Indeed! Welcoming all, regardless of colour or creed, hospitality, generosity with anything we can share; these are key characteristics of our faith. Jesus calls us to be people of welcome, doing what we can, in faith. This Jesus embodies the good news of God's kingdom and asks us to join in the same. Amen

Inspired by Gerd Theissen, New Testament scholar, author of 'The Shadow of the Galilean'

Singing- Jesus hands were kind hands Tis 236

OR: - **Brother, sister... Tis 650**

OR: Kneels at the feet of his friends Tis 640

Offering

God, the source of life and all blessings accept and bless these offerings which as a token of our love we bring.

For you and for your service. we offer these gifts, O Lord. Use them to reach out those in need to proclaim your word in deep and to share your love in peace. Amen.

Notices

It's NAIDOC week July 2-9. So, what are you doing and how is your church involved? The 2023 theme is **For Our Elders.**

From the website: [Current Theme | NAIDOC](#)

Across every generation, our Elders have played, and continue to play, an important role and hold a prominent place in our communities and families. They are cultural knowledge holders, trailblazers, nurturers, advocates, teachers, survivors, leaders, hard workers and our loved ones.

Our loved ones who pick us up in our low moments and celebrate us in our high ones. Who cook us a feed to comfort us and pull us into line, when we need them too. They guide our generations and pave the way for us to take the paths we can take today. Guidance, not only through generations of advocacy and activism, but in everyday life and how to place ourselves in the world.

We draw strength from their knowledge and experience, in everything from land management, cultural knowledge to justice and human rights. Across multiple sectors like health, education, the arts, politics and everything in between, they have set the many courses we follow.

The struggles of our Elders help to move us forward today. The equality we continue to fight for is found in their fight. Their tenacity and strength has carried the survival of our people. It is their influence and through their learnings that we must ensure that when it comes to future decision making for our people, there is nothing about us - without us.

We pay our respects to the Elders we've lost and to those who continue fighting for us across all our



Sunday July 2nd, 2023
The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Nations and we pay homage to them. In 2023, how will you celebrate **For Our Elders?**

Prayers for World & Community

We pray for the senior citizens of our churches and community that they will continue to cherish your abundant love and blessings and move on their lives with happiness and joy which come from your sustaining power.

God of love: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the families of those of your servants whom you used to plant this Uniting Church in Australia, and those founding servants who are still alive that they will continue to experience the joy of pioneering sacrifice they had offered to you at the Alter of unity and oneness in Christ.

God of sacrifice: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those of all people who are serving you in the different and varied sectors and department of Uniting world and Uniting churches within and outside of Australia that they will continue to get the needed spiritual, mental and physical strengths to serve you more and more in serving one another and the community in which we live and have our beings through your empowering grace:

God of grace: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the troubled world around the globe that they will come to know you are neither silent nor inactive history, but you are the source of life and death, you are in control, you are the sustaining enabler, you are the energizer of all power.

God of power: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for your disciples of every denomination around the world that in our day to day life, we will continue to recommit our lives for the service of the power of faith in obeying your will and following the way you want us to go for the extension of your kingdom and for your glory.

God of obedience: **Hear our prayer**

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,
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

607 *Make me a channel of your peace*
686 *Lord Jesus we belong to you*

Blessing

Friends,
as you go out into this new week
remember Abraham who received a
reward of righteousness
because of the power of faith in obedience
in the Lord.
Therefore,
may God's unfailing love sustaining you
may God's calling strengthen you
may God's answer to your cry empower you
each day, **Amen.**

Reflection: Rev. Ian Brown
Liturgy: Rev. Gospel Ralte
Editor: Moira Dodsworth
Wattlebird Ministry Team
Presbytery of Gippsland
mdods1@gmail.com

