



**Weekly Worship**



## Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

The steadfast love of our God never ceases. It surrounds those who trust in the Lord. Let us shout with joy for God preserves us in times of trouble.

*(based on Psalm 32)*

*Light the candle - Christ is with us.*

### Acknowledging

As we gather, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of these unceded lands and waters. We pay respect to Elders past and present. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander  
Christian Congress

## Singing: Praise and thanksgiving TiS 627

OR: *Come as you are* TiS 693

OR: *Praise with joy the world's creator* TiS 179



## Prayer

God of our longed-for reconciliation,  
God who loves us more than we deserve  
in grace, through hospitality and welcome -  
we come to you in praise and thanksgiving.  
You are our resting place.  
You are our shelter in times of trouble.  
You are loving and generous even when we demand  
what is not ours.  
You wait and look and look and wait  
for the hope that we will be found again  
when we have strayed.

As we hear your Scriptures again, we wonder again  
how we can be so self-absorbed,  
how we can be blind to your grace, your love, your  
compassion, your reconciliation.

When we have turned away, we pray forgive us:  
**forgive us.**

When we grumble about the measure of your grace  
towards others for fear of missing out,  
we pray forgive us: **forgive us.**

When we see love as a commodity to be meted out  
to get what we want from life,  
we pray forgive us: **forgive us.**

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.

Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no  
iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

*Psalm 32:1-2*

As Christ shows through the story of the Forgiving  
Father, as we turn to God, God is waiting for us. As we  
turn to God, we turn for home.

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**





## Passing the peace

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

## Listening

**Read:** Joshua 5:9-12,  
2 Corinthians 5:16-21 &  
Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

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

## Reflecting

**Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson**

### ***The Awkwardness of Grace***

When we turn to God, God is waiting for us,  
poised for welcome, rejoicing in our presence,  
hoping that we would come. **When we turn to  
God, we turn for home.**

*(Rev. Rachel Kronberger)*

I wonder what reconciliation means to you. Is it a hard concept? Perhaps you think of individual or family circumstances, perhaps of reconciliation between people groups, maybe between indigenous and second peoples. The text in 2 Corinthians speaks to us of a new way to see things, not a human point of view, but the point of view of grace. Our old way of seeing is gone and we see through the eyes of grace. As God's ambassadors we bring reconciliation, eyes no longer fixed on "trespasses" but with the eyes of grace. If sin is defined as all that causes

division between us and God, that which fractures and separates us, then reconciling is the reverse or the redemption of that. Fracturing is when we turn away, reconciling is when we have turned back. Reconciliation is the lived reality of the realisation that we are all one.

The Old Testament reading also speaks of grace, the disgrace of the people is removed, and they are forgiven and restored. A community Passover meal of remembering and celebrating, God's gift of manna is appreciated with grateful hearts and then it is removed as they come on home. They are set free of shame, restored and renewed through grace.

The parable in Luke is set in a context, of the opening verses of the chapter. Such wonderful words, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them". The parable itself is so familiar, perhaps too familiar and we may find ourselves accepting it has a particular meaning and looking no further. I find it an awkward story of family pain and heartache, a story very present in the lives of so many in our society. I find myself quite annoyed by some of the dissonances in it, and by some of the easy interpretations through which we view it.

Each of the characters in the story are part of my own experience, that includes the Pharisees and scribes who are grumbling and the tax collectors and sinners who are avidly listening. Some of these sinners will have been viewed as collaborating with the enemy and the Roman oppressors. This is a radical teaching from Jesus about where grace becomes more than just words. This is where Law itself is giving way to radical grace.



*Reflecting continues*

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# Fourth Sunday in Lent

Sunday March 30, 2025

*Reflecting continues*

The son who is responsible for the fracturing of his family 'comes to himself', perhaps this is repentance but perhaps he just works it out and wises up. Comparing himself to the servants in his family (who he perhaps thinks are given way more than he has - is this resentment?), he recognises he was better off at home. He rehearses a speech on the way home, he is the younger sibling so has observed some of the nuances of his family vibe. Does he know his dad will melt when he sees him? Is he manipulating the situation? We usually read it as the son repenting and accepting whatever tone his dad will take with him.

It is the final scene I find hardest because I understand why the older son is so concerned, perhaps because I am an oldest sibling. I too would be concerned about my dad and probably feel slighted when my brother who took his share already comes running back into dad's good graces AND is treated better than I ever was as I worked away in faithful service. I wonder though, if this is not part of it, if the awkward parts are the way we are meant to hear it. This much-loved scene of hospitality, fatherly love and welcome may be made even more vital and dynamic by the acknowledgment of the risky business of grace. Perhaps part of grace is that it is not a good idea! Grace is radical and risky and a creative force which invites us into vulnerable places.

I wonder what happens next in the story, does the youngest son stay in the relationship of home? Does he continue to exploit or is he truly restored? Does the relationship between his brother and his father find resolution? Does he get another share of inheritance? We do not know because the story ends on the risky business of grace and the vulnerability of reconciliation.

This is a sentimental story but if we stay in the sentimental emotions of it, we risk missing its finer points. True grace and its hospitality, welcoming in the stranger, the homeless, the 'other' is always a risk and a radical expression of relentless love. The love is real, the requirement to love is real, but so is its radical nature. I thank God for that since it means I am included in God's relentless love and grace too.

I will continue to sit with the awkwardness I experience in the story and allow my bias toward the older son's feelings of injustice to remain unresolved. Nevertheless, the risky business of grace I hear in the story is so badly needed in our world right now, in our community and in our churches. In the climate of today's human point of view which seems to be the perspective of outrage, we are called to a ministry of reconciliation, of radical grace and relentless love.

## Singing: Loving Spirit TIS 417

OR: Amazing grace TIS 129

OR: God when human bonds are broken TIS 683

OR: Love divine all loves excelling TIS 217



## Offering

Reconciling God, bless all that we offer - that grace, love and healing may be known. May our living be infused with your reconciliation for the whole of creation.

## Prayers for World & Community

God of grace, we pray for your world, for places where human bonds are broken and reconciliation is desperately needed.

For warring places where fragile hopes of ceasefire seem too often crushed by vengeance and payback. Where powers crush the most vulnerable, we pray that grace and hope may spring forth.

We pray for particular places in our world that are troubled, facing disaster, or feel beyond the reach of global care and concern ...

*Prayer continues*

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## Weekly Worship



*Prayer continues*

We pray for our country as we move ever closer to a federal election, aware of many competing voices, and that often the quiet voices of the many remain unheard. We pray for ordinary voters trying to navigate the noise with grace and faith for the sake of our future. We pray for particular needs in our nation ...

We pray for your church, under pressure for many reasons. Help us remember that you watch and wait, longing for us to find home in you. As we turn to God, we turn to home. No matter what troubles us in the church, remind us anew that we are people of the resurrection. We pray for the needs of the church ...

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: God gives us a future TiS 687

OR: *Guide me O thou great Redeemer* TiS 569  
OR: *Made in God's likeness* TiS 671

### Blessing

God gives us a future,  
daring us to go  
into dreams and dangers  
on a path unknown.  
We will face tomorrow  
in the Spirit's power  
we will let God change us,  
for new life starts now.

*Elizabeth J. Smith*

Go to bless and be blessed  
in the name of God who is our home:

Creator,  
Redeemer, and  
Sustainer. Amen.

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