



**Weekly Worship**



# Forth Sunday of Easter

**Sunday April 30, 2023**

## 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

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.**

*Prayer continues*

*Weekly Worship. Season of Easter 2023. Presbytery of Gippsland, Fig Tree Worship Resource*



**Uniting Church in Australia**  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



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### *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.**

### **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 swiny sound) and it allows us to go both ways through it with our hands full. It is not just a door

*Reflecting continues*

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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 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**



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### **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.*

[unitingqueenscliff.org.au/sacrededge-festival](http://unitingqueenscliff.org.au/sacrededge-festival)

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

### **Responding: 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!**

*Prayer continues*





## Weekly Worship



*Prayer continues*

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,  
 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 for ever. 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.**

#### Contributors this week:

Reflection: Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson.

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