



Weekly Worship



Pentecost 8
Sunday July 23, 2023

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Genesis 28:16 Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place--and I did not know it!"

"There is nowhere that God is NOT present."

We welcome God to this place and worship.

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.



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

Singing: Love divine, all loves excelling TiS 217

OR: Here in this place TiS 474



Prayer

Here is a song by Bernadette Farrell, based on Psalm 119. You might want to play this clip as prayer, and hold some silence at the end.

O God, You search Me and You Know Me
By Bernadette Farrell.

Loving Lord, we come to you in confidence as we hear the words you spoke to Jacob:
Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go,... for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

Lord of heaven and earth,
we praise you for your greatness.
Your wisdom is seen in all your works.
Your grace and truth are revealed
in Jesus Christ your son.
Your presence and power are given to us
through the Holy Spirit.
Therefore, blessed Trinity,
we worship and adore you for ever and ever.

Amen

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We come to you as people who know our failings, our humanness and we are grateful that you accept us as we are.

Forgive us when we have thought of ourselves first, when we have not looked for your guidance, when we have wondered if there is meaning in our lives.

Forgive us when we have not loved as you love us.

Amen

Be assured, we are loved and forgiven.

Thanks be to God





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Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Genesis 28:10-19a

Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24 (responsive)

O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.

**You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.**

Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD,
you know it completely.

**You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.**

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so
high that I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

**ALL: Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.**

Read: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

For these words of faith
and for Jesus the Word

Thanks be to God.

Reflecting

Rev. Wendy Elson

Jacob recognised the sacredness of 'Place'
through his deep encounter with God. He knew
that this country was holy land and it held the
presence of God in a palpable sense. Interesting
that he recognised and heard the Spirit through
his dream. Our dreams can certainly be a place
where we have deep encounters with the Spirit.

A few years ago I was pondering a major
research program I had decided to undertake.
However, I was floundering around in my efforts
to find clear focus. One night as I went to bed I
decided to welcome dreams, to allow my mind
to relax and hear what God and my inner self
were trying to say to me, to hear my unconscious
dreaming. I woke up with three words in my heart
and they have held me right through my efforts.
Every time I get lost or unfocussed in my project
they speak themselves to me again, "Tell the
Stories". What are your dreams saying to you?

Have you ever heard the term 'God forsaken'?
As a chaplain in schools I often heard people
refer to "bringing God into" the school and yet
some of my best God encounters were already
happening in the school. I could sense the Spirit's
work already inviting people, connecting them
in their diversity and being there in kindness and
the moments when people were at their most
human. Students always had such life about
them and if I listened carefully, I could hear God in
relationship with the sacredness at the centre of
people's humanity.

When I was at college, I did a unit called *Sacred
and Secular* and found it very helpful. In the
student lounge we had been having an ongoing

Reflecting continues





Weekly Worship



Reflecting continues

discussion about whether God was everywhere. I sat in some interesting places in that course and could see that the question needs to be flipped. There is nowhere that God is NOT present. Anyway, the project I undertook for this session led me to Rolland House where the Deaconesses from the Presbyterian Church had been trained and in going to visit the building and noting the changes, I was renewed in my own sense of call.

In this land we refer to the Great South Land of the Holy Spirit. When we come in as outsiders and think we 'bring' God with us we do damage to those present as well as to the work of the Spirit. But when we expect to encounter God, to listen for the Spirit as Jacob did (and recognise the encounter when it occurs) we work in tune with God and each other. Let us listen and celebrate when we encounter God and mark these as special moments of connection. There is nowhere that God is NOT present.

Sometimes we walk into a field of ministry and see weeds, other times we see herbs and plants which have been placed there for growth and nourishment. Jesus' teaching here encourages me to let go of the need to sift and discern between them. With wisdom and care I can let them flourish and allow for them to have different purposes when the time of harvest comes. After all, weeds are apparently just plants growing in the wrong place. Dandelion tea may be a tasty medicinal plant used for healing, but it can be annoying when it is growing in my lawn and or among my pot plants. Let's let God sort out the winnowing, deciding what needs to grow where. Rather than labelling weeds and seeds we can let them grow together. Later on, all will be revealed but it is not for us to do the sifting. We hear the groaning of creation, the longing of all that has been created, for the Spirit's touch. We await with eager hope, the fulfilment of all things and the reconciliation of all of us to God, to each other and to nature.

So how do we discern where the Spirit is? Where the Spirit is there is freedom and Life. It just takes careful listening and a little dreaming.





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**Singing: You are before me Lord
TiS 87**

OR: The Great Southland of the Holy Spirit



Offering

**In enthusiasm and hope,
in humility and community,
in trust and expectation
we make our offering to God
Amen**

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Notices

The Act2 Project team is excited to announce the release of its new report, *Act2: In Response to God's Call*. It brings together a summary of what the team has heard, theological reflections and a set of options and directions for the future.

www.act2uca.com/act2report

**Responding: Prayers for
World & Community**

Prayers for others-using an image of suitcases of all kinds.

We pray for those in Ukraine, fleeing to places of safety with suitcases packed with the ordinary things of life so they may simply live. Their lives suddenly coming down to one small suitcase, dragged through the snow and rain and bitter cold.

We are reminded of people who have had to flee violence and war in many places – Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, who left with their suitcase of dreams for freedom and for a better life. We pray especially today for those in immigration detention here in Australia, for those still in PNG and Nauru.

We pray for those with courage to leave domestic violence situations, who silently and carefully pack their bags to leave, seeking safety and peace of mind.

We pray for those displaced by natural disasters of flood, fire, famine, and those who have no time to pack their bags ...

We pray for those affected by the climate emergency who have already been displaced from their homes in low lying areas in the Pacific.

We pray for those whose suitcase of dreams has been battered, and for those discarded along the way ...

We pray ...

We pray about own baggage that weighs us down ...

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings but connected, in mystery and miracle, to the universe, to the divine, to community, to each other.

Ever present God, you are with us in the hour of need. Bring hope, bring healing.

Stir our compassion and imagination, as we in turn seek our best loving response. Amen.

(Source: Sandy Boyce, Uniting Church in Australia)

Continued





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Prayer continues

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: Praise the God who ... TiS 178

OR: Sent forth by God's blessing TiS 531

Blessing

Go out and tell your stories, listen to others' stories and dream. Do this without fear, knowing that God is good and our charge is to tell the Good News.

In the name of God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

Amen

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