



**Weekly Worship**



**Pentecost 14**  
**Sunday September 3, 2023**

## Call to Worship & Lighting the Candle

When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Ex 2:3

Let us turn aside from daily life and be present.  
Let us worship God

**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.



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander  
Christian Congress

## Singing: Immortal. Invisible God ... TiS 143

OR: *The God of Abraham Praise, TiS 125*



## Prayer

Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, sing praises to him, tell of his wonderful works.  
Let us seek the Lord in our prayers.

*Time of Silence*

Remember the works of the Lord,  
His miracles and judgements.  
Remember Moses and Aaron and all those since  
that God has chosen and sent. Psalm 105

O God

We confess the blindness that is not even aware  
of sinning:

the pride that dares not admit that it is even  
wrong;

the selfishness that can see nothing but its own  
will;

the righteousness that knows no fault;

the callousness that has ceased to care;

the defiance that does not regret its own sins;

the evasion that always tries to make excuses;

the coldness of heart that is too hardened to  
repent;

God we are sinners; be merciful to us.

**Amen**

**UiW2 256**

Remember we are a loved and forgiven people.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Amen**

## Passing the peace

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





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## Listening

Read: Exodus 3:1-15  
Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b  
Romans 12:9-21 alt. (responsive)

Let love be genuine;

**hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good;**

Love one another with mutual affection;

**outdo one another in showing honour.**

Do not lag in zeal,

**be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.**

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering,

**persevere in prayer.**

Contribute to the needs of the saints;

**extend hospitality to strangers.**

Bless those who persecute you;

**bless and do not curse them.**

Rejoice with those who rejoice,

**weep with those who weep.**

Live in harmony with one another;

**Do not repay anyone evil for evil.**

If it is possible, so far as it depends on you,  
live peaceably with all.

**Do not be overcome by evil,  
but overcome evil with good.**

Read: Matthew 16:21-28

For these words of faith  
and for Jesus the Word

**Thanks be to God.**

## Reflecting

**Rev. Sandra Houghton**

I was driving home one afternoon when my attention was taken by a large fire, burning fiercely, out in the middle of a paddock. I stopped to take in the view with the redness of the flames, shooting high into the air, standing out vividly from the green of the paddock.

There is something quite mesmerising about fire, but fire can be good or bad. As a contained fire for cooking and heating it is an asset, but wildfire/bushfire is quite another thing. Fire can be dangerous and horribly destructive. We know this all too well in Australia.

Apparently, they also experience destructive scrub fires in the semi-arid deserts of the Middle East, often set off by lightning. Perhaps that is why Moses went to investigate when he saw the burning bush. But this was no normal fire as it did not blacken, nor did it consume the bush. Moses stopped to look at this strange sight, not yet aware that this was God's doing, but he was soon called to attention by God.

What followed was a long discourse between God and Moses in which God showed God's compassion and concern for the Israelites trapped in slavery and God's determination that they be liberated.

Moses was awestruck, as he struggled to come to terms firstly by the fact that he was being addressed by Almighty God, and then as he railed against being called to undertake what he rightly saw as a pretty much impossible calling. How was he, an exiled murderer not even in good standing in his own community, going to be able to convince his own people that God had sent him to liberate them? Let alone convince the Pharaoh?

*Reflecting continues*

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



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



**Weekly Worship**



*Reflecting continues*

But for every objection Moses makes God has an answer. No matter how hard Moses argued, it was clear that God would have God's way. But in the process God revealed to Moses some of the powers that he would be given in order that God's will would prevail.

And so it was that Moses finally capitulated to God's will and headed back to Egypt to begin one of the greatest liberation stories in history. And it all began at the burning bush.

Throughout history, many people have remembered the story of the burning bush when the situation looked impossible, especially when there seemed to be no possibility of freedom or liberation or peace or justice. The story reminded them of how the liberation story of the people of Israel begun with a burning bush. For the burning bush signalled that the power of God is mightier than any human powers and armies, and furthermore that God longs for the liberation of God's people from all forms of servitude and injustice. For the Israelites were trapped in slavery and servitude in Egypt, and there appeared to be no possible way that they could ever successfully rebel and gain their freedom against the might of Pharaoh's army. But God liberated them.

For example, the black African born slaves who were transported to the United States and the West Indies to work on the cotton and sugar plantations saw themselves as being in the same position as the Israelites trapped in servitude and slavery in Egypt. They longed to be set free, but were forbidden to protest in any way, and punished severely if they did. So, they sang of their longings for liberation in songs that we often call 'Spirituals'. Many of these songs like 'Sing long, sweet chariot', 'Go down Moses', 'Creep along Moses', and 'We're going to make it' include references to the burning bush and express their prayers and their longings for God to send a new Moses to lead them to freedom.

But we also need to remember that God calls to people out of that burning bush, and tells them that they are to be part of that liberation. For God's liberating work happens through God working through people like Moses.

God calls people to do God's work, whether it be liberation of the captives and other works of social justice, evangelism, preaching, healing the sick, tending the frail, educating children and adults, or some other form of God's mission in the world.

I read about Ruth Pfau, a German born doctor whom God called to be a missionary nun. She joined the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, a Catholic order, and was sent to Pakistan where she ministered to people with leprosy and other diseases. She remained in Pakistan for 57 years treating, housing and caring for thousands of people, and enlisting the help of the government and many other people and agencies to drive leprosy into submission in that country. When Ruth Pfau was asked why she went to Pakistan and undertook her very demanding ministry, she said, "When you receive such a calling, you cannot turn it down, for it is not you who has made the choice. ... God has chosen you for himself."

This is what Moses discovered, albeit it reluctantly. It is what many, many thousands of people have discovered down through the centuries, that is that God calls his people to undertake his mission and ministry in the world, and that God will keep on calling them until they say, "Yes". So, we all need to be open to his calling for tasks big and small, for this is what we are called to do as Christians. We are called to be God's hands, feet, and voices in our world, working for the liberation of its people.

Surely this is good, indeed great news, for the suffering of the world.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.





**Weekly Worship**



**Sunday September 3, 2023**

**Singing: I, the Lord of sea and sky, TiS 658**

*OR: Take, take off your shoes, TiS 651  
Or: The Summons*



**Offering**

**Knowing that each member of Christ's body contributes to the whole, we bring our gifts as our share in the unity and diversity of Christ.**

**Amen** UIW2 273

**Notices**

**September 7th is National Threatened Species Day.** On this day in 1936, Australia's Tasmanian tiger, also known as the thylacine (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*), slipped over the extinction line. Over 565 native species are currently listed as threatened under Australia's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999, and after the catastrophic bushfires in 2019-20 with nearly 3 billion animals impacted, many of these species are being pushed further towards extinction.

**[National Threatened Species Day - WWF-Australia](#)**

**September 8th is International Literacy Day.** Check out: **[www.events.unesco.org](http://www.events.unesco.org)**

**Responding: Prayers for World & Community**

Loving Lord, we come to you with our prayers. We pray for our world for those caught up in war and violence. We pray for creation, for the effects of climate change and those affected.

*Beloved One, interrupt us when we get caught up in our own complacency, in our own conviction that it will never happen to us, in our certainty that it's someone else's responsibility, in our determination to care only for our own, in our narrow view that "they" are not "us".*

We pray for our country and its people, for our leaders, those in power and the opposition. We name our concern for the summer which is coming, the threat of fires, drought and lack of rain. We pray for those who lack a living wage, a place to live healthcare-and the people who love them.

*Beloved One, help us to discern which are the disrupters and which are the noisy voices through which you invite us to meet and follow you.*

*Beloved One, interrupt us before the waiting becomes interminable.*

*Beloved One, do not let half of the human race be silenced.*

*Beloved One, meet us in the places where the powers of earth and sea; rain, drought, flood and fire besiege us.*

We pray for our church, our community, our families and all those we encounter in our lives. We pray for those who grieve, those in pain, lonely and frightened and we pray for ourselves.

*Beloved One, interrupt us in unexpected encounters, in the midst of our preoccupations, in the middle of all the "oughts" and "shoulds" of our lives.,*

*Prayer continues*





## Weekly Worship



*Prayer continues*

*Beloved One, interrupt us  
that we might meet you.  
Interrupt us, that we might be you  
when the world needs to be interrupted.*

Amen

Worldinprayer.org 17/08/23 (adapted)

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: Community of Christ, TiS 473**

*OR: Take my life and let it be, TiS 599*

### **Blessing**

Beloved One, interrupt us that we might meet you. Interrupt us, that we might be you when the world needs to be interrupted.

In the name of the triune God, creator, redeemer and sustainer.

**Amen**

### **Blessing song: May the feet of God, TiS 779**

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