



Weekly Worship



Sunday October 29, 2023

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Happy are those whose delight is in the Lord - those who immerse in God's way. They are like trees by the water producing an abundance of fruit.

Psalm 1 (adapted)

We gather to delight in God.
We gather to immerse
and drink deeply.

Come, let us worship God.
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: For the fruits of all creation TiS 168

OR: All people that on earth do dwell TiS 59



Prayer

Psalm 1: 1-3

Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers;

but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night.

They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither.

In all that they do, they prosper.

We offer thanks, God of creation,
For the fruitfulness around us:

for the sweet fragrance of blossom
like coastal ti-tree.

for the budding of apricots and olives
and the tender shoots of new tomatoes.

for this season of growth and the promise
you offer through the cycle of seasons.

As we pray we imagine drinking deeply from living streams, growing abundant fruit. While some parts of our country enjoy thirst quenching rain, many places are dry with people fearful of the coming fire season. Some places have already been burnt and then flooded the same day.

When we take life-giving streams for granted or when we upset the balance of your creation, we pray: **Forgive us God of life.**

When we are too absorbed to notice the gifts around us, the things that connect us, we pray: **Forgive us God of life.**

Prayer 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



Pentecost 22
Sunday October 29, 2023

When we find strength on our own and dismiss the importance of connection to others, we pray: **Forgive us God of life.**

Community of Christ, God invites us to drink deeply and find nourishment and bear fruit in abundance.

In Christ we find our place to renew and restore. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Deuteronomy 34: 1-8
Psalm 90: 1-6,
Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

You turn us back to dust, and say, "Turn back, you mortals."

For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night.

You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning; **in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.**

Read: Matthew 22:34-40

For these words of faith and for Jesus the Word

Thanks be to God.



Reflecting Rev. Ian Brown

"above all else, love"

The psalm says, 'Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations'. It's a practical statement of God's ongoing love. God provides the safety of a 'dwelling place.' It's an antidote to the vanity that puts us at the centre of everything. The psalm reminds us that we humans are transitory, quickly turned back to dust, easily swept away, but like the flowers of the grass, able to flourish and do our part. God's love begins it all.

Confronted often with their mortality, the Israelites protested to Moses, we're hungry, thirsty, going around in circles! But Moses was a protester too. He protested to God about the people he'd been saddled with, about God's help, about the journey and more. The story today tells us Moses died on Mt Nebo. There's an ending and there will be a new beginning, a re-formation.

Moses had given everything for his people. He died and they wept for 30 days; a national grieving to pay appropriate respect to this great leader. Grief is a consequence of love. The Hebrews took grieving seriously. Loss was and is still, just as real - very real there at the moment! But remembering and telling the stories was given a much healthier place in social life then.

Reflecting continues





Weekly Worship



Reflecting continues

The truth is that we never exist in a vacuum. We are always in relationship. Relationships with those around us, in the here and now – as well as in relationship with those of past generations, many of whom we owe a great debt. They have helped make us what we are and our world what it is. It's sobering to remember that we also leave a legacy to future generations.

Moses died on Mount Nebo, he was mourned, he left a legacy, the people entered the promised land and they remembered him. The grief shown was an indication that he was loved as much as he loved his people.

In Matthew 22, Jesus is in Jerusalem, facing tough questioning in the last week of his life. We're not on Mt Nebo, but some of the issues are similar. The question Jesus answers here is one about priorities. Which laws are the pre-eminent ones, what are the most fundamental core values and principles of life and faith we should build on? If we are re-forming what foundations do we do that on?

It's not a bad idea to clarify the bare bones of life's meaning and best practice. Jesus could have taken the questioner's bait and fought back, or refused to answer. But instead, he continues to teach about love; about God's loving compassion and how we should echo it. Jesus does this in the face of threats to his life!

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind; This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

So what might that mean for us? 'Love God as much as possible and each other as much as yourself!' What does it mean to take Jesus seriously?

Martin Luther King Jr put his finger on a big part of the issue for us. "Our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power", he said, "We have guided missiles and misguided men." So how do we go about putting into practice that love Jesus summarised all the law with? This is about what guides us and our decisions. It's something that we have a degree of conscious control over - something in fact that we need to decide to do; engage in those things that make love real, with words and actions.

Little things count big in this field. The warm smile of greeting, the thoughtful comment, the remembered occasion, the phone call, the giving where need is dire - these are ways to make love real. When we talk about sharing our gifts in the church, it's about making love real by what we do and give of ourselves. Love has to be 'incarnate' - has to be made real in words and actions.

Jesus brings the fundamental philosophical question down to real life actions. Love, not the warm feeling that is the icing on the cake of life, but love, the basic ingredient that binds it all together. And when we make love real in our world, we make God present - the God who is love! Like it was for Jesus, the place we have to exercise love is often in difficult circumstances. Confrontation and antagonism are not an excuse to stop loving, but all the more reason to follow Jesus.

The early Protestants believed that they were not only creating a new church, but were creating a new world. One that would resemble God's loving desire for humanity. The Protestant impulse was in favour of the power of God's spirit to transform human hearts and society. Protestants knew things weren't right and they set out to change the world. How can we do more of that? How can we note the ending of the old and see the new direction, like the people of Moses' day?

Reflecting continues

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Above all else, 'Love with all your heart, soul and mind', it's not about abstract concepts - it's about the doing, putting work and energy and caring commitment into people. Amen and Yes, may it be so in us.

Singing: Brother, sister, let me serve you TiS 650

*OR: Kneels at the feet of his friends TiS 640
When I needed a neighbour were you there?
TiS 629*



Offering

God of all fruitfulness, may what we offer - money, talents and time - come as an offering of our hearts: loving God, neighbour and ourselves as you have loved us. Amen.

Notices

October 24-31 is Disarmament week.
<https://www.un.org/en/observances/disarmament-week>

Responding: Prayers for World & Community

As the UN invites us to observe Disarmament week, we pray for our world, especially the places of war, and where stockpiles of weapons

are used as a constant threat of war. We pray for those working in peace roles. We pray for those negotiating nuclear non-proliferation treaties. We pray for our nation, especially those who have been targeted in racist or deceptive ways; for those who have been undermined by division; for those who have lost hope or vision for a future of our country.

We pray for those we know who have borne the burden and carry wounds of toxic and divisive debate on the Voice referendum.

(silence)

We pray for our churches, that we may draw deeply from life-giving streams and creatively love God, neighbour and self with courage and determination.

We pray for those we know who are struggling at this time.

(silence)

May we be people of heart and love, in all we do.

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.**





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Singing: When I needed a neighbour were you there? TiS 629

*OR: Take my life and let it be TiS 599
O God our help in ages past TiS 47
God of freedom God of justice TiS 657*



Blessing

Go to love and be loved,
drawing deeply from the waters of life.
Go to love and be loved,
carrying a heart of God's love within.
Go with a heart for God,
for neighbours near and far,
and with the blessing of God upon you.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the companionship of the Holy Spirit,
rest with you now and always.

Benediction:

Make me a channel of your peace TiS 609

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