



**Weekly Worship**



**Pentecost 25**  
**Sunday November 19, 2023**

## Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Leader:

We recognise God's presence, not fearfully but adoringly, we worship not as a duty, but with delight.

**God has gifted us with so much to share, blessed with abundant life, through Jesus Christ.**

Lift up your eyes beyond anxieties and ills to God whose glory exceeds the starry skies.

**We join in wonder, together building each other up in faith and joy.**

*Light the candle - Christ is with us.*

## Welcome

A warm welcome to worship, whatever your space. You are welcome if your faith is as sure as the sun rising, or as thin as breath.

God welcomes us all, in our need, in our frailness and vulnerability.

## 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: Praise to the Lord TiS 111

*OR: Praise our God, the great creator TiS 165*



## Prayer

Welcoming God, you are light and love and joy!  
And you call us - come!  
Open our hearts and minds to your all-encompassing hospitality.

Liberate us from starved visions and blinkered loves. With the wonder of those who are freed by your Spirit, we worship you in spirit and in truth.

Merciful God, we know that you aren't a heavenly bean - counter, expecting a greedy rate of return.

All of your creation plays its part and we thank you we have so much to use and share.

Forgive us when we invest our energies into growing our own prosperity rather than enriching other's lives and when we waste our gifts by leaving them idle.

Forgive us if we've disguised the wideness of your mercy by our lack of compassion.

*Prayer continues*

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



Uniting Church in Australia  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



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*Prayer continues*

Forgive us if we've failed to be adventurous in spreading your good news where it needs to be heard.

Help us to hear Jesus' words addressed to us about being eager to share the spiritual treasure that we have, knowing that as we do, more, much more, will be given.

Loving God, we turn to you for the blessing that only you can give; we are lost who need to be found, the offenders who need forgiveness, and the weak who need to be built up.

Gracious God, forgive us,  
have compassion for all,  
for in Jesus we pray. Amen!

O God, come to us with your healing grace.  
May our talents be unearthed and well used,  
as we take in the truth that in Christ,  
our sins are forgiven: **Thanks be to God**

### Passing the peace

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



### Listening

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11;  
Matthew 25:14-30

For these words of faith  
and for Jesus the Word

**Thanks be to God.**

### Reflecting

**Rev. Jennie Gordon**

The Outer Darkness seems to be quite a populated space, according to the gospel of Matthew. Unfortunate folk end up engulfed in outer darkness in two preceding chapters of the gospel, and here it is again, this banishment, this eschatological punishment. In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, he tells them that they do not belong there, reminds them that 'you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness'.

The parable of the talents should be called the parable of the crazy master. Who decides to amass a great wealth, and then leave it all to the staff while they go off on a little sojourn? One talent was worth about 5 years wages! Surely the parable isn't about ensuring we have the best investment strategy, or the highest performing portfolio. Sometimes we talk about the 'talent' in this parable as a gift we've been given, like our personal attributes and things we do well, maybe that's a helpful reading that moves us away from the discomfort of the whole money question, or does it? Some get more and some get less and the ones with more get more and the ones with less get less... quite troubling really.

There is so much more that is troubling about this parable, and completely unfair. It's important to remember that parables are meant to be disturbing, stirring us into a new understanding, shaking us up, waking us up. The timid guy who knows how mean the master is and will not risk his wrath, does what is correct by Jewish law

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*Reflecting continues*

at the time and buries the money in the ground, safe and sound. They are the one who ends up banished. It's often the case isn't it, that the one who is seen as the least capable, the poorest paid, the most intimidated, who stands up against the expectations of the establishment, is the one who pays the price. Whistle-blower. Here's the door to the outer darkness.

But how about we look again. There is a lot of darkness in the world right now, we only need to turn on the news, if we dare. We are still reeling from the COVID pandemic, and we face a multiplicity of crises, from a gasping earth in the grip of climate change, intractable wars spanning generations and still killing children, disasters wiping out villages, and a refusal to face our history or our shared humanity. It's not an easy time to be children of the light, and yet, that's what we are called to be.

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus is telling this parable on the way to the cross. He is about to give away everything he has and depart, if only for a time. He hands it all over as he breathes the Spirit into our nostrils. What we have been given by this crazy master carpenter is abundant and unending, death-defying love. We have been served the best wine, offered calm in a storm and a place at the table and forgiveness for our running away, our unwillingness and unbelief. Even if we feel like we still have only have a small share of faith, it can be a little light, burning bright, in the terrors of the night. But not if it is buried, it needs to shine. Our task in these days of darkness is to shine our measure of light, to choose to find joy, goodness and grace in the places where we are and to share them around. We can choose to act out of hope and not fear. We can use the time we have been given with wisdom and generosity. We have been entrusted with the wealth of love. So how will you answer when Jesus asks, 'What have you done with what I have given you?'

### **Singing: Inspired by love and anger TiS 674**

*OR: Let us talents and tongues employ TiS 537*

*OR: Brother, sister, let me serve you TiS 650*



### **Offering**

All:

**Generous God,  
these represent the offering of our time,  
talents, and treasure.**

**Bless our giving and inspire us with your  
generosity, that the good news may bring  
peace and healing through Jesus. Amen.**

### **Notices**

This weekend the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania meets as a Council of the church. We pray for growing relationships, deepening faith, widening discernment and bold decision-making.

*Notices continues*

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*Notices continues*

Today marks the sinking of the SIEV-X in 2001. 353 asylum seekers drowned. **Nov 24** is *United Nations Day* and the start of *Disarmament Week*.

## **Responding: Prayers for World & Community**

God, for all your marvellous, diverse creation we are thankful.

For your generosity of giving that we see in Jesus, we are awed; we have no words good enough to express our gratitude.

We acknowledge our debt to you and still ask for your help to better use our gifts to respond to your love in our living.

We listen for your voice in the voices of those in need;  
for those we know sick, in trouble or lonely,  
for others we know who have lost friends or family;  
surround them with your love,  
healing and peace.

Lord, in your generous mercy,  
**Hear our heartfelt prayer.**

We pray for all who face tough choices. Out of the habits of the past, and the comfort of the familiar, help us be ready for your newness; ready to use our talents in service and rise to new heights in loving;

Lord, in your generous mercy,  
**Hear our heartfelt prayer.**

We want to go on being part of your giving to others, eager to see a world where everyone has a chance, where all are valued and able to find their place.

We pray for help to be your people, not overreaching to love everyone adequately ourselves, but as part of a loving community, able to reach out with your compassion and share what we have with the same generosity we've been shown;

Lord, in your generous mercy,  
**Hear our heartfelt prayer.**

We pray for the many who have great needs and no voice.

In these days of cash being lavished on weapons and military defence, may the will to shoot and bomb run out faster than the desire to feed the hungry, shelter the destitute and aid the oppressed.

We pray for all suffering in dependency,...  
unemployment,...  
poverty,...  
and from violence,...;

Lord, in your generous mercy,  
**Hear our heartfelt prayer.**

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

*OR: God our help in ages past TiS 47  
OR: Who would true valour see TiS 561*

**Benediction: We are marching  
(TiS 666)**

**Contributors this week:**

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**Blessing**

We go now from being the church at worship,  
to be the church at work, in fellowship, in  
service and love.

We go;  
blessed and enriched with the gifts of  
God's extravagant grace,  
blessed and made members of God's family  
through Jesus Christ  
blessed, stirred and energised  
by the Holy Spirit.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord  
in the name of Christ. **Amen**

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