



## Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes.

With my lips I declare all the ordinances of your mouth.

I delight in the way of your decrees as much as in all riches. *Psalms 119:112-14*

*Light the candle*

The light shines in the darkness  
and the darkness cannot overcome it.

## Acknowledging

As we gather, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of these unceded land and 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: Sing praise and thanksgiving **TiS 107**

OR: *I'll praise my Maker while I've breath TiS 90*

OR: *Jesus calls us here to meet him TiS 477*

## Prayer

They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

*John 12:21*

We come in prayer as we too, want to see Jesus.

God of love, we thank you for the moments  
you give us to enjoy your creation;  
we look to the skies, we feel the earth,  
we notice the breeze, the trees, the birds  
and our hearts rejoice in this world  
that sustains us.

For this we offer you  
our thanks and praise.

As we come to worship, we acknowledge our  
humanness and the grace with which you welcome  
us into your place.

Forgive us in this time of lent, or wilderness, this time  
of preparation,  
when we have failed to remember you  
as Creator of all around us,  
of all you have given  
and promised us.

Forgive us when we have failed  
to see Christ in those around us  
to be present with those who love us  
by taking for ourselves instead of  
giving of ourselves.

Forgive us for not using  
the power you have given us  
to make a difference in the world.

Grant us peace knowing we are loved and forgiven.  
Amen.



*Weekly Worship. Season of Lent 2024. A Worship Resource from Friends of the Fig Tree.*



Uniting Church in Australia  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



## Passing the peace

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

## Listening

Read: Jeremiah 31:31-34  
John 12:20-33

For these words of faith  
and for Jesus the Word  
**Thanks be to God.**

## Reflecting

**Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson**

Do you have any tattoos? How about that! Jeremiah says that you do, you have an engraving, a tattoo on your heart! Many of the people who have tattoos do so because they symbolise something special. Engravings too are to signify something special like the one inside my wedding ring. Engravings and tattoos have that 'eternal' quality about them too, they are there for the long haul. Even though my wedding ring has worn to half of its original width, the engraving is still there. I have had to let go of the edges of it, but the main part of the sentiment is still there.

Your conscience and your passions and your motivations are all under the instruction and engraving of the God who loves you enough to stamp you with a covenant of love. And this God forgets all the stuff that gets in the way, every wrong and every time we fall short. Mercy and faithful love through compassion are the response to our guilt.

I wonder how easy it is for you to forgive yourself though. How often do we hold onto the things which often function to hold us back? All the regrets and the imperfections. The Psalm speaks of this, our wrongdoings being ever before us. What a heartfelt plea for forgiveness and purification and bringing back of right relationship!

The thing is, that the whole teaching of the Gospel is about letting go. Letting go the things which divide

us, from each other, from God, from being our best selves. While we hold onto anything, especially life itself, we are holding ourselves back from God. When we think there is anything which will sustain us other than God, we are kidding ourselves. Even a little seed must let go of being a little seed in order to become something else. It must go through the letting go of its own image of itself, die to its own identity and sense of what it is, to become something so much more. This is a big ask. I wonder what you are holding onto. It is probably something really important and worthwhile. But it will not sustain you to hold onto it. Just like I can hold the intent and sentiment of my engraved ring, but change is inevitable and the wearing in it just adds to its enduring meaning.

As we come to the Cross through this time of Lent, we are reminded to let go. The death and resurrection of Jesus, this Easter event, tells us that we are loved and forgiven and acceptable just as we are. The sins that might be ever before us, the distance we cause ourselves from God, are not ours to carry. We can forgive ourselves because God knows us and loves us and has written God's name on our heart (just as our name is written on God's heart). We can love ourselves because God loves us.

In this time in history, I think guilt and shame are overdone. Looking around I see a lot of folks who do not know their own worth and sometimes we don't make them feel any better about themselves in our reminder to them that they are sinful rather than the reminder that they are loved and cherished. Guilt can be a destructive force when misused but really it should be understood through the lens of unjust and divisive action. However, shame can really harm people because it tells them that they are bad and evil, not just their actions.

Jeremiah tells us that, while we have been unfaithful, God brings us into new covenant promise. Judgement has already come, says the Gospel reading, and evil is not in control. The result is that we are all drawn toward God, drawn to be followers of Jesus and gathered together (the meaning of the word "re-ligion" is the image of ligaments being drawn back together).

*Reflecting continues*

*Weekly Worship. Season of Lent 2024. A Worship Resource from Friends of the Fig Tree.*



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





*Reflecting continues*

The Easter event demonstrates the love, the mercy, and grace offered us when we acknowledge and receive the forgiveness already claimed for us. Let us live in the way the Psalmist yearns for, in the joy of our salvation, the wholeness (which is my understanding of what salvation is). Let us feel the joy and live in it (and it in us). This is what sustains us and allows the Holy Spirit to live through us, and in us.

As we journey through Lent, let go of anything which holds you back. Fasting and other Lenten practices are the symbols of letting go, but they may also make us feel a bit satisfied and cleansed. The thing is, there may be more that we need to let go of, such as images of what we have been or things from our past. Let's meditate on this and ask what else needs releasing. And then let's move toward the joy of our salvation and rejoice in the love and grace and mercy.

Let us forgive ourselves and ask 'what now does the Holy Spirit ask of me?'

## **Singing: Breathe on me Breath of God** **TiS 407**

*OR: All my hope on God is founded TiS 560*

*OR: God of Jeremiah grieving TiS 679*



## **Offering**

What now does the Holy Spirit ask of me?

God whose Spirit moves as breath and life within and beyond us, bless these offerings and join them with our every breath, in your movement of salvation. In the name of Christ. Amen.

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

Loving Lord, we bring our prayers to you, the ones we say aloud, the ones we wish we could say aloud and those we need to say.

We pray for our world, cities, towns and wilderness, places of joy, places of peace, places of despair, hurt, anger and loneliness...

All those who live ordinary lives, may they know their specialness in your love.

All those with power, may they use it wisely.  
May we be present where we can, to share your love, to comfort and encourage.

We pray for our country and all those who live here, may they all find their place of safety.

We pray for those who need care, and those who provide it.

We pray for our church and community, the old and young, secure and insecure, peacemakers and angry, newcomers and old timers, active and tired, all who seek you.

We pray for ourselves, those we love, those we find difficult, our families and friends and in the silence we offer our unsaid prayers...

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 forever. Amen.**







## Singing: I the Lord of sea and sky TiS 658

OR: Christ be my leader TiS 624

OR: When Christ was lifted from the earth TiS 248



## Blessing

In the deserts of this world,  
may you find signs of God.  
In the wilderness of your lives,  
may you be encouraged by God.

In your joy and in your sorrow,  
may you rejoice in God.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>from *Uniting in Worship 2*

In the name of God,  
Creator,  
Redeemer,  
Sustainer  
**Amen.**

## Contributors this week:

Reflection: Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson  
Shearwater Ministry Team

Liturgy: Rev. Moira Dodsworth,  
Wattlebird Ministry Team

Editor: Rev. Arnie Wierenga  
[revjenniegordon@gmail.com](mailto:revjenniegordon@gmail.com)

*This Worship Resource comes to you from  
Friends of the Fig Tree, PO Box 126 Wonthaggi VIC  
3995, Gippsland, Uniting Church in Australia - with  
blessings and permission to use the content in  
worship services with acknowledgement.*

