Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

from Jeremiah 31:33

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD:
I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Light the candle

The light of Christ shines in the darkness
and the darkness can not overcome it.

Acknowledging
The Ancient of Days breathed life into this land and her peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the (please name the people on whose land you gather) People, the Traditional Custodians, have blessed this place through their law and customs, their care and life. We pay respects to their Elders and leaders past and present, and pray for the future of their communities. May we walk gently and respectfully on this Land.

Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress

Singing: Here in this place TiS 474

OR: Morning has broken TiS 156
OR: I'll praise my maker while I've breath TiS 90

Prayer

As your people, God of all times,
we come to you with grateful hearts.

We give thanks for the wonder of life,
for the blossom on trees growing into fruit,
for nesting birds and tiny tenacious ants,
for blue skies and sunshine,
clouds, wind and rain
and the gentle pulse of surf
as it rolls and breaks onto sand.

We give thanks for the wonder of life,
for the miracle of birth,
for the wisdom of age,
for the choices and challenges of our day
and the rest and replenishment of sleep.

We give thanks for the wonder of life,
for the people who share their kindness,
for the people who gratefully receive,
for our family, friends, neighbours and all
who move our feet and meet our eyes
with companionship and love.

We pause to hold in prayer
our gratitude and awe
that we are your people
and you are our God.

(pause)

You have written your law on our hearts,
God of the ancient and the new.
In Jesus you have shown us
how you want us to live.
Through the gift of the Spirit
you inspire and guide us.

In the quiet we bring to you
the things we need to lay down,
burdens of shame or regret,
times of turning away,
or failing to live in love
towards ourselves, others and you.

(time of quiet)

We are assured that you are Justice and Truth
and that you hear us, hold us
and love us, tough and tender,
as your children.

Prayer continues

Prayer continues

We are forgiven, and free to live
in the covenant of love
and to share this gift of forgiveness
with those in need.
Thanks be to God.

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: from Jeremiah 31:

31:27 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals.

31:28 **And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the LORD.**

31:29 In those days they shall no longer say: "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

31:30 **But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge.**

31:31 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, **when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.**

31:32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—**a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD.**

31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**

31:34 No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; **for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.**

Read: Psalm 119:97-104
Luke 18:1-8

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

Reflecting

Rev. Heather den Houting

the future is bigger than the past

In the town where I live, a new version of an old thing is happening. Church leaders are gathering for breakfast.

Now for those of you who have a strong ecumenical spirit in your community, you may wonder why this is noteworthy. Here in this community, it is because there has been no church leaders' gatherings, or ecumenical activities for many years. Once upon a time there was strong and active cooperation. Christmas Carols, Walk of Witness and so on. But as different leaders left and retired and after the immediate impact of COVID, these things just stopped. Sporadic attempts to gather were poorly attended and those participating felt down-hearted.

So, a few of us decided to gather for prayer every Friday morning specifically to pray blessings and support for all the churches in our area. When we started, we focussed on restarting our previously successful activities. It was what I call a shopping list prayer – Lord please let us have the strength and capacity to do the things we used to do. But as we went on, we started to pray instead that our gaze would be brought around to see the new things that God was doing that we could be a part of. We began to trust that God was preparing us for something new. We continue to pray patiently and with persistence every Friday morning.

Reflecting continues

Reflecting continues

Out of this prayer time, we saw the emergence of a co-operation between the Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Churches in hosting the Gippsland Camino. This was a new thing, a new way of working together.

Then one day a person from the Baptist church, persistent, enthusiastic and with nothing to lose, started to invite church leaders to a monthly breakfast. His ambition was that the people got to know each other again, and were blessed in their ministry. There was no other agenda.

We know when a new group starts there are often lots of questions and concerns raised around different traditions and theologies. But his approach is that God will take care of that and his job is to generously provide the space and place for people to meet for breakfast and to learn to trust each other again. He is also now part of the persistently praying Friday morning group.

It is this kind of faithful persistence that I think of when I read the gospel from Luke. But I imagine God as the persistent widow and ourselves as the grumpy judge. If we continue to convince ourselves that we can restart and return things to the way they were, that there is a right way of doing things and we know how this works - we lose sight of the change of heart we may need to fully embrace the future that God has for us.

It may not look like the past. It may be full of trips and slips. There will always be reasons why we cannot do it (no money, no people, no time, no theological rationale!). But our lives will not be complete as disciples until we understand that God is always preparing us for something new and we may just need to start again in small ways. Pray together. Invite each other to breakfast. Remember it is God's church, not ours.

When the new things emerge (and they will) there will be signs. The Psalm reminds us of what they are: Love of God and love of neighbour will be the key tenets. Timothy reminds us that we can never do this alone, but rather we will find ourselves tested in community and our position has to be defendable.

Are we prepared to be patient while our resolve is tested? And Jesus and Jeremiah remind us there is always hope. There is always a new beginning. There is always a future that is bigger than the past.

Singing: Breathe on me breath of God **TiS 407**

OR: Holy Spirit go before us TiS 420
OR: All my hope on God is founded TiS 560
OR: Lord hear my praying TiS 689

Offering

We bring these gifts, aware of the privilege of being able to share even a little of what we have. Bless the money, the food, the time and the energy that we give. Use it, and use us to bring the light of your loving kindness to the hard and shadowy places around us. In Jesus' name, **Amen.**

Notices

Today is World Mission Day.
Oct 24 is World Development Information Day.

Prayers for World & Community

(you may want to write your own list of prayer points, or invite people to come with their prayers at each section and light candles)

As your people, God of all times,
we bring our prayers to you.
We ask, because we know your goodness.
We pray, because we sense your presence.
We love, because you first loved us.

Prayer continues

Prayer continues

Send your Spirit of hope and healing
to these places of pain and struggle:
parents who have lost children
lovers who are grieving
people in prisons
families in poverty
victims of injustice
peoples dispossessed of home
sufferers of disease and trauma
those caught up in warfare...

Send your Spirit of justice and truth
to these people who can make a difference:
leaders of all nations
state and local governments
those who work in the justice system
leaders of our churches
people who speak out for change
people who support them ...

Send your Spirit of courage and calm
to these people who offer compassion :
health care workers and teachers
parents and grandparents
social justice organisations
local congregations
chaplains and pastoral care givers
reconciliation groups
welfare agencies
neighbours and friends ...

As we pray together in the language of our hearts,
the words that 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: God of Jeremiah TiS 679
OR: Filled with the Spirit's power TiS 411

Blessing

from 2 Timothy 4: 1-2

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus,
who is to judge the living and the dead,
and in view of his appearing and his kingdom,
I solemnly urge you:
proclaim the message;
be persistent
whether the time is favourable or unfavourable;
convince, rebuke, and encourage,
with the utmost patience in teaching.

And may the blessing of God
Source, Son and Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always,
Amen.

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