



Weekly Worship

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday September 5, 2021

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

It's the first Sunday in Spring! The Rev. Sharon Hollis, President of the UCA, has encouraged us all to engage with the Season of Creation through September to October 4th, St Francis of Assisi Day. For continuity, our Fig Tree Worship Team has decided to stay with the RCL readings but we will weave some material into this worship resource.

<https://seasonofcreation.com/>

Light your candle, Christ is the light of the world.

Call to worship

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!
I will praise the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God all my life long.
Psalm 146:1-2*

People of God, let us gather in joy and praise to worship our God in truth and holiness. We have hope in the Lord our God, the One who made heaven and earth, who created all things and who keeps faith with us forever. We trust in the God who loves us, lifts us up and showers us with many blessings. We come eagerly to sit in your presence. Praise, O praise the Lord!

Acknowledging

As we gather we acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and these waters. We offer our respect to elders past, present and emerging and commit ourselves again to walking together in justice and truth.



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

Singing: A Mighty Wonder

Tune **TIS 103** (A mighty fortress)

A mighty wonder is our Earth,
a planet filled with mystery,
And all across her vibrant face
we read her cosmic history.
How long long ago, a drive from below
turned one speck from space, into a sacred place;
This planet has no equal.

God's presence fills this sacred space,
that nurtures our beginning;
but children of our Mother Earth,
have revelled in their sinning;
they clear forest land, with a heavy hand;
polluting the skies, with ugly greedy eyes;
their crimes go on forever.

The time has come for true reform,
by children who are caring:
replace your love for ruling Earth
with empathetic sharing.
by loving God's Son, the wise Wounded One;
by healing the Earth, is giving her new birth;
we celebrate our planet.

'Norman Habel





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Prayer

Gracious and loving God,
 We thank you for your faithfulness
 and your steadfast love which never wavers,
 despite how we ebb and flow towards you.
 We thank you for your bounty embedded
 within the opportunities of life:
 for the possibilities waiting to be realised
 through an embrace of difference and diversity;
 for answers to prayers asked,
 and as yet not formed,
 which emerge from exploring new ways of being,
 as we are open and offer ourselves in relationships;
 for the movement in our spirit
 which blesses us, as we think and act
 with generosity
 towards those who are different from us.

Loving God, you know us inside and out.
 There is nothing that escapes your attention
 or is beyond your concern and love.

Forgive us, when we want to stick within
 the prism of our own understanding,
 rather than ask for your leading and instruction.
Have mercy on us and forgive us.

Forgive us, when we seek to avoid
 your challenging words of life and
 the command to love which you whisper to us.
Have mercy on us and forgive us.

Forgive us when we fail to notice those
 who are left out in the cold,
 and when consciously or unconsciously,
 we exclude others
 from our warm circles of belonging.
Have mercy on us and forgive us.

Forgive us when either our willfulness,
 or our mindlessness,
 reveal thoughts, attitudes or actions
 that reflect our inward-looking focus,
 rather than our desire to be disciples
 devoted to the bringing in of your kingdom.
Have mercy on us and forgive us.

Forgive us when we would prefer
 to prop up the barriers which are unhelpful
 in our relationships, or when we are too lazy
 to attempt to heal the brokenness between us.
Have mercy on us and forgive us.

Forgive us for our sinfulness
 in thinking that people who are different
 from us are less worthy in your sight.
 Forgive us for our pride in thinking
 that we are better than those
 we don't understand,
 for you O God, know and love all people and
 value each one as your treasured child.
Have mercy on us and forgive us.

Words of Assurance

Our God is gracious and kind.
 When we sincerely admit our wrong,
 we are offered restoration and wholeness.
 For this, we say, with humble gratitude,
Thanks be to God.

Listening

Read: Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23
 James 2:1-10, (11-13), 14-17
 Mark 7:24-37

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





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Reflecting

Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

I have never been a lawn bowler, because I tried it and I am hopeless. But I do understand what happens to those little round balls as they roll on down those pretty greens. They take off to the edges. They have a bias! Just like those little balls, I believe the Bible shows a bias. God loves the poor. God is on the side of the poor and calls us into those places to minister in a different way. A bit like those balls roll off to the edges, that is where we are called to be.

Sometimes we need to be confronted by those we ignore, those who are usually just outside our vision. My understanding of the Gospel message, a theme throughout the Bible (as we see in every lectionary reading today) is that the mission of God is right there. It isn't just the poor in the sense of money either, but of all those sidelined by society (and sadly sometimes by the church). Those who need our solidarity and our advocacy, our standing with them for justice and righteousness. After all, sometimes the sidelined are us! And sometimes we are the privileged who benefit from the sidelining of others.

In the first story in Mark today this woman who is marginalised by gender, race, class and being the mother of a child who was disabled (indeed, held in the clutches of 'evil') is calling for help and healing of so much pain.

I wonder who you would identify with in the story. Are you the disciples who are about to get a lesson in true discipleship? This marginalised woman who they would turn away seems to recognise the real Jesus and is commended for her great faith.

Might you be Jesus who has had a tough time of it lately and is suddenly interrupted in the very focused nature of his mission. People have a habit of doing that, but it is amazing how often the mission is found right there. I think Jesus gets a lesson in discipleship himself in this narrative and he shows the importance of openness to hearing God in the 'other'.

Perhaps you are the woman herself (known as Justa by tradition) and feel that people are not really listening. You are sick of the suffering and are wailing in lament to the Holy One, longing for attention and to be heard.

Or perhaps you are her daughter, known as Berenice. Who is there to speak for you?

Maybe you are the narrator, witness to the story, yet a step removed. Or maybe you are the Jewish rulers who Jesus has called out for their lack of true discipleship.

The healing narratives are problematic for some. The deaf are sometimes more able to 'hear' than those whose ears function fully. Those we call 'disabled' sometimes struggle with the view of disability as impairment and a lack of whatever 'normal' is. We are all abled and disabled in different ways and there is no real normal. All of us call for healing and wholeness and deeper faith. All of us need each other to truly thrive and flourish. The gospel calls us to bring good news, to truly hear one another and to stand in the edges with those who find their place there. In this we all find healing and wholeness; in this we express our faith.





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Responding: Prayers for the World and Community

The Prayers of the People today makes use of an important Uniting Church document, a renewal of our 1977 Statement to the Nation. These points are what we ask for in building a just and compassionate Australia in "Our Vision for a Just Australia". <https://uniting.church/visionstatement/>

1. Constitutional change to enshrine a First Nations Voice to Federal Parliament. We pray this day for healing and wholeness as we seek justice with the First Peoples. May we stand for truth as we listen and learn.

2. Recognise the sovereignty of First Nations and establish a commission for treaty making, truth telling, justice and reconciliation. May we give space for hearing and healing and true relationship. We long for wholeness.

3. A national climate policy and plan for a just, equitable and rapid transition to a low-carbon economy, that drives down greenhouse gas pollution. Creation groans and needs our advocacy. We hear its wailing in deepest suffering. May we take responsibility to stand for our world against greed and profit that robs us all.

4. Policies which support people, nations and ecosystems that are most vulnerable to climate change. We pray for those most affected and we long for creative solutions which bring healing.

5. An end to the policy of indefinite, mandatory detention for people seeking asylum. May we treat others the way we would like to be treated. May we look into the eyes of others and see the Christ.

6. A system that supports people seeking asylum to live in the Australian community with access to essential services while their refugee status is processed in a timely manner. The least and the lost, you call us to care and compassion.

7. A fairer tax system including the introduction of laws which target tax evasion and avoidance. The gap between rich and poor widens, help us to seek justice.

8. Access to decent and affordable housing. All of us need a home, shelter, a belonging place. Bring justice, sheltering God.

9. Raising, and appropriately indexing, the single rate of Jobseeker, Youth Allowance and Parenting Payments, and related payments including rental assistance. Worth and dignity, a basic wage and a sense of meaning. We pray for wholeness and for all to thrive.

10. Universal access to quality early learning for all children aged three and four, prior to their commencing school. Our young ones need this basic right, wherever they live and whatever their circumstance. We stand with them loving God.

Prayer continues



Weekly Worship. Season of Pentecost 2021. Presbytery of Gippsland, Fig Tree Worship Resource



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



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Prayer continues

11. Older people have access to appropriate, quality, well-funded services that meet their needs in the location they choose. Our elders need our love and respect. Teach us to truly value their wisdom and dignity.

12. A comprehensive approach to preventing gender-based violence and domestic and family violence with targeted strategies for those most at risk. We stand with those who are vulnerable and at risk. Our hearts call out for action to protect those who need it.

13. Adequate funding of appropriate services for people living with mental illness.

We advocate for those who are struggle with their pain. Help us to advocate for greater support.

14. An NDIS that is fully funded and properly rolled-out where no one is left behind in the process. Our vulnerable ones need adequate and generous care. For the least of these...

15. A scaled up Australian aid program.

This day we also hold others across our world who wail their pain, those in Afghanistan and other conflict zones. Those who struggle with illness, those who long for healing and those who are victims of natural disasters.

16. Australian Government in partnership with global institutions, Australian NGOs and our regional neighbours, address the worst impacts of COVID-19 on the world's most vulnerable nations and communities.

You teach us to stand with all who are vulnerable, to call for health and wholeness and healing. We long for healing, O God. Stand with us as we stand together in seeking justice. Your kingdom come on earth, we pray.

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.**

Passing the peace

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

Offering

As Spring dances on our doorsteps, we offer you our fruitfulness, mysterious God of life. Take the gifts we bring and let them enliven the world with your love. May they make possible small acts of blessing and contribute to the abundance of hope and ongoing healing for this planet that we call home and for those who need it most. Amen.





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Singing: Kneels at the feet

TiS 640

*T.S. Colvin & people of Ghana
Used with permission CCLI 206 729*

Kneels at the feet of his friends,
silently washing their feet,
Master who acts as a slave to them.
*Refrain: Yesu, Yesu, fill us with your love
show us how to serve
the neighbours we have from you.*

Neighbours are wealthy and poor,
varied in colour and race,
neighbours are near us and far away
Refrain: Yesu, Yesu ...

These are the ones we should serve,
these are the ones we should love,
all these are neighbours to us and you.
Refrain: Yesu, Yesu ...

Loving puts us on our knees,
silently washing their feet,
this is the way we should live with you.
Refrain: Yesu, Yesu ...

Blessing

May God be your hope and trustworthy guide,
May Christ Jesus be your example in how to live,
And may the Holy Spirit sustain you
in every moment. **Amen.**

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¹Norman Habel, 2015

