



Weekly Worship



Pentecost 23
Sunday November 5, 2023

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.

For he satisfies the thirsty,
and the hungry he fills with good things.
(from Psalm 107)

We gather, thirsty and hungry,
full of longings and needs.
From desert journeys
and wilderness wanderings
from contested spaces
within a fragile world,
we come.

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.

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: Guide me O thou great Redeemer. TiS 569



Prayer

God of our pilgrim journeys,
we give our thanks for
your goodness, your guidance,
your steadfast love
through all our days.

We've known days that are dry
and yet you offer ways to quench us.
The rains come,
the wells spring with living water,
wildflowers bloom,
crops regenerate.

We've also known days of hunger:
hunger for truth,
hunger for justice,
hunger for words of comfort,
and for your life-giving presence.
We've hungered for
needless wants
but also
for our daily needs.

We hear that you let the hungry live:
to sow fields;
to plant vineyards;
to yield fruit.

When we are quick to complain
and slow to remember your love,
we pray: God forgive us. **God forgive us.**

When we ignore the thirst
and hunger of others,
we pray: God forgive us. **God forgive us.**

When we are blind to the signs
that you journey alongside us,
we pray: God forgive us. **God forgive us.**

The psalmist has witnessed
hunger and thirst and
yet praises God
whose steadfast love endures forever.

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

*For he satisfies the thirsty,
and the hungry he fills
with good things.*

In God revealed to us through Jesus Christ,
may we be renewed, enlivened
and discover fruitfulness in him.

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13 &
Matthew 23:1-12

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

Reflecting

Rev. Sandra Houghton

There was once a joint Anglican-Uniting congregation in a working-class area which drew on both denomination's traditions and made some of their own. Their worship was much less formal than most Anglican parishes, and they rarely wore robes or processed into church.

One Sunday they had invited an Anglican priest who worked for a mission to come and preach and talk about the work of his mission. Between the time that they had invited him and the Sunday of his visit he had been appointed and consecrated as a Bishop. The congregational leaders requested that he not wear his Bishop's garb, but either he had not got the message or had decided to ignore it. He arrived elaborately gowned in Bishop's purple complete with mitre and gold crozier (crook), and demanded to the leaders that they also robe up and process into worship.

This they did with the organ playing and the people standing to await the bishop's entrance. As the bishop entered the church an awestruck small child, who had obviously not seen such a sight before, pointed at the bishop and said loudly to his mother, "Mummy, mummy, is that God?" Another, but older and more cynical member, replied, "No, but he's got pretensions in that direction!" And a titter spread through the congregation.

This, as you could imagine, did not end well! Every time the bishop opened his mouth someone got the giggles, and it was truly infectious. Whatever valuable things the bishop came to share that day were largely lost. It would have, in my opinion, been far better if he had arrived in a much humbler fashion. Then he would have, no doubt, enjoyed their congratulations on his elevation and new position.

Reflecting continues

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Reflecting continues

Now, you can argue that that congregational member who quipped about the bishop was rude, and it's probably true. But it was a classic Australian example of the pricking of pomposity.

I wonder what Jesus would have thought?

Well, we know that Jesus modelled a servant leadership – he demanded no special privileges for himself and he shared in the lowliest tasks (e.g. feet washing). He aligned himself with those who were the ordinary folk, and also the outcasts, rejected and poor against those who would abuse or reject them. He detested anything that involved exploiting others, and demanded that his followers see themselves as servants.

He fought a constant battle against those of his disciples who wanted to claim power or special positions or privileges, but rather taught that anyone who wanted to follow after him needed to humble themselves and become a student and a servant.

In our Epistle reading today, we can see how Paul also tried to live that way. For when he came to Thessalonica he assumed no place of privilege, but worked hard to earn a living. It is believed that he was a tentmaker, so he probably worked at his trade or took whatever work he could.

Now, Paul was quite clearly an important leader in that church community. And he would have wielded some power, but clearly, he tried to ensure that it was not for personal gain or prestige or for the sake of having power over others. Rather he sought to equip the new Christians so that they would be able to manage on their own when he had to leave. And he sought to model a healthy style of leadership that was based in Jesus' teachings. Now, no doubt he didn't always succeed, and we know

from his writings that he struggled to deal with difficult situations and hostility, and wasn't always humble. However, he was willing to own his mistakes and failures and gave God the glory for all the good things that happened, and continued faithfully until death despite much suffering because he gloried in the joy of knowing God's love in his heart.

Steve Goodier, a Christian psychologist and writer, has suggested three traits of modern day good leaders.

- 1.** Good leaders share leadership. They know when to follow and when to lead.
- 2.** Good leaders build their skills on following role models for the behaviours they want to learn. What they admire in another, they copy.
- 3.** Good leaders exhibit humility. They remain open to suggestion. When they need it, they ask for help and follow good advice.

In other words, good leaders are also good followers. They know when to follow in the footsteps of others and when to leave tracks of their own.

You may be the boss, but you will be a leader when you also learn how to follow.

We, as Christians, are called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and to model our behaviour on his. He calls us to faith, and hope, and peace, and humility, and servant leadership, and to loving our neighbour as ourselves. Whether we hold formal leadership posts or not, he calls us to be wary about how we use any form of privilege or power, because of their ability to corrupt us and make us lose our way.

To finish, I came across what I think is a very helpful suggestion from Jim Melchiorre (in *Disciplines*) relating to the issue of being humble. He says, "Let me tell you of an experiment I

Reflecting continues





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Reflecting continues

tried a few years back. I banished the words pride and proud from my vocabulary. Instead of saying, "I'm proud of my children," I'd say "I'm blessed by my children." In place of "I'm proud of the work our team did," I'd substitute, "I'm honoured to be working with you."

This experiment forces a fundamental shift from portraying ourselves as "possessing" something (pride) to "receiving" something (blessing and honour). Try this experiment long enough (says Jim) and your attitude changes to seeing life as "gift."

If we are aware that our lives are all gift, then the only responses are gratitude in receiving and generosity in giving away. Amen.

Singing: Brother, sister. TiS 650

OR: Kneels at the feet of his friends TiS 640



Offering

God of grace, all you offer us is gift. From you we experience thirst-quenching gifts and gifts that feed our souls. In every breath you offer us life, inviting us to wonder anew at your goodness, to celebrate your steadfast love towards us.

As we return in parts gifts you have shared in generous wonder, may that same generous wonder be how we live in you while responding to the needs of the world.

Notices

Today, November 5, is World Tsunami Awareness day.

<https://tsunamiday.undrr.org>

Responding: Prayers for World & Community

We pray for our world, in particular those who work proactively towards preventing or minimising disasters. We pray for those involved in tsunami awareness, for those involved in food and medical aid, for those working towards food and water security.

We pray for our nation, in particular those places and situations where honest workers seeking our national good are silenced or ridiculed by others. We pray for those who offer humble leadership despite it seeming weak against power and greed.

We pray for our churches, for all people with the desire to follow the way of Jesus Christ. May Christ be our courage and strength as we seek to walk a pilgrim path together.

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: Loving Spirit,
Loving Spirit. TiS 417**

OR: Guide me O thou great Redeemer TiS 569

Blessing

We are sent out
to continue our pilgrim path,
to journey the way of Jesus Christ.
In the goodness of God,
and in God's steadfast love,
may gratitude be our walking,
and generosity be our path.

Go to bless and be blessed
in the name of God:
Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. Amen.

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