

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



16 JUNE 2024

PENTECOST 4



WORSHIP AT HOME

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

Set aside a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are. We join with them all.

Prepare a space in the house; find a comfortable chair, light a candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.

Focussing ... As we pause to contemplate this season after Pentecost – the growth and dispersion of the Christian communities, we consider the stories in the Book of Acts and others which highlight the God who calls out and accompanies on journeys towards unseen and undreamt places and peoples. We hear of and are invited to name our own experiences of the generous grace and mercy given for the whole creation, the richness of life unearned and undeserved. In the quietness and stillness of this time, be grateful to the loving creator/parent, who faithfully travels with us through the storms of our lives, especially when we feel alone, confused and despair.

Acknowledgement of Country: We come to meet this morning from all manner of places, and on the Country of diverse Clans and Nations of First Peoples', and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging, and commit ourselves afresh to the journey of justice and reconciliation.

Joining the scattered community

Here we begin another week, weaving together the fabric of our lives, in all their different textures and colours, their changing forms and flows.

Here we mark the things that have gone before and look forward in hope for newness to come.

Here we celebrate each other's place as one thread in the weaving and cherish the moments when the fabric of our lives become whole.

NOTE – the occasional unfamiliar words in headings are in Arabic – SALAT AL SHOKOR صلاة الشكر - a reminder of the cultural diversity of the UCA, of Australia, and that among those suffering and displaced in the Arabic speaking world are many Christians.

Focussing for worship

Christ be with all who gather today. Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe, and all its peoples.

Greeting: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Call to worship (Uniting in Worship 2, page 232)

Our land is alive with the glory of God; **desert sands hum and gum trees dance.**
Brown grasses sing **and mountains breathe their stillness.**

All created things add their rhythms of delight **and even stones rap out their praise.**
Let out voices mingle with those of the earth; **may our hearts join the beat of her joy,**

For our God is with us: **the source of all things surrounds and upholds us.**
Christ Jesus walks beside and before us. **The spirit moves within and between us.**
Blessed be God, our wonder and our delight.

TIS 47 Our God, our help in ages past

PRAYER OF PRAISE AND THANKS / SALAT AL

SHOKOR صلاة الشكر

Life-giving, life-renewing, life-sustaining God, we thank and praise you for the gift of yourself to all the children of this blue planet, earth.

Like a caring father you foster and cherish the life of us all, protecting, guiding, sacrificing, providing a creation with enough and abundance for all your children.

Thank you, life giving God ... **we thank you today and always!**

Like a mother your Spirit is broodingly with us, offering new birth and healthy nurture, and with tough love making us strong. Thank you, life giving God - **we thank you today and always!**

Like a brother you come among us in Jesus of Nazareth, arriving among our deceits and doubts and calling us to step free in trust and really live!, Thank you, life giving God - **we thank you today and always!**

Life-giving, life-renewing, life-sustaining, God, we thank and praise you for the gift of yourself to the children of this blue planet, earth. Wonderful is your name forever! **Amen**

CONFESSION / SALAT AL AETERAF صلاة اعتراف

We look for your Kingdom, Lord. We look high and low - where is it found - where can You be found?

We sought you in our sanctuaries. Looked at the stain glass windows for clues, hoped we could see you. **We looked but didn't find you.**

You were out on the streets, in the alleys, walking with the hookers and addicts, drunks and homeless. **We never thought of looking for you there.**

We searched for you in our Bibles - read your story, memorized your commandments and recited the psalms. **We looked but didn't find you.**

You were in the war stories of frightened families struggling for life, begging for food, seeking shelter **We never thought of looking for you there.**

We listened for you in our prayers - hoped that you would answer and grant that which we asked. **We looked but didn't find you.**

You are in the cries from the nursing homes, the moans in the hallways, the lonely glances, the waiting for their end. **We never thought of looking for you there.**

We chased after you at our revival - shouted for your presence and spoke in tongues in your praise. **We looked but didn't find you.**

You were speaking in a child's first cry, a mother's prayer, a father's hope, a grandparent's dreams. **We never thought of looking for you there.**

Open our minds, Lord to find your Kingdom: **among the outsiders and hopeless.**

Open our eyes, Lord to find your Kingdom: **amidst the wounded and hungry.**

Open our ears, Lord to find your Kingdom: **in confession and thanksgiving and doxology.**

Open our hearts, Lord to find your kingdom: **beside the frail and ailing and dying.**

Lead us to your Kingdom **of mangers and shepherds, blind men and harlots.**

Lead us to Your Kingdom **of Roman crosses on Golgotha and empty tombs on Easter morn.**

Lead us to your Kingdom Lord and we shall rejoice to be home. Amen.

THE PEACE: As-salamu alaykum **السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ** – Peace be upon you!

BIBLE READINGS – Lisa Saffin

1 Samuel 15:34-16:13 - David is anointed as king.

³⁴ Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. ³⁵ Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the Lord was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel.

¹⁶ The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.” ² Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” And the Lord said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’” ³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do, and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.” ⁴ Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, “Do you come peaceably?” ⁵ He said, “Peaceably. I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely his anointed is now before the Lord.” ⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” ⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” ⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” ¹⁰ Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any of these.” ¹¹ Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him, for we will not sit down until he comes here.” ¹² He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. The Lord said, “Rise and anoint him, for this is the one.” ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

Mark 4:26–34 - Parables of the growing seed and the mustard seed.

²⁶ He also said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground ²⁷ and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸ The earth produces of itself first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle because the harvest has come.”

³⁰ He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

The Use of Parables

³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it; ³⁴ he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

TIS 745 Seek ye first the kingdom of God

CONTEMPORARY WORD - (Rev Dr. Tony Floyd)

The parable of the seed growing secretly only appears in the Gospel of Mark.

Sowing seed is such a simple act. Age is no barrier or prerequisite - adults and even tiny children can do it. For my grandson and granddaughter the joy of planting almost knew no bounds. Something mysterious, unexpected, unimaginable happened in the darkness of the ground. Often that mysterious process happens without any additional human attention.

As in the parable life goes on around that mystery. But it is mystery that is happening and not 'nothing'. Only with relatively modern technology can we actually see what is happening, without that, it is only after a while that we see anything at all, can be gladdened by what we see, wonder at what is happening, anticipate what is yet to be.

The vision that God has for all creation and its diverse peoples is like that kingdom of God is like this: slowly, imperceptibly, beyond our imagining moving towards what our Basis of Union calls God's promised end in view for the whole creation – a world and its peoples reconciled and renewed!

We preach and witness, we live our lives, enter our struggles, endure long waits without any apparent results and the results are overwhelmingly ordinary: a few children come forward to listen to the children's time, a teenager seeks baptism, we discover that the stranger (different in language, colour and culture – even religion), seeks the same fullness of life and hopes the same hopes for their children as we do. It seems not to amount to much, but the seed is growing! God is present! The divine energies are at work in a process that we understand only in part, so also the realm of God is becoming a reality in our midst in a process that remains largely mysterious.

But ... MYSTERY itself is not the point here but its dependability. Just as we can count on the earth to produce great plants from small seeds, so also we can count on God to bring about God's promised end in the efforts of obscure, unlikely peoples; in the potential of those who have been made to feel powerless; in the exponential potency of networks formed among those who don't appear to count; in the divine grace that burgeons even where human resources seem scant. Dangerous and wonderful ideas!

Similarly in the parable of the mustard seed the Gospel begins differently than we would expect.

Many of those in Jesus' own religious tradition who looked for God's promised one to come as a mighty warrior. Instead he comes as an infant. In our time of efficiencies, simplification, and 'experts' we would expect him to select the brightest and best to be his disciples and followers. Instead he chooses ordinary people, working class (fishermen), public service functionaries (a tax collector), and women. He speaks with officers of the invading army (roman Centurion), touches those with unspeakable diseases (lepers), and asks for a drink from a woman whose cultural group are related but hated (Samaritan). We might expect him to compare the realm of God to a Tasmanian Blue Gum, or a River Red Gum, or a Mountain Ash but he compares it instead to a mustard seed — the smallest of all seeds.

The Parables of the Growing Seed (vv. 26-29) and the Mustard Seed (vv. 30-32), both speak of the power of God's will to bring the kingdom into being out of the insignificant.

subversive strategy, planting riddles in the mind of his hearers that can suddenly get them to see the action of God in radically different ways. Parables are miniature time-bombs, and when they have gone off in the heart we can't see things in the same way ever again. We can't

'unknow' what the parable has opened up. And that is both the wonder and the danger of the Good news according to Jesus!

OFFERING during which we will sing - TIS 439 What shall we offer our good Lord

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE - Prepared by Warwick Barry

Light the candle to remember those who are not at worship with us today

God of Jesus, God of us all,
only true and everlasting friend,
inspire us to pray and act with the compassion of Jesus Christ.

God, at this moment, there are people who hunger for food,
for a crust of bread, a piece of fish, or even the scraps in our garbage bins.
Please feed them.

Holy friend, sift our prayers,
and turn our hopes into deeds.

There are some people who hunger for liberty,
to go as they please,
to stay on at home, or visit friends,
to worship without hindrance,
to vote for whoever they please,
to see the end of police, compounds, and prisons,
to be reunited with those, they love dearly.
Please give them liberty.

Holy friend, sift our prayers,
and turn our hopes into deeds.

And there are some who hunger to be useful,
to share what wisdom they have learnt from life,
to listen to a neighbour's worries,
to work beside a weary friend,
to be of use to their family, country or church – to be of use to you,
but bad health,
or shyness and timidity,
or unsightly physical deformity,
or the frailty of old age,
or sorrow, over old sins, holds them back and makes them useless.
Please show them how they can still be useful.

Holy friend, sift our prayers,
and turn our hopes into deeds.

Bread of life, there are some who are spiritually hungry,
who yearn for some faith and passion,
who search for your meaning and use your name,
who look for someone they can trust

and hunger for something worth worshipping.
Please satisfy their hunger with the living bread of life.

Holy friend, sift our prayers,
and turn our hopes into deeds.

From the fear that poisons your church,
when stories of scarcity,
replace listening for you:
buildings become idols,
self-preservation,
consumes our energy, and despair suffocates hope – rescue us.

Ancient of days clothed in mystery, light and fire,
thaw out our hearts,
so that we may have a courageous heart like David the shepherd boy.
Kindle your wild grace and burn away the anxiety and all that is dead within us-
so that your love and joy may grow and we may dream your dreams.

And to you, bountiful God,
Father and provider,
Christ our saviour,
Holy Spirit our friend,
be honour and glory;
worship and praise,
from now till eternity. **Amen**

(Adapted from Rev B Prewer & Rev Sally Douglas)

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.**

TIS 217 (i) Love divine, all loves excelling

SENDING AND BLESSING / BARAKAT بركات

On our heads and on our houses – the blessing of God
In our coming and going – the peace of God.
In our life and our believing – the love of God.
At our end and new beginning – the arms of God to welcome us and bring us home!

(Iona Community)

Postlude

You can find a copy of today's sermon along with other congregational information on the church website.

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Presider: Rev Dr. Tony Floyd

Music: Peter Hurley

Church Office

Tuesdays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Thursdays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Fridays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Phone: 0411 958 127

office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

Website: www.ormondunitingchurch.org

NEWS & NOTICES