



uniting  
church

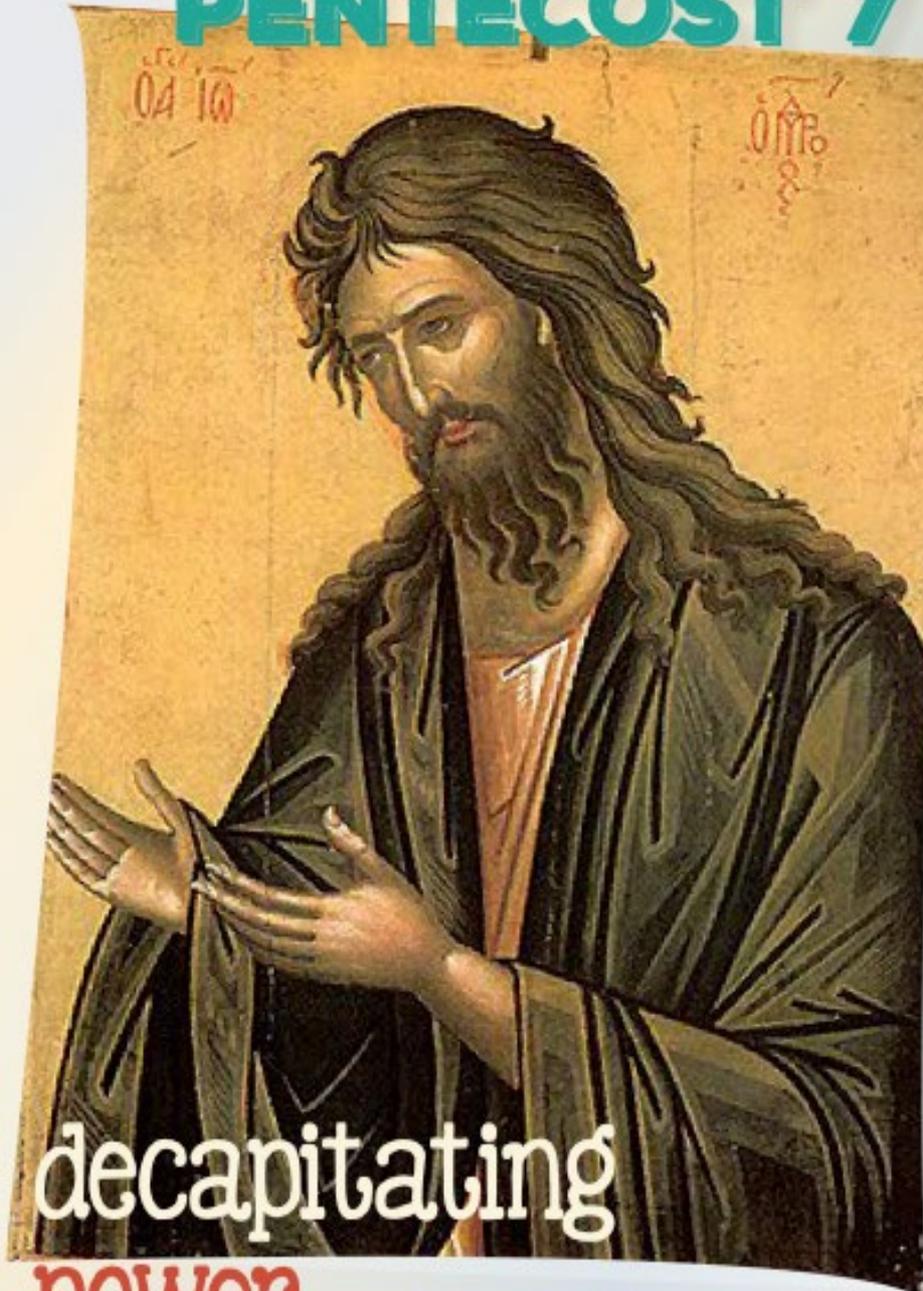
in Australia,  
Synod of NSW & ACT

Westmead  
Uniting Church



Parramatta  
Mission

# PENTECOST 7



decapitating  
power

Westmead Uniting Church Worship

Sundays service 9.45am

ZOOM: <https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/3958336709>

## WELCOME

A warm welcome as we gather together on this Sunday.

## LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE

Today we light this candle which announces that the crucified risen Christ breathes love into reconciliation, inspiring transformed relationships, cultural respect and structural changes, and truth-telling even in the face of unjust power.

*The candle is lit*

## THEME

Herod resists the transformative call of the gospel, and kills the one who bears him good news.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge the Burrumattagal people of the Darug Nation, the first inhabitants of this place, as the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to their ancient culture, their elders past and present and their emerging leaders. We acknowledge the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now reside within this area. We honour them for their custodianship of the land, on which we gather today.

## INVITING GOD INTO LIFE

O God, as we draw together this day,  
our Gospel story gathers our hearts and minds,  
portraying the fickle but brutal injustices of power,  
Displayed in the beheading of John the Baptist:

Holy God  
By whose authority is judged  
All human exercise of power,  
Give us grace to obey  
Where we are called to solidarity  
And courage to resist  
When your justice is at stake,  
Through Jesus Christ, *Amen!*



God our lover,  
In whose arms we are held,  
And by whose passion we are known:  
Require of us also that love  
Which is filled with longing,  
Delights in truth,  
And costs not less than everything,  
Through Jesus Christ, *Amen!*  
*Janet Morley, All Desires Known*

**HYMN** *Let All Creation Dance (TIS, 187)*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GybOFak\\_a8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GybOFak_a8)

1. Let all creation dance  
in energies sublime,  
as order turns with chance,  
unfolding space and time,  
for nature's art  
in glory grows,  
and newly shows  
God's mind and heart.

2. God's breath each force unfurls,  
igniting from a spark  
expanding starry swirls,  
with whirlpools dense and dark.  
Though moon and sun  
seem mindless things,  
each orbit sings:  
'Your will be done.'

3. Our own amazing earth,  
with sunlight, cloud and storms,  
and life's abundant growth  
in lovely shapes and forms,  
is made for praise,  
a fragile whole,  
and from its soul  
heaven's music plays.

4. Lift heart and soul and voice:  
in Christ all praises meet  
and nature shall rejoice  
as all is made complete.  
In hope be strong,  
all life befriend  
and kindly tend

### **PRAYER OF RESOLVE**

In defiance of corruption and falsehood,

we commit to truth and integrity!

*We pray for honesty and uprightness  
to increase in our world.*

In defiance of apathy and hatred,  
we choose to be proactive in love!

*We pray for understanding and peace  
to increase in our world.*

In defiance of scepticism and cynicism,  
we embrace the mystery of faith!

*We pray for humility and wonder  
to increase in our world.*

In defiance of self-interest and human arrogance  
we celebrate God's salvation!

*We pray for compassion and faith  
to increase in our world.*

In defiance of all that would oppose God's purpose among us  
we choose again to follow Christ!

*We continue to pray,  
not just now, but at all times.  
Amen.*

## **ASSURANCE**

The voice of Christ calls to us in grace in our fragility,  
to enter the gates of our resolve to live new life!

Follow the call of love

and lay down the past in faith.

We are are invited to flow into justice.

*Thanks be to God. Amen!*

**HYMN**     *She sits like a bird (TiS 418)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPb5gO8ASvM>

1 She sits like a bird, brooding on the waters,  
Hovering on the chaos of the world's first day;  
She sighs and she sings, mothering creation,  
Waiting to give birth to all the Word will say.

2 She wings over earth, resting where she wishes,  
Lighting close at hand or soaring through the skies;  
She nests in the womb, welcoming each wonder,  
Nourishing potential hidden to our eyes.

3 She dances in fire, startling her spectators,  
Waking tongues of ecstasy where dumbness reigned;  
She weans and inspires all whose hearts are open,  
Nor can she be captured, silenced or restrained.

4 For she is the Spirit, one with God in essence,  
Gifted by the Saviour in eternal love;  
She is the key opening the scriptures,  
Enemy of apathy and heavenly dove.

### **SCRIPTURE READINGS** Mark 6: 14-29

#### **The Death of John the Baptist**

14 King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." 15 But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." 16 But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

17 For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. 18 For John had been telling Herod, "It is

not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed;[d] and yet he liked to listen to him. 21 But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. 22 When his daughter Herodias[e] came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." 23 And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." 24 She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." 25 Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. 27 Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, 28 brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

## RESPONSE

*O God our nurturer,  
may your word live in us.  
And colour our living. Amen!*

## REFLECTION **DECAPITATING POWER**

**HYMN**     *Keep calling me, David McGregor*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v6LB37fl5s&t=131s>

## OFFERING PRAYER

Receive and bless these gifts and our lives, O God,  
which we offer in response to your love  
revealed so clearly in Jesus.

As he planted the seeds of love and life in our lives,  
strengthen us to nourish others with the fruits  
of our faith made visible through these gifts,  
our love and our witness.

*In Jesus' name we pray.*

*Amen*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **PRAYER FOR ALL PLACES & PEOPLE**

God of love and freedom, of hope and joy,  
we pray for those who long to be free,

For those wrongly imprisoned.

For those imprisoned because of a fight for justice,  
because they spoke out against the tyranny of their government,  
because they protest the actions for their state,  
because they have a faith that is censored.

We pray for those who seek asylum and refuge from their past;  
and who now live in detention centres.

We pray for those who are detained for their own safety and wellbeing,  
but long to be free.

We pray for all those whose freedom falls victim  
to the greater power of an unjust majority.

We pray for those whose helplessness  
condemns them to a form of slave labour.

For those working unbearably long hours with little or not pay.

For those increasing number of people trafficked –  
human lives bought and sold.

We pray for those who long to be free.

For those who know daily pain,  
and who are overwhelmed with the struggle of coping.

For those who have a diagnosis that feels like an incarcerating sentence.

For those whose health curtails a freedom they used to know.  
We pray for those who are trapped by the snares self-contempt.  
For those who disregard their own inherent worth and loveliness,  
and long to be free for love.  
For those who are not free to love who, or how,  
or where their heart leads them.  
We pray for those who long to be free,  
for those who are condemned by poverty.  
For those whose hunger becomes like shackles.  
For those who feel unemployment to be liberty-deprived.  
We pray for those who long to be free,  
for those who wish to be free of the pain of this life.  
And for those who mourn the passing of one dear to them.  
For all those who have loved freely and long to again.  
Creator God,  
You are the God who loves freely:  
the God whose love is unconditional and infinite.  
You love each of us eternally: enfold us into Your embrace;  
grant the freedom of Your people and the fulfilment of our prayers.  
*All this we pray, in the name of Jesus the Christ, Amen.*  
(Source: Rev Andrew Kimmitt, Church of Scotland)

## HYMN

*God of freedom, God of justice (TiS 657)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzxHog711D4>

1 God of freedom, God of justice,  
God whose love is strong as death,  
God who saw the dark of prison,  
God who knew the price of faith:  
touch our world of sad oppression  
with your Spirit's healing breath.

2 Rid the earth of torture's terror,  
God whose hands were nailed to wood;  
hear the cries of pain and protest,  
God who shed the tears and blood;  
move in us the power of pity,  
restless for the common good.

3 Make in us a captive conscience  
quick to hear, to act, to plead;  
make us truly sisters, brothers,  
of whatever race or creed:  
teach us to be fully human,  
open to each other's need.

### **BLESSING**

May the God of creation  
warm your heart  
like the campfires of old.  
Bring wisdom and peace  
as shown to the first peoples of this land.  
Shake off the dust from the desert plains  
by the refreshing rains  
followed by the glow and warmth of the sun.  
Let the light of God  
show us the right path  
and stand tall like the big river gums  
drawing life from the ever flowing waters.

*(Source: Uncle Vince Ross,  
Victorian Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress)*