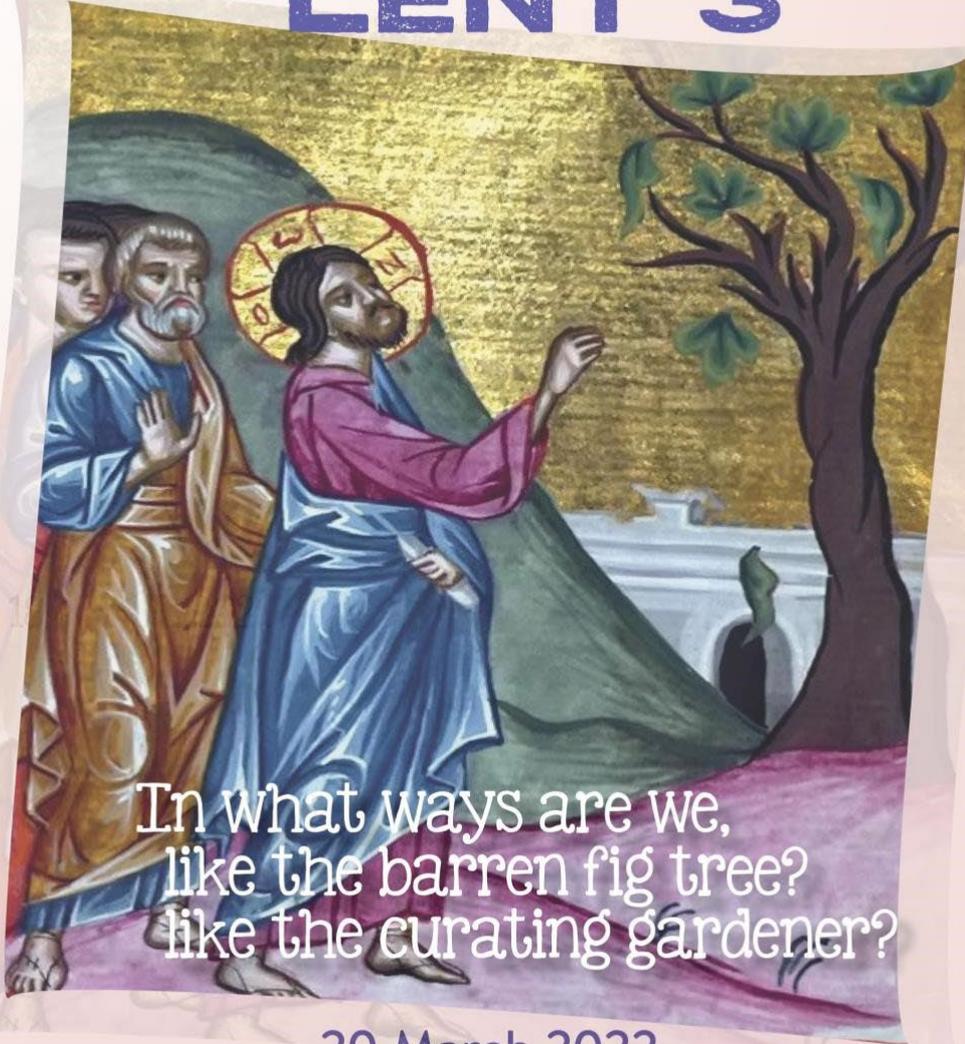




**uniting
church**
in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

Leigh Memorial
Westmead
Uniting Churches

LENT 3



In what ways are we,
like the barren fig tree?
like the curating gardener?

20 March 2022

Leigh Memorial 9.30am

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/5199089657>

Meeting ID: 519 908 9657

Westmead Uniting 9:30am

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

WELCOME

A warm welcome as we gather together in this space and on zoom.

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.

THEME

IN WHAT WAYS ARE WE:
LIKE THE BARREN FIG TREE?
LIKE THE CURATING GARDENER?

OPENING SENTENCES

One more year for growing towards abundant life and fruitfulness, in the name of God. We walk another Lenten week, covered by God's mercy, as we try again to be the true people of God and to live as though anything is possible in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us incline our ears to hear God's word to us this day.

In Jesus Christ there is always a new beginning.

In Abba God we live and breathe and have our being.

Dorothy McRae McMahon, used with permission

LIGHTING OF THE LENTEN CANDLE

As light is borne from a white candle to a violet candle and the flame remains the same; so the Spirit of God burns in our lives through the good times and the testing times.

The Lenten Candle is lit

We do this in remembrance of Jesus.

As an extinguished candle waits in the darkness to be rekindled;

so the spirit of God is forever ready to shine with hope and love.

the Lenten candle is extinguished

As we extinguish this Lenten light,

we acknowledge the darkness and pain of injustice in the world

And as the Christ candle remains lit, we acknowledge the promise of the presence of Christ in every wilderness experience.

PRAYER TOWARDS GROWING CHANGE (Luke 13:1-9) Where in the world do fig trees grow, but grow no fruit to share? *In the gardens of our good intentions, stifled by our inaction.*

Where in the world do fig trees grow, but grow no fruit to share? *In the chapels where our prayers and songs fill the air, but there remain.*

Where in the world do fig trees grow, but grow no fruit to share?

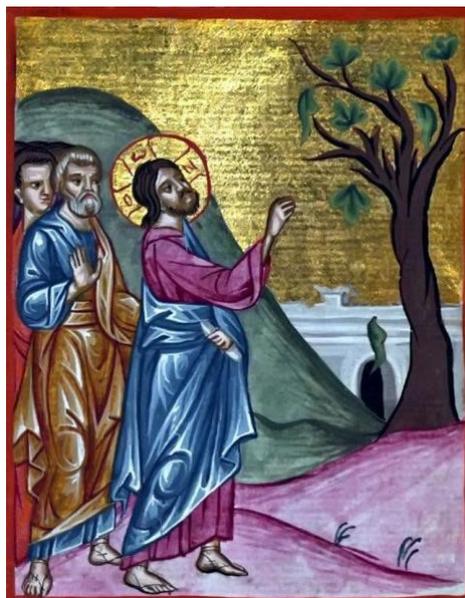
In pre-election rhetoric designed to win votes, but not to change a thing.

Where in the world do fig trees grow, but grow no fruit to share?

Here, they grow, around and within us, fig trees with no fruit to share:

Forgive us, though we make poor use of the good soil you provide. Dig around and feed our roots, help us to grow again. Turn around, Jesus calls, and I will restore, renew. Hear this promise, receive this grace: God will enrich our growing, take heart, and be at peace. Amen.

(Source: Sarah Agnew, Pray the Story)



HYMN

Bring many names beautiful and good (TiS 182)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aj7Ms2Z35Tc>

1. Bring many names, beautiful and good, celebrate, in parable and story, holiness in glory, living, loving God. Hail and hosanna! bring many names!
2. Strong mother God, working night and day, planning all the wonders of creation, setting each equation genius at play: Hail and hosanna, strong mother God!
3. Warm father God, hugging every child, feeling all the strains of human living, caring and forgiving till we're reconciled: Hail and hosanna, warm father God!
4. Old, aching God, gray with endless care, calmly piercing evil's new disguises, glad of good surprises, wiser than despair: Hail and hosanna, old, aching God!
5. Young, growing God, eager, on the move, saying no to falsehood and unkindness, crying out for justice, giving all you have:
Hail and hosanna, young,
growing God!

6. Great, living God, never fully known, joyful
darkness far beyond our seeing, closer yet than
breathing, everlasting home: Hail and hosanna, great,
living God!

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 13. 1-9

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse people than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you keep on changing, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them - do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you keep on changing, you will all perish just as they did."

Then he told this parable: "A landowner had a fig tree planted in their vineyard; and then came looking for fruit on it and found none. So the owner said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' The gardener replied, 'let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

RESPONSE

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

REFLECTION

MUSIC *Have mercy* - Sandra McCracken

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXCo4xo0rps>

Have mercy on me ...

Oh help my unbelief ...

OFFERING

God of compassion and relationship,
you work with us to bring forth life in the midst of death, healing in the
midst hate and anger, and hope in the darkest places of poverty and despair.
You desire our wholeness, and invite our company to bring healing and life
with others. May the gifts we offer to you this morning bring life and healing
to us all.

Amen!

PRAYER FOR THE WORLD

O God, we are listening for the Good News which nurtures and
feeds us.

***We pray that, when we believe that we hear it, we will become
those who live from that truth.*** Give to us a faith which lives in strength
beyond the testing times and hard questions, which dares to bear witness
to you as One who does not wreak judgement on the innocent. ***For we
believe that, even as we falter, you cherish us and give us grace to try
again.*** May your church be so faithful as the Body of Christ that people
will run to us as a place of safety, where they can weep in the hard times
and be held in care in the face of life events which make it hard to believe
in a loving God.

We pray now for such people:

The people pray

May what lies ahead be healing and reassuring for these people,
loving God.

Strengthen our faith so that it survives in ways which turn fragile growings of life into fruitfulness which can be shared, we pray.

For we are those who thirst for the waters of your life, O God, the water of renewal and hope which we can share with the world.

Grant this to us as we step into the year ahead, we pray. Amen.

Dorothy McRae McMahon, used with permission

HYMN

O God you search me and you know me

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4ScBPE9v_I

1 O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze. When I walk or lie down, you are before me, Ever the maker and keeper of my days.

2 You know my resting and my rising. You discern my purpose from afar, and with love everlasting you besiege me:
In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are.

3 Before a word is on my tongue, O God, you have known its meaning through and through.
You are with me beyond my understanding:
God of my present, my past and future too.

4 Although your Spirit is upon me, still I search for shelter from your light.
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight.

5 For you created me and shaped me, gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:
Safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

6 O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze. When I walk or lie down, you are before me, Ever the maker and keeper of my days.

Bernadette Farrell

BLESSING

The love of the faithful Creator,
The peace of the wounded Healer,
The joy of the challenging Spirit, The hope of the Three-in-One surround and encourage us today, tonight, and forever.
May the blessing of God – the Creator, the Healer, and the Spirit, be with us and remain with us always.

Amen.

(Source: The pattern of our days – Iona)