

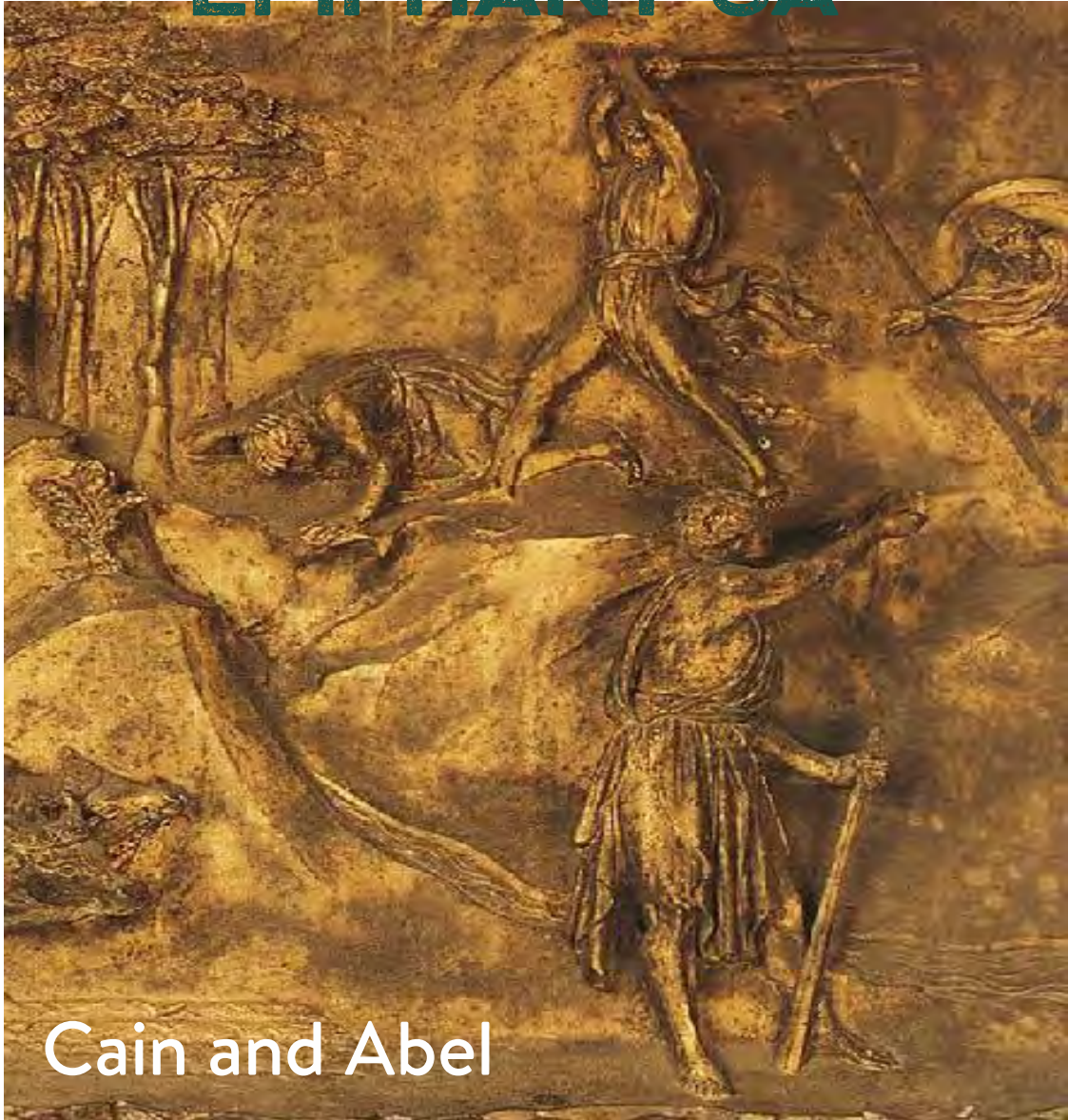


uniting
church

in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

Leigh Memorial
Uniting Church

EPIPHANY 6A



Cain and Abel

YOU SHALL LOVE
YOUR CROOKED NEIGHBOUR
WITH YOUR CROOKED HEART

12 FEBRUARY 2023

WELCOME

LIGHTING OF THE EPIPHANY CANDLE

We light the Christ candle
as a symbol of the healing love
and the call to freedom
to learn to love our enemy
and birth justice within expectant life.

The candle is lit

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.

OPENING SENTENCES

In the beginning O God,
You shaped our soul and sets its weave
You formed our body
and gave it breath.
***Renew us this day
in the image of your love.***

O Great God, grant us your light
O Great God, grant us your grace
O Great God, grant us
your joy this day
***And let us be made pure
in the well of your health.
Amen!***

Adapted: J Philip Newell, Celtic Prayers, Iona

HYMN *"May God's Wisdom" (Tune: 'Stuttgart 87.87)*

May God's wisdom deep within us
Shape the joy within our hearts,
Smooth the road we travel gently
Using all our loving arts.

May fair blossoms dropping petals
On the living path we tread,
Make a cushioned, glorious carpet,
Fragrancing the way ahead.

May we root our dreams and longings
In a true integrity,
Clearing out all that will hinder
Love's own creativity.

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A PRAYER

God help us to find our confession;
The truth within us
which is hidden from our mind;
The beauty or the ugliness
we see elsewhere
But never in ourselves;

The stowaway which is smuggled
Into the dark side of the heart,
Which puts the heart off balance
and causes it pain,
Which wearies and confuses us,
Which tips us in false directions and inclines us to destruction,
The load which is not carried squarely
Because it is carried in ignorance.

God help us to find our confession.
Help us across
the boundary of our understanding.
Lead us into the darkness

that we may find what lies concealed;
That we may confess it
towards the light;
That we may carry our truth
in the centre of our heart;
That we may carry our cross wisely
And bring harmony into our world.

Amen.

The Prayer Tree by Michael Leunig

SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 5. 21-37

²¹“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ ²²But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell. ³¹“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³²But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

³³“Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ ³⁴But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by

Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one.

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

SONG *its not too late, Archie Roach*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iuepsowqku>

I'm so sorry for the world today
With all the killing and all the hate
I get down on my knees and pray
That it's not too late
That it's not too late for peace
And it's not too late for love

For all the children everywhere
I ask the old ones up above:
"Won't you hear this prayer?"

It's not too late to turn it round
We gotta find some common ground
I know it's there
And it comes as no surprise
It's deep within our children's eyes
It's everywhere, oh yeah

So comfort those who wake in fright
And hold them in your arms
Tell them all it'll be alright
Keep them safe from harm
And we hope as we all wait
Wait to see the snow white dove

For all the children everywhere
I ask the old ones up above:
"Won't you hear this prayer?"

It's not too late to turn it round

We gotta find some common ground
I know it's there
And it comes as no surprise
It's deep within our children's eyes
It's everywhere

It's not too late for peace and love
I ask the old ones up above:
"Won't you hear this prayer?"

It's not too late
It's not too late

REFLECTION

GATHERING IN GROUPS

COFFEE & TEA

SHARING

HYMN *When I needed a neighbour were you there? (Ti S629)*

1. When I needed a neighbour
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour, were you there?
And the creed and the colour
And the name won't matter
Were you there?

2. I was hungry and thirsty
Were you there, were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?
And the creed and the colour
And the name won't matter
Were you there?

3. I was cold, I was naked
Were you there, were you there?
I was cold, I was naked, were you there?
And the creed and the colour
And the name won't matter
Were you there?

4. When I needed a shelter
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a shelter were you there?
And the creed and the colour
And the name won't matter
Were you there?

5. When I needed a healer
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a healer, were you there?
And the creed and the colour
And the name won't matter
Were you there?

6. Wherever you travel
I'll be there, I'll be there
Wherever you travel, I'll be there
And the creed and the colour
And the name won't matter
I'll be there!

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 our despair.

You desire our wholeness,
And invite our company
to bring healing and life to others.

May the gifts
we offer to you this morning
bring life and healing to us all.

Amen.

PRAYING TOGETHER FOR PLACES AND 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

Let us go from here,
committed to loving
our neighbours as ourselves.

And may the light of Christ's life
lead us on,
the faithfulness of God's love
inspire us
and the warmth of the Holy Spirit
be offered to all people.
Amen.