



**uniting
church**

in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

Leigh Memorial Uniting Church

LENT 2

IN THE DARKNESS
OF
UNKNOWING
WE ENTER
THE LIGHT

**NICODEMUS
COMES TO JESUS
IN THE DARKNESS
OF UNKNOWING**



5 March 2023

WELCOME

Welcome to our Second Sunday of Lent.
And today we will celebrate International Women's Day.

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.

LENTEN SPIRITUALITY

Welcome to a season of self-examination.
This is a time to ponder the depth
of God's transforming love into the world.
Lenten spirituality invites a transformative journey,
Into the darkness of unknowing
of our contained "Nicodumus" existence,
to participate in the emergent light of new life ...

LIGHTING OF THE LENTEN CANDLE

As light is borne from the white Christ candle
to the second violet Lenten candle in Lent,
so the Spirit of God lights up our lives through the desert times
of testing and times of abundant life.

The Lenten Candle is lit

A LITANY FOR LENT

Sustainer and giver of life,
may we be freed from the temptations of power,
from the urge to control rather than enable.

Spirit, liberate us from the forces of domination.

Loving Empowerer, may we challenge
the abuse of authority wherever it is to be found,
including in ourselves.

Spirit, give us strength not to walk by on the other side.

Still Small Voice,
may we learn to listen to each other,
and may those in authority understand the strength
that comes from true consultation.

Spirit of Contradiction, deepen our insights.

Loving Creativity,
may we affirm ourselves and others,
understanding that we are all unique,
and have voices that need to be heard.

***Creator of Diversity, enable us live with the value of
difference.***

Silence

Inclusive and Compassionate God,
may we recognise and challenge discrimination
based on gender, race, age, sexual orientation,
clericalism and other forms of power for exclusion.

***Spirit of Equality, imbue us
with the values of interconnectedness
with all created nature, human and non-human.***

(Adapt. DMcEwan/ml)

HYMN *“One in Love, We Meet Together”*
 (Tune: TiS 217 (i)
 ‘Hyfrydol’ 87.87D)

1. One in love, we meet together,
one in time, and never apart.
We in flesh as brother, sister,
makes us one in mind and heart.
All incarnate, we would offer,
all we most sincerely prize,
Learning though traditions differ
how they join to make us wise.

2. One in outlook, always searching,
not to bind in common creed,

As a people, be more ready
to respond to other's need.
Here we are so finely fashioned,
understanding, here to serve,
Never narrow in compassion,
empathy without reserve.

3. As in Christ, may we discover
that to give is to receive,
That in God the good is present,
ever, always we perceive.
Not by chance the world's creation,
not by chance was life begun,
God is love and our vocation
is to love 'til love has won.

(Adapted by Betty Van Till/3C Exchange)

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LITANY FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The theme for this year's International Women's Day
is ***Embrace Equity***.

Equity isn't just a nice-to-have, it's a must-have.

A focus on gender equity needs to be part of every society's DNA.
And it's critical to understand the difference between equity and
equality. Here is a video to enable us to grasp the difference.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCS7Rus4-Y&t=5s>

Let us pray:

God,

Today we honour the women of all times and places,

Women knowing the interconnectedness of the human family,

Women promoting human flourishing,

Women boldly leading the transformation of unjust global
structures,

Women seeking and sharing wisdom and love,

Loving God, we celebrate your faithfulness and love,

On this day we celebrate the promotion

of the full humanity of all women everywhere,

We know that whatever denies or distorts

the full humanity is not of God.
Enable us to be faithful to your call
to love all of humanity with equity,
In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.

*(Adapted: source: Tané Theron, Christian ethos and chapel prefect,
Ravenswood school for girls)*

SCRIPTURE READING John 3: 1-17 (Scholars Edition)

Now there was a human being, a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a Judean leader, who came to Jesus during the night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you've come as a teacher from God; after all, nobody can perform the miracles you do unless God is with them."

Jesus replied to him, "As God is my witness: No one can experience God's life-world without being born from above."

Nicodemus says to him, "How can an adult be reborn? Can you re-enter your mother's womb and be born a second time?"

Jesus replied, "As God is my witness: No one can enter God's life-world without being born of water and spirit. What is born of the human realm is human, but what is born of the spiritual realm is spirit. "Don't be surprised that I told you, 'Every one of you must be reborn from above.' "The spirit blows every which way, like wind: you hear the sound it makes but you can't tell where it is coming from or where it's headed. That's how it is with everyone reborn of the spirit".

"How can that be possible?" Nicodemus retorted.

Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Human One sent of God. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Human One be lifted up, that whoever believes in this One may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that God gave part of Godself, so that everyone who believes in this One may not perish but may have eternal life, unending life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the

world, but in order that the world might be saved through the One sent by God.”

RESPONSE

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

REFLECTION

HYMN *I danced in the morning When the world was begun, (TiS, 242)*

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

1. I danced in the morning
When the world was begun,
And I danced in the moon
And the stars and the sun,
And I came down from heaven
And I danced on the earth,
At Bethlehem I had my birth.

Chorus

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

2. I danced for the scribe
And the pharisee,
But they would not dance
And they wouldn't follow me.
I danced for the fishermen,
For James and John –
They came with me
And the Dance went on.

Chorus

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

3. I danced on the Sabbath
And I cured the lame;
The holy people
Said it was a shame.
They whipped and they stripped
And they hung me on high,
And they left me there
On a Cross to die.

Chorus

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

4. I danced on a Friday
When the sky turned black –
It's hard to dance
With the devil on your back.
They buried my body
And they thought I'd gone,
But I am the Dance,
And I still go on.

Chorus

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

5. They cut me down
And I leapt up high;
I am the life
That'll never, never die;
I'll live in you
If you'll live in me –
I am the Lord
Of the Dance, said he.

Chorus

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

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!***

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER FOR THE WORLD

In this second Sunday in Lent,
we bow our heads in prayer before you, O God.
Make us wise in praying,
that our love may be joined with yours
in reaching out towards those
whose choices in life are reduced to finding ways of surviving.

***Shine your light on their faces,
so that we may pray with a passion for good.***

We pray for those who are close to our hearts now

May we be those who so love the world
that, like Jesus, we become known as those
who do not bring condemnation to others
but walk beside them in compassion.

***Shine your light on all we do as your church, Jesus Christ.
Enable us to be those who dare
to come into that light ourselves
and to see what is of lasting value, rather than passing
attraction.***

As we walk through this Lenten period,

may we not fear what lies ahead of us,
but trust that you have gone before
and made the way straight.

Refresh us, each day, with hope and grace
which flows from your holy Being
in a never-ending stream.

***This we pray in faith in the name of Jesus.
Amen.***

HYMN *Feed us now, Bread of life* (TiS, 538)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58U_jEkuyTY

1. Feed us now, Bread of life,
in this holy meal;
let us know your love anew:
we hunger for you.
Feed us now, Bread of life,
come and live within;
let your peace be ours today,
Lord Jesus, we pray.

2. Piece of bread, glass of wine:
Lord, this food is good;
love and mercy come to us —
your promise we trust.
Piece of bread, glass of wine;
who can understand
how his mercy works in these?
Yet, Lord, we believe.

3. God is here, O so near,
nearer than our thoughts.
Stay with us where'er we go;
Lord, help us to grow.
God is here, O so near,
in this heaven's meal.
May we always feed on you —
on the bread that is true

COMMUNION

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

The Holy Table of Jesus Christ
waits for its honoured guests:
all of us, each of us
who come in humble faith.

***In eating and drinking
this life-giving sacrament
we are fed by God's love.***

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

May the God of generosity
Giver of the Bread of abundant life
and all things new be with you!

And also with you!

God of grace and tenderness,
even when we look for Jesus
for all the wrong reasons,
he offers the bread of life to us;
though we offer the cross to him,
he graces us with life;
though we would divide each other
by class, race, gender, or condition,
he calls us to oneness in you.

Holy God of wonder,
feed us with the bread of life,
so we might feed those
who know true hunger;
as your justice shines
in the shadows of our hearts,

may we light the way
for the lost and despised;
as you speak in truth
of your love for us,
may we be the voice
for the unloved and forgotten;
as you reshape our brokenness
into wholeness,
may we bind up
the wounds of our world.
And so we give you thanks
with the faithful
of every time and place,
joining with the whole creation
in the eternal hymn :

***Holy, holy, holy,
God of power and vulnerability,
heaven and earth
are full of your glory.
Come and deliver us,
God the giver of life.
Blessed is the One who comes
in the name of our God.
Come and deliver us,
God the giver the Bread of Life.***

THE INSTITUTION

On the night he was betrayed,
Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and said:
“This is my body, which is for you.
Do this to remember me”
In the same way, after supper,
Jesus took the cup and again giving thanks, said:

“This cup is the sign
of my new covenant with you.
Do this as often as you drink it to remember me.”

THE INVOCATION

Be present risen Jesus Christ,
by your Holy Spirit, as you were with your disciples
and make yourself known to us
in the breaking of the bread,
for you live and reign with the Creator
and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. ***Amen.***

THE BREAKING OF BREAD

The bread we break
is a sharing in the body of Christ.
The cup we take
is a sharing in the life-blood of Christ.
The gifts of God
for the people of God.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF BREAD AND WINE

The body of Christ given for us.
The life of Christ poured out for us.

FINAL PRAYER

God of amazing grace,
we are grateful for your presence.
***We pray your presence
will feed and strengthen us
to follow in the way of Jesus,
in our world.
Amen.***

HYMN *May the feet of God walk with you (TiS, 779)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rw1sjc3IVrw>

May the feet of God
walk with you,
and God's hand hold you tight.

May the eye of God rest on you,
and God's ear hear your cry.

May the smile of God be for you,
and God's breath give you life.

May the Child of God grow in you,
and God's love bring you home.

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BLESSING

Go into the third week of Lent
to live and learn
as we enact our faith in the world.
And may the life of Jesus Christ be made real before us,
the Holy Spirit lift our faith to follow in the Way
and the Creator God make all things new.

Amen.