

# PARRAMATTA CITY UNITING CHURCH

## Fifth Sunday of Easter - 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023



### **WELCOME**

Welcome to worship on this Fifth Sunday of Easter. Today we encounter the life and witness of the early followers of Jesus who declare Christ as a “living stone” upon which their lives are built and in whom they are called out of darkness into light.

May this be a time of joy and inspiration as we gather together, and as we are challenged to walk in the light as bearers of reconciliation, hope and peace in a world wrecked by violence and division.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

We are honoured to gather and worship on the ancestral lands of the Burramattagal people of the Darug nation. We acknowledge First Australians as the traditional custodians of this land, whose cultures are among the oldest living cultures in human history.

We pay respect to the Elders of the community and extend our recognition to all their descendants. Further, we state our commitment to justice and to reconciliation so that a positive, inclusive future can be built together.

### **LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE**

During this Easter a season we light the Christ candle declaring that the light overcomes darkness, the sting of death is gone, love conquers all!

*(The white Christ candle is lit)*

### **PRAYER OF APPROACH**

Ever-faithful, ever-present God,

As we continue to celebrate the resurrection of Christ,  
we pray that we may be bound together in Christian love.

As we gather for worship on this Fifth Sunday of Easter,  
we pray that our faith and fellowship will touch the hearts of those around us.

As we hear your Word and share together in the Lord's Supper.  
We pray that we will be strengthened to be your people in the world.

Amen.

**SONG: "Be still, for the presence of the Lord" (The Source 47)**

(YouTube:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZugvUQ4m90U>)

Be still, for the presence of the Lord the Holy one is here.  
Come bow before him now with reverence and fear.  
In Him no sin is found we stand on Holy ground.  
Be still for the presence of the Lord the Holy one is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;  
he burns with Holy fire with splendour He is crowned.  
How awesome is the sight, our radiant King of light!  
Be still for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place;  
He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister his grace.

No work too hard for him, in faith receive from him.  
Be still for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

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## **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Holy God, you call us:

to celebrate your peace in a world which worships war;  
to celebrate your freedom in the face of oppression;  
to celebrate the seed of faith planted in the doubts of our hearts.

Gracious God, you would have us:

celebrate the safe ground of hope emerging from the flood of our tears;  
celebrate those who love us in the midst of hurt and hatred;  
celebrate our salvation as we struggle with so many failures.

Loving God, you teach us:

to celebrate our new life in the gift of the Risen Lord;  
to celebrate the grace of your heart which melts our fears;  
to celebrate that all our moments are cradled in your hands.

**Awesome, amazing God,  
we celebrate, and we give you thanks!**

## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

God of mercy, hear the brokenness of our lives:

We cover our ears so we cannot hear the cries of those in need.

We rush to defend every issue that matters to us, but quickly disperse when you would call us to be your holy people.

We shout as loud as we can to cheer on our sports teams but can manage only whispers when it comes to sharing the good news.

Forgive us, and do not hold our faults and failures against us.

We lay the garments of our foolishness at your feet, so you might clothe us in grace and hope.

We yearn to feed on the spiritual food which flows from your heart, so, we might be strong to follow Jesus as he leads us in your way of justice and peace.

*Silence is kept*

## **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

You are no longer alone - you are God's beloved.

You, who once had no hope, have been gifted with mercy and grace.

You are forgiven, you are redeemed and made whole.

You are God's people made one in faith.

### **Thanks be to God!**

*(prayers adapted from: lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com)*

## **THE PEACE**

The peace of the Lord be always with you

And also with you

*(The peace is shared with one another)*

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS:**

### **1 Peter 2:2-10**

<sup>2</sup>Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— <sup>3</sup>if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. <sup>4</sup>Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and <sup>5</sup>like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup>For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." <sup>7</sup>To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner," <sup>8</sup>and "A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. <sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. <sup>10</sup>Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

### **Acts 7:55-60**

<sup>55</sup>But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup>"Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" <sup>57</sup>But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. <sup>58</sup>Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup>While they were stoning Stephen, he

prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." <sup>60</sup>Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

For the Word of God among us,  
for the Word of God within us:

**We give thanks.**

## **REFLECTION**

**SONG:** "May the mind of Christ my Saviour" (TIS 609)

(YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?=gE5fOXSymBc>)

May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,  
live in me from day to day,  
by His love and power controlling  
all I do and say.

May the Word of God dwell richly  
in my heart from hour to hour,  
so that all may see I triumph  
only through His power.

May the peace of God my Father  
Rule my life in everything,  
That I may be calm to comfort  
Sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me,  
as the waters fill the sea;  
him exalting, self abasing,  
this is victory.

May I run the race before me,  
strong and brave to face the foe,  
looking only unto Jesus  
as I onward go.

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## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **OFFERING PRAYER**

Gracious, generous God, it is out of gratitude that we give these gifts. They come with the commitment that all your people may know justice, that all your people may live in peace in every part of world.

In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen.

### PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD

Let us pray for the poor, hungry, and neglected all over the world, that their cries for daily bread may inspire works of compassion and mercy among those to whom much has been given.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for schools and centres of learning throughout the world, for those who lack access to basic education, and for the light of knowledge to blossom and shine in the lives of all God's people.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for an end to the divisions and inequalities that scar God's creation, particularly the barriers to freedom faced by God's people throughout the world because of nationality, ethnic and cultural identity, social class or gender; that all who have been formed in God's image might have equality in pursuit of the blessings of creation.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for the health and wellbeing of all people around the world, especially for an end to homelessness, the exploitation and abuse of others, the silencing of those who already have little or no voice and the victims of maternal and child mortality, that all God's people may be empowered to strengthen their communities and repair the breaches which divide nations and peoples.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for an end to pandemic disease throughout the world, particularly the scourges of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis; that plagues of death may no longer fuel poverty, destabilize nations, and inhibit reconciliation and restoration throughout the world.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for an end to the waste and desecration of God's creation, for access to the fruits of creation to be shared equally among all people, and for communities and nations to find sustenance in the fruits of the earth and the water God has given us.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for those who have particular needs today, for the sick and the dying, those who have lost hope, those who are lonely, those who are broken hearted and those who just find it so hard to cope with the challenges and complexities of life. May all your people be strengthened and encouraged to flourish and grow.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer. Amen.**

*(adapted from a prayer posted on Church World Service's Making Poverty History page. <http://hunger.cwsqlobal.org/hungerbooklet/prayer.html>)*

## **HOLY COMMUNION**

### **PRAYER OF GREAT THANKSGIVING**

Christ is risen!

**He is risen indeed!**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Gracious, loving God, you are beyond complete knowledge, above perfect description.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Source of Life, Living Word, and Bond of Love, you are creative and self-giving, generously moving in all the near and distant corners of the universe.

Nothing exists that does not find its source in you. Through fear-filled days and aching nights when the powers of death have done their worst, your love has never deserted us. Even when we turn away from you, you are with us; your presence never fails us, your gifts of hope and new life transform us.

We praise you for Jesus Christ, risen to life, eternal as your love. With the women at the tomb, we raise the strain of gladness.

Hallelujah! Life is stronger than death! Jesus lives, the day of resurrection has come scattering fear and gloom.

And so, we rejoice with all your people of every time and place, to proclaim the glory of your name:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

It is Jesus, the Risen Christ, who joins us together as a community of broken but hopeful believers: loving what he loved, living what he taught, and striving to be his faithful servants in our time and place.

In this meal we remember Jesus, his promises, and the price he paid for who he was, what he said, and what he did.

## **INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

On the night before Jesus died, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said,

“Take and eat, whenever you do this, remember me.”

After supper, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks and said,

“This is the new covenant, remember me.”

We remember Jesus' life of love, his friendship, his teaching, his dying, and his rising to life again. In sharing this meal, we live out the mystery of our faith:

**Christ has died,**

**Christ is risen,**

**Christ will come again.**

Holy God, we call on you to transform these familiar things, as you continually transform the world around us.

Bless this bread and this cup, so that in the sharing of these simple elements in community, we may taste and see your goodness.

Through Christ, in Christ, and with Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory is yours, God most holy, now and forever.

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name;  
Your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread  
and 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 forever.  
Amen.

The body of Christ broken for you

*(The bread is broken)*

The cup of blessing given for you

*(The cup is raised)*

The gifts of God for the people of God,

*(Sharing the Meal – bread and cups are distributed among the people)*

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Thank you, Jesus, for this feast of life. We are fed by your love; we are strengthened by your life. We are sent forth into this world to live your way and share your joy. We are now commissioned to feed as we have been fed, to forgive as we have been forgiven, to love as we have been loved.

Amen.

*(Communion liturgy adapted from The United Church of Canada/L'Église U© 2013  
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**SONG: "Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord" (TIS 390)**

**(YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZcCnLfufQs>)**

*Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord.*

*Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his Name.*

Jesus is Lord of all the earth.

He is the King of creation.

*Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord.*

*Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his Name.*

Spread the good news o'er all the earth:

Jesus has died and has risen.

*Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord.  
Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his Name.*

We have been crucified with Christ.  
Now we shall live for ever.

*Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord.  
Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his Name.*

God has proclaimed his gracious gift:  
Life eternal for all who believe.

*Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord.  
Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his Name.*

Come, let us praise the living God,  
Joyfully sing to our Saviour.

*Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord.  
Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his Name.*

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## BLESSING

Go forth in faith, hope, love, peace and justice. May the Spirit and the grace of God be with you and among you. Amen.

### **SONG: "Shalom to you now" (TIS 778)**

**(You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?e=2oqiFenpWxY>)**

Shalom to you now, shalom my friends,  
May God's full mercies bless you my friends.  
In all your living and through your loving,  
Christ be your shalom, Christ be your shalom.

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