

Parramatta City
Uniting Church

Leigh Memorial
Uniting Church

PENTECOST 18



Unexpected people receive forgiveness
& enter the realm of God
even as they are judged by us

1 October 2023

WELCOME A warm welcome as we gather together on this Sunday.

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE

May this flame remind us of the light of wisdom.
May the warmth of its glow remind us of the warmth
of God's empowering love.

The candle is lit

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge the Burramattagal 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.

CALL TO WORSHIP

O Christ of the least
and of the social outcasts
O Christ of the lost
and the judged and betrayed
Come close to us this day
That we may come close to you.
As you watched us all with care
at our soul's shaping
Look on us now with grace and forgiveness.
As you blessed us with light
at the sun's rising
Shine on us now with love.

Amen

(Adapted: Celtic Prayers from Iona, J Philip Newell)

SONG

Welcome to country (Tune: Morning has broken)

1. Welcome to country country is calling
calling from scrub and watering hole
sense now the sacred spirit of country
stirring the silence deep in your soul

2. Country is calling know in your spirit
land is alive and blessed you at birth
celebrate now the song of your mother
you are a precious child born of Earth

3. Country is crying crying in anguish
landscapes and lizards feeling the pain
forests destroyed and rivers polluted
when will you care for country again

4. Country is calling stirring your dreaming
songs that our primal ancestors sang
spinning through time and all of creation
dreaming returns with God's boomerang

5. Welcome to country Christ at the centre
calling for healing holds out his hand
reconciled true each brother and sister
come now and heal our mother the land
(Used with permission: Norman Habel)

WORDS OF GRACE & CHANGE

Can it be that easy, Jesus?
Can it be that hard?
That what You want for us
is just to love and be loved?

Is it possible that even those who have tried the hardest,
signed on the dotted line,
sat for years in classes
and strained their eyes from reading,
dressed in all the most appropriate garments,
and spoken with only the most measured words...
that these can miss You?

How can it be when those who have hardly tried at all,
who have damaged themselves and others so much,
that in the end they have no where else to turn

but to throw themselves on Your grace...
that these are the ones You search out?

How do we make sense of this, Jesus?
How do we love so scandalously, so inclusively?
How do we allow ourselves to be loved enough,
that all our hard and sharp edges
grow soft and round?

Enable us to find the humility and courage,
the boldness and grace,
that in our loving and being loved,
we may somehow ignite our world with a compassion so fierce
that violence and abuse,
rejection and condemnation,
neglect and greed
become unthinkable.

Amen.

(Sacredise)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Matthew 21:23-32

²³When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" ²⁴Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ²⁶But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." ²⁷So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

²⁸"What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first."

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the realm of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him."

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

HYMN *Creator God you made every race (Tune 526)*

1. Creator God, you made every race,
giving each your law, good and true.
We are to worship you, O God,
care for creation in your name,
love and forgive as you love us, Holy God.
2. Oh Jesus Christ, you have made us one,
binding each to you, making peace;
healing the wounds our hands have made,
asking for truth and grace to rule,
justice, respect and loyalty, covenant God
3. Spirit of Christ, present from all time,
guiding, shedding light, giving life.
Counsellor, make us strong to fight,
free as the wind to do the right,
ready to follow all the way yet untrod.
4. One God in three, bonded strong in love,
reaching out to all, giving God!
Build in this land community –

black, white and brown, one family –
serving the world your love has made, God of grace.
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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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER FOR ALL PLACES & PEOPLE

We pray to you great Lover of the world,
That the meek may be encouraged
and the proud may be humbled,
That the losers may be comforted
and boastful winners may be discomfited.
Hear our prayers, God of mercy and peace.

That the thin-skinned may be encouraged
and the tough-hided become more sensitive,
That the downtrodden may be uplifted
and the oppressors may be overthrown.
Hear our prayers, God of mercy and peace.

We pray to you, great Lover of the world,

That the suffering may receive relief
and the unthinking and heedless may be made more aware,
That the drug addicts may find release
and the power-freaks may be kept in check.

Hear our prayers, God of mercy and peace.

That the lonely may find friends,
and the much admired and praised
may be saved from believing such adulation.
That the dying may see God's face in the darkness,
and the grieving may find Christ in their tears and loneliness.

Hear our prayers, God of mercy and peace.

We pray to you, great Lover of the world.
That those who feel sorely tempted may be held safe,
and those who don't even recognise temptation
be given a wake-up call.
That the secular world may be saved from despair,
and that the church may be saved from self-righteousness.
That those thirsty for faith may permit Christ to find them,
and that believers may permit Christ
to regularly invade their comfort zone,

***Source of all light and life and holy joy,
bless all who pray to you this day,
and bless also those who do not know how to pray.
Through Christ Jesus our Friend and Companion.
Amen!***

(Adapted: Bruce Prewer)

HYMN *Seek ye first (TIS 669)*

1. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God
and God's righteousness
and all these things
shall be added unto you

allelu alleluia

2. Ask and it shall be given unto you
seek and you shall find
knock and it shall be opened unto you
allelu alleluia

3. You shall not live by bread alone
but by ev'ry word
that proceeds from the mouth of God
allelu alleluia

Refrain

Alleluia alleluia alleluia allelu alleluia

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COMMUNION

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

The Holy Table of Jesus Christ
Welcomes each of us as 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 JESUS PRAYER: MAORI & POLYNESIA

*Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:*

*The hallowing of your name echo through the universe;
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the
world;
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings;
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.*

*With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trial too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever. 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,
in the flowering of Spring
we are grateful for your presence,
warming us.
We pray your presence
will feed and strengthen us

to follow in the way of Jesus,
in our world. Amen.

SONG *Come as you are (TiS 693)*

Come as you are, that's how I want you.
Come as you are, feel quite at home.
Close to my heart, loved and forgiven
Come as you are, why stand alone?

No need to fear, love sets no limits.
No need to fear, love never end.
Don't run away, shamed, and disheartened.
Rest in my love, trust me again.

I came to call sinners, not just the virtuous.
I came to bring peace, not to condemn.
Each time you fail to live by my promise
Why do you think I'd love you the less?

Come as you are, that's how I love you.
Come as you are, trust me again.
Nothing can change the love that I bear you.
All will be well, just come as you are.

Deirdre Brown

BLESSING

May God bless you with a restless discomfort about easy
answers, half-truths and superficial relationships,
so that you may seek truth boldly
and love deep within your heart.

May God bless you with a holy anger toward injustice,
oppression, and exploitation of people,
so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and
peace among all people.

May God bless you with the gift of tears to shed
with those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation,

or the loss of all that they cherish,
so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them
and transform their pain into joy.

May God bless you with enough foolishness
to believe that you really can make a difference in this
world, so that you are able, with God's grace,
to do what others claim cannot be done.