

Parramatta Community  
Uniting Church

Leigh Memorial  
Uniting Church

# PENTECOST 26



Just as you  
cared for the least  
you cared for me!

26 November 2023

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

### **LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE**

This is the place and this is the time;  
here and now the realm of Christ waits to break into our experience:  
To change our minds, to change our lives, to change our ways!  
To free us to see the world and the whole of life in a new light!  
To fill us with hope, joy, and certainty for the future.

*The candle is lit*

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

We acknowledge that we are on the land of the Burramattagal people of the Darug Nation and that the Spirit was in the land revealing God to them through law, custom and ceremony. The same love and grace that was finally and fully revealed in Jesus Christ sustained the Burramattagal people and gave them particular insights into God's ways. Therefore, we honour the wisdom of the Burramattagal Elders and their continuing culture, and pray that we might all work together for reconciliation and justice in this nation.  
*(Using words from the Preamble to the Uniting Church Constitution)*

### **OPENING SENTENCES**

We come, for God gathers us here,  
into that community called faith:  
***where the hungry are served first,  
where the thirsty drink life's water.***

We come, for God welcomes us here  
into that home called grace:  
***where the naked are clothed in robes of hope;  
where the stranger is embraced as the long-lost prodigal.***

We come, for God reunites us here,  
sisters and brothers in that family called love:  
***where the imprisoned model justice,  
where the sick are cradled in God's peace.***

*(Source: Thom Shuman, Lectionary liturgies)*

## HYMN

### Called as partners in Christ's service (Tune, 446 TiS)

1. Called as partners in Christ's service  
Called to ministries of grace,  
We respond with deep commitment  
Fresh new lines of faith to trace.  
May we learn the art of sharing,  
Side by side and friend with friend,  
Equal partners in our caring  
To fulfil God's chosen end.
2. Christ's example, Christ's inspiring,  
Christ's clear call to work and worth,  
Let us follow, never faltering,  
Reconciling folk on earth.  
Men and women, richer, poorer,  
All God's people, young and old,  
Blending human skills together  
Gracious gifts from God unfold.
3. Thus new patterns for Christ's mission,  
In a small or global sense,  
Help us bear each other's burdens,  
Breaking down each wall or fence.  
Words of comfort, words of vision,  
Words of challenge, said with care,  
Bring new power and strength for action,  
Make us colleagues, free and fair.
4. So God grant us for tomorrow  
Ways to order human life  
That surround each person's sorrow  
With a calm that conquers strife.  
Make us partners in our living,  
Our compassion to increase,  
Messengers of faith, this giving  
Hope and confidence and peace.

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## A PRAYER

Midst the teeming cities' millions, witness to God's boundless love,  
Reaching for each system's lost ones, seeking justice with each move;  
O Christ of the poor and broken,  
Grant us courage, strength and patience to contend with vicious power,  
Lead us forward in the faith that gives us hope in testing's hour.

*Paul R. Gregory, 1985*

## SCRIPTURE READINGS Matthew 25: 31-46

Jesus said to the disciples:

When the Human One comes in glory, with all the angels, then he will sit on the throne of his glory.

All the nations will be gathered before him, and will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and will put the sheep at the right hand and the goats at the left.

Then the ruler will say to those at the right hand, Come, you that are blessed of God, inherit the realm prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.

Then the righteous will answer the Human One, 'When was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?'

And the ruler will answer them, Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me. And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

## RESPONSE

In these words God speaks to us!

***May they come alive in our living!    Amen!***

**SONG**      *the porter's gate* - **little things with great love**

(feat. Madison cunningham)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pm5VQAxdMrc&list=RDpm5VQAxdMrc&start\\_radio=1&t=145s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pm5VQAxdMrc&list=RDpm5VQAxdMrc&start_radio=1&t=145s)

In the garden of our Savior no flower grows unseen  
His kindness rains like water on every humble seed  
No simple act of mercy escapes His watchful eye  
For there is One who sees me  
His hand is over mine

In the kingdom of the heavens no suffering is unknown  
Each tear that falls is holy, each breaking heart a throne  
There is a song of beauty in every weeping eye  
For there is One who knows me  
His heart, it breaks with mine

O the deeds forgotten, O the works unseen  
Every drink of water flowing graciously  
Every tender mercy You're making glorious  
This You have asked of us:  
Do little things with great love  
Little things with great love

At the table of our Savior, no mouth will go unfed  
And His children in the shadows stream in and raise their heads  
O give us ears to hear them, and give us eyes that see  
For there is One who loves them. I am His hands and feet

**REFLECTION**

**HYMN**      “Here Stands a Stranger, Who is She?”

(Tune: ‘Saffron Walden’, TiS 584 (i))

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ib6p85fKIcc>

1. Here stands a stranger, who is she?  
We do not know. What do we see,  
someone who threatens you and me?  
Is she a foe, or friend?



2. Here stands a person, young or old,  
seeking asylum, so we're told.  
How does he fit your frame or mould?  
Is he your foe or friend?

3. Here stands a child: assess her need.  
What should we offer so we heed  
her cry of hunger, so we feed  
this child? This foe? This friend?

4. Here stands a person, this time, you.  
The choice is yours. What will you do  
to ask this stranger in, or sue  
this foe, who could be friend?

5. Here is a mirror, see your face.  
What do you offer; hatred, grace,  
now in this very time and place,  
to Christ you call your friend.

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## OFFERING

Receive these our gifts, O God.  
May we use them to bring compassion into the world.  
Bless them now, we pray. ***Amen.***

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

## PRAYING FOR OTHERS

God of all places,  
We thank you for the gift of life:  
for the breath that sustains life,  
***for the food of this earth that nurtures life,***  
***for the love of family and friends***  
***without which there would be no life.***

We thank you for the mystery of creation:  
for the beauty that the eye can see,

for the joy that the ear may hear,  
for the unknown that we cannot behold  
filling the universe with wonder,  
***for the expanse of space that draws us  
beyond the definitions of our selves.***

We thank you for this day:  
for life and one more day to love,  
for opportunity and one more day to work for justice and peace,  
for neighbours and one more person to love and by whom to be loved,  
for your grace and one more experience of your presence,  
for your promise:  
***to be with us, to be our God,  
and to give salvation.***

For these, and all blessings,  
we give you thanks, eternal, loving God,  
God of all people and nations,  
God who loves all without distinction of colour or feature.

Hear our prayers for the people and churches of the world  
who stand firm in the face of injustice and,  
with imagination and determination,  
share a spirit of adventure which can lead to miracles.

*time for silent prayer and reflection*

Generous God,  
we give thanks for the life of faith,  
and being able to share it freely.  
We pray for your people,  
who face persecution,  
and help them to offer love freely  
to one and to all, no matter their faith or religion.

***Loving Christ, born in simplicity,  
may your Living Stones be salt to all,  
that both hope and justice may be real;  
that prejudice and bigotry be banished.***  
Awaken all people from complacency  
and give us courage to invest in peace,  
through Jesus Christ we pray. ***Amen.***

*[Source: Adapted from "Prayers of Our Hearts" © 1991 Vienna Cobb Anderson.]*

## SONG

### **When I needed a neighbour were you there?**

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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## **BLESSING**

### **A Non-Traditional Blessing**

May God bless you with discomfort  
At easy answers, half-truths,  
And superficial relationships  
So that you may live  
Deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger  
At injustice, oppression,  
And exploitation of people,  
So that you may work for  
Justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears  
To shed for those who suffer pain,  
Rejection, hunger and war,  
So that you may reach out your hand  
To comfort them and  
To turn their pain to joy

*A Non-traditional Blessing  
by Sister Ruth Marlene Fox OSB*

## **HYMN      For you (Deep stillness)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpRWWnZa6Ro>

For you deep stillness of the silent inland  
for you deep blue of the desert skies  
for you flame red of the rocks and stones  
for you sweet water from hidden springs

From the edges seek the heartlands  
and when you're burnt by the journey may the cool winds of the hovering  
Spirit soothe and replenish you  
in the name of Christ  
in the name of Christ.

in the name of Christ.

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