

Parramatta Community
Uniting Church

Leigh Fijian
Leigh Memorial

epiphany 2



COME AND SEE

January 14, 2024

LALI

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

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)

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

OPENING SENTENCES

In every fragment of time, O God,
You work Your acts of grace.
In every grain of earth, O Christ,
You bring Your grace to life.

***In every breath of every living thing, O Spirit,
You whisper Your grace to our inner being.***

Open our eyes, open our ears, and open our hearts...
Open the senses of all people to Your ever-present grace;
That those who are disillusioned may hope again,

*That those who are frightened may trust again,
That those who despair may rejoice again,
That those who grieve and are lost may love again.*

And that all creation may be filled again with wonder
at Your gracious life in the world.

HYMN

God is love (TiS 153)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-tZq0zR8IE>

1. God is love, let heav'n adore him;
God is love, let earth rejoice;
let creation sing before him,
and exalt him with one voice.
God, who laid the earth's foundation,
he who spread the heavens above,
and who breathes through all creation
God is love, eternal Love.
2. God is love, and gently enfolding
all the world in one embrace,
with unfailing grasp is holding
every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking
under sorrow's iron rod,
then they find that selfsame aching
deep within the heart of God.
3. God is love, and, though with blindness
sin afflicts our human hearts,
God's eternal lovingkindness
holding, guiding, grace imparts.
Sin and death and hell shall never
o'er us final triumph gain;
God is love, so love for ever
o'er the universe must reign.

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GOD WITH US

The struggles of our world feel overwhelming, Jesus;
beyond our ability to understand, let alone solve.
We do not have the capacity
to silence the justifications,
to heal the addictions,
to restore the brokenness,
to repair the destruction,
or to reverse the trajectories
of our self-centred, short-sighted weakness,
our heartless, dehumanising aggression.

But, we do not face these struggles alone, Jesus;
You have aligned yourself with us,
in being born into vulnerability and humanities chaos
taking on flesh,
in going through the waters,
in laying down your life;

*And you have invited us to partner with you,
in living and proclaiming Good News,
in freeing the imprisoned,
in restoring the broken,
in uniting the divided;*

And you see us as we are!
Our false and true self!
Yet we are given the capacity,
the divine Spirit,
to be co-workers with God,
to renew ourselves and our world!
For this, we are eternally grateful.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS In English and Fijian

PSALM 139

¹ O God, you have searched me and known me.

² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.

³ You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴Even before a word is on my tongue,
 O God, you know it completely.
⁵You hem me in, behind and before,
 and lay your hand upon me.
⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
 it is so high that I cannot attain it.
 ...
¹³For it was you who formed my inward parts;
 you knit me together in my mother's womb.
¹⁴I give you thanks, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
 Wonderful are your works;
 that I know very well.
¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you,
 when I was being made in secret,
 intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
¹⁶Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
 In your book were written
 all the days that were formed for me,
 when none of them as yet existed.
¹⁷How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
 How vast is the sum of them!
¹⁸I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
 I come to the end—I am still with you.

John 1:43-51

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." ⁴⁹Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Child of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven

opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Human One.”

RESPONSE

In these words God speaks to us!

May they come alive in our living! Amen!

REFLECTION

SONG

I see you, *Brian Sirchio*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O11TQEQ3vN4>

On the last night of a trip I took to Haiti
I was driving down this crowded city street
I can still see the diesel fumes lingering in the headlights
I can still see that little girl's bare feet
She was wearing a tattered yellow dress
She was 4 or 5 years old I would guess
Another orphaned street kid, working hard to just survive
To be honest, I was hoping to drive right by

But the traffic was grid-locked to a standstill
And when she noticed my white skin, she came real quick
She leaned up against my window and then with one little hand
She pointed back and forth from her belly to her lips
At first she seemed a little bit too practiced
At pulling strings of guilt and sympathy
And then, I'm not sure why -- but I looked right into her eyes
And as I did these words washed over me

(Chorus)

I see you. I see you.

Hey little girl, I won't pretend that you're not there

I see you. I see you.

Little girl Christ, I see you.

People tell me please, don't give these street kids money

It just perpetuates their cruel dependency
And to be honest, I didn't like the thought of pulling out my wallet
You never know who else is working these crowded streets
Compassion sure was feeling complicated
Mother Teresa called these kids Christ in disguise
But there was nothing that seemed right to try to do for her that night
Except to try to tell her with my eyes...

(Chorus)

I see you. I see you.
Hey little girl, I won't pretend that you're not there
I see you. I see you.
Little girl Christ, I see you.

And how often I have quoted that familiar cold statistic
32,000 children starve to death each day
A few more years, some high-heel shoes and lip stick
And little girls will do what they must do just
to still those hunger pains one more day

I could see the traffic up ahead was moving
But she and I kept looking eye to eye
And when the moment finally came to take my foot off of the brake
She shrugged her shoulders, and then she cracked this little smile
And as I drove away I made a promise
Little girl, I never will forget your face
And I'll do what's mine to do to change the world for kids like you
And when I hear 32,000, I'll remember you and say...

(Chorus

I see you). I see you.
Hey little girl, I won't pretend that you're not there
I see you. I see you.
Little girl Christ, I see you.

CONTEMPLATION: And I'll do what's mine to do to change the world ...

HYMN

Here Stands a Stranger, Who is She?

(Tune: 'Saffron Walden', TiS 584 (i))

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jb6p85fKIcc>

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.]

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

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

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

3. 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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BLESSING

As the new year beckons us Faithful God,
come lead us onward in new ways.

We give thanks for the gifts 2023 has brought
And how they become inlaid within
Where neither time nor tide can touch them.

At the turning of the year,

turn our ache into action.
At the turning of the year,
turn our fear towards love.
At the turning of the year,
re-turn our hearts to you,
loving, living God.

Amen

(Adapted. Source: Iona community)

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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