**MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE**

**25-27 September 2020**

You may like to follow our service on our video. You can find it on our Worship Services page on our website at <https://www.macedonrangesunitingchurch.org.au/worship-services> or on YouTube at [https://youtu.be/PRm7ZKjUhZ4](https://youtu.be/PRm7ZKjUhZ4%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

 Our service invites you to read the scriptures, pause, meditate and pray. Allow the stories told to lead you. We suggest reading the passages when suggested below. We are touching on several of the scripture readings in one way or another this week.

If you would like to look at previous videos on our YouTube channel, go to <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCb4hzdO-YgzmrIRVC-oby_w>.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

We acknowledge all the Aboriginal Groups who have cared for and nurtured the land on which we meet: the Wurundjeri; Woi Wurruung; Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung.

We acknowledge their leaders: past, present and emerging for it is in them that Australia’s future lies.

You are welcome here, as we reflect in different rooms and districts, States and Countries around the world, our spiritual connectedness through Christ Jesus, is remembered.

**WORDS OF WELCOME**

Welcome to the Macedon Ranges Partnership worship service.

Wherever you may be, the hope is that the service provides

inspiration, comfort and hope

in a time of great challenge

throughout the world.

**CALL TO WORSHIP: Based on Psalm 78**

Leader: Let us incline our ears

**All: to the words of our Lord.**

Leader: In stories of old, in parables anew,

**All: may we find the teaching of God.**

Leader: May we be ever refreshed,

**All: by the abundant Word of life flowing
like rivers of water from the generosity of God.**

Leader: Let us worship God,

**All: as one people united in love**

**HYMN: SHE SITS LIKE A BIRD TIS 418**

**PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION by Dad and Daughter used with permission**

Father God , you are worthy of all our praising , all our loving , and all our highest endeavours of mind , body and soul .

For you care for our needs ;giving us our daily bread and filling the earth with an abundance of good things to sustain us. We lift our hearts in gratitude to you .

Blessed are you forever.

For your unconditional love freely given to all humanity and in Jesus made flesh ,

We thank you .

And for the grace which summons all to share in your work and receive your reward , we thank you .

On grudging spirits and greedy eyes which survey other’s plates and measure helpings like spoilt children , and squabble and quarrel out of meanness :

Lord have mercy .

On the times we do not rejoice that others have been justly rewarded and we are jealous .

Christ have mercy

On our hesitance to praise others , and our unwillingness to serve without rewards we can touch and count ,

Lord have mercy .

Your forgiveness , Good God , is without limit : you give us freedom to live and grow as your children , learning the way of Jesus in dealing with others in mercy and peace .

Blessed are you forever . AMEN

**OUR READINGS FOR TODAY**

Take a moment to read our readings for today: Exodus 17:1-7, Psalm 78, Philippians 2:1-13, Matthew 21:23-32. We explore in our video discussion the Exodus story, the Matthew story and the Philippians reading.

**REFLECTION** by Ps Annette Buckley

Another day in the wilderness, another lot of grumbling by God’s people.

We have some sympathy for them; they’re thirsty, tired, fed up and they can see no end to their difficult situation. Perhaps not unlike some of us at the moment, who just want to get on with it, get back to life as normal. We, too, question whether our leaders know what they’re doing sometimes.

The story from Exodus shows us that God is far from absent to us in these times. The One who became as a slave in order to walk beside us and share our humanity will not leave us in the midst of our fear. In the Exodus story, God’s presence is shown in the grace-filled act of providing water from a rock. We might struggle to see signs of God at work in our current situation. Miracles like this don’t happen every day, and yet, if we stop and consider it, God’s presence has been with us in many small ways, if not in blindingly obvious signs. It has been a testing time, a time to discover whether we do indeed “say what we believe and mean what we say”. Sometimes, we’ve needed to remind ourselves of the stories of God’s presence with and provision for us in the past, sometimes we’ve needed to notice the signs of God with us now, and sometimes we’ve needed to take the faith-full step of bearing God’s light of hope into the dark corners of our communities. I have been really inspired by some of the creative ways people have found to continue to build community in this time. Did you read the article about the librarians in Melbourne who have been ringing their older borrowers to check in on them? What a great example of people remembering what is at the heart of what they do.

For us, worship is certainly one thing at the heart of what we do, but our Partnership has made a commitment to be people whose heart is also focussed on God’s mission in our world. As we continue to be unable to meet together as we normally do, I wonder if we can re-focus (pivot seems to be the word of the moment!) our missional energy in the way we’ve re-focussed how we worship together. As we still live with some of the aspects of being locked down, as we move into the ‘new normal’ of life in the coming months, I wonder where the needs in our community that call us to respond will be. Others in the community may not be explicitly asking “is the Lord among us or not?” but we can answer the unasked question by being ready to serve alongside the servant-God in our midst. As we do, we may well discover for ourselves that God is indeed among us in new and surprising ways.

**SOME QUESTIONS:**

1. The Israelites asked, and we might ask “Is the Lord among us or not?” How do we know? What, if any, are the signs of God among us during our wilderness wanderings?
2. How easy or hard is it for us to “say what we believe, and mean what we say”?

**SONG: *TO BE PLEASING TO YOU* ------- Marantha Singers**

**PRAYER FOR OTHERS From *Spill the beans* with permission**

Name above all names , name yet untamed ;

In the fullness of time you emptied yourself

becoming weak in power to be strong in love .

Still fear and trembling fill our days and our faith ;

Please help us to shift from fear to awe .

Move us from trembling to transformation

that we might not confuse the love of infinite power

for the power of infinite love .

So we pray for those in places of privilege and power

that empty words and empty promises might be replaced

with the fullness of justice and the honesty of humility.

We pray for those under the thumb of privilege and power:

For voices silenced , breath suppressed, lives destroyed.

Bend our knees that we might uplift all those long-held down ,

All those long ignored, all those bound by powers and principalities

into shapes that seek to hide your imaging shining within them .

Encourage us to be of that same mind, of that same spirit ,

Of that unity in Christ that first wound the world with the cords of your grace **. AMEN**

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**

Say the Lord’s Prayer.

**SENDING FORTH**

You are one of God’s beloved

As we step out of our time together and into the world we live in

May our words and actions be testimony to God

Who loves us beyond measure , we who are treasured by God ,

Inspired by Jesus ,

And led by the Holy Spirit

Each and every day of our lives AMEN

**OFFERING**

You may like to consider giving an offering to your congregation via direct deposit. Details for each are:

* Gisborne: Gisborne branch, Bendigo bank, B.S.B. 633 108, A/C: 1512 83736
* Romsey: Bendigo Bank, B.S.B. 633 000, A/C: 161501200, Account name: UCA Romsey Uniting Church
* Lancefield: Account Name: Lancefield Uniting Church, BSB: 633 108, A/C No: 112926639
* Mia Mia – Kyneton: Commonwealth bank, B.S.B. 063 517, Account no.: 1002 1775

 *I will publish other congregation’s details as they come to hand. Contact you congregation’s treasurer for details if they are not here.*

**BONUS:
Reflection and Poem Wendy Hebbard**

As one gets older it is hoped we have learned to be wiser .

One learns that time in the Bush or a lovely garden is so refreshing and healing .

During the lockdown life has become quiet but not boring

If you can appreciate small things ,say a cup of tea lovingly made and brought to you.

You can now hear the birds singing .

We simply appreciate the small things , the smile of a passing stranger ,

Or a kind deed from a neighbour .

Some have learned to meditate , to be mindful of life around us .

There have been frustrations , like not being able to go to classes , meetings , church

Or even seeing our friends , but there are compensations --- becoming slower , calmer ,reading and listening

Can we accept the conditions without resistance and craving for something different ?

We know it will pass .

These times could be a lesson in humility .

Let’s go for a solitary walk before sunset .

My mother once mentioned having “ an educated heart “

Let’s keep it up .

**Questions**

Will we emerge from the pandemic as better people ?

 Could the caring and acts of kindness become part of our living.?

**Poem**

Thankyou for giving me the key to live my life more joyfully .

Thank you for showing me the way to be more loving everyday

You taught me to share a smile with a kind friend once in a while

Or even with a stranger , who may need a little sunshine , too .

I saw a rainbow in the sky . involuntary came the cry ,--

“A rainbow . Look ! how lovely there !

The stranger thanked me for his share of colour on that wintry afternoon ,

Quick flash of friendships in a smoke-filled room .

Surprise it was to me that such a brief affinity was of some value to a person ,Who ,

Perhaps is feeling as I do .

How can we show to those we meet life isn’t sour -- it’s often very sweet .