**MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE**

**23rd– 25th October 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/O9TRq0Sg5rQ](https://youtu.be/O9TRq0Sg5rQ%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**

Wherever the place –

Whatever the time ,

We are united in God’s love –

not only for our neighbours and each other ,

but ourselves

The love that God has for us is a love of intention –

that we love ourselves as God loves us .

May you take joy in the good that is created in you .

**You might like to light a candle as a sign of God’s presence**

**CALL TO WORSHIP** by Bruce Prewer Leader: Nola Anderson

God has been our dwelling place in all generations.

Before the mountains were raised up,

Before the universe was ever formed,

God has been there for us.

So let us live in him,

Rooted and established in the faith of Christ,

And abounding in thanksgiving.

Love God, love your neighbour.

all the laws of Moses,

and all the teachings of the prophets,

hang on these two commandments.

May the love of God be upon us,

establishing whatever is loving in the work of his hands.

Yes, let God establish all that is loving in the work of our hands.

**SONG: Love divine all loves excelling TiS**

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION** by Moira Laidlaw. Leaders: Glennis Speed & Bev Gilbertson

**Leader** Jesus calls us to love God with all our hearts …..

**Voice 1** All our hearts ?…….. More than our families and friends, our homes, our jobs, our cars, our computers?

**Leader** More than all of these because when we love God with all our heart ,

It is that love which influences us and enables us to act lovingly towards not only famil and friends - who may be easy to love- but towards others who may not be so easy to love

**Voice 1** and we realise that people matter more than things.

*Forgive us , O God when we fail to put you first in our lives.*

**LEADER** Jesus calls us to love God with all our soul

**Voice 1** Our whole being ?

More than anyone or anything we invest energy in?

 music, sport, art, gardening, any of our hobbies?

**LEADER** More than all these because when we love God with all our soul, it is God’s dynamic love which directs how we use our energy, our interests, our power .

Who we are and what we do can then be used to benefit others as well as ourselves.

*Forgive us, O God when we fail to put you first in our lives.*

**LEADER** Jesus calls us to love God with all our mind.

**Voice** 1 Surely not all our mind .

More than our thirst for knowledge, our learning in schools and beyond, the books we read, our advances in information technology ……..?

**LEADER** More than all these because when we love God with all our mind,

It is God’s creative love which then inspires our thoughts and our will so that our wisdom and knowledge are shaped by God’s kingdom values of justice and mercy, love and peace.

*Forgive us, O God when we fail to put you first in our lives.*

**LEADER** Jesus calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves.

**Voice 1** Forgive us, O God, when we go along with society’s concentration on selfish needs over against selfless deeds. Forgive our self-centredness and enlarge our vision to see all people as neighbours, all of us loved equally by you .

**LEADER** Merciful God, forgive our weaknesses and strengthen us with your Spirit

To love you with all our heart, soul and mind and to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

Help us to know the peace of your forgiving love

In Jesus’ name we pray **AMEN**

**ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

Hear the good news : God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned. (John 3;17,18a ) In Jesus Christ, therefore, we are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God!**

**OUR READINGS FOR TODAY –**

Take a moment to read our readings for today: Deuteronomy 34:1-12, Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17

**1 Thessalonians 2:1-8** reader: Margaret Woolner

**REFLECTION** by Janet Wood

**1 Thessalonians 2: 1-8**

In NT scripture, Paul is the ‘everywhere man’ - Jerusalem, Damascus, Athens, Ephesus, Rome. And, in today’s reading, he writes to the new Christians in Thessalonika. We don’t know how long his stay had been in that lovely part of the world. I was once there – for a few days – and I wish it had been for longer. Its very stones tell the story of its history, from its founding in 315 BCE to its importance in the Roman period and its years as the wealthiest city in the Byzantine Empire. One never gets the impression from Paul’s letter that he gave himself a few days of sightseeing. He certainly would not have seen the great statue of Alexander the Great on his rearing horse Bucephalus which now dominates the harbour...a work of the 18th century.

There are many statues of Paul, of course, in city squares and churches – more than there are of Alexander. Because Paul was on a mission, a mission that took him to many places over more than 2 decades. The statues, the scriptural record, the thousands of books written about Paul – the fact that he has been remembered by millions of people across 2000 years indicates he was indeed a leader for his time and for the generations to come.

Right now we, in our local, state and national communities, seethe with the question of who is fit to lead? Our cousins across the ditch have opted for one who elevates kindness and empathy into her list of priorities. Here, the debate has been about who is best equipped to save our health and not sink the economy in doing so. And in the US? Well, we are holding our breath.

Paul would argue (and he often argued) that the true leader is Jesus Christ – to whom he bears witness. As a witness Paul’s task is to daily proclaim the God of peace, of grace, of love. That’s his first step. Then Paul claims that a true witness must be honest in all things, no deceit, no trickery, no flattery – but preach the word only. Thirdly, says Paul, the witness must care for the people who share the faith with him – often at the expense of his own safety.

Quite often I quarrel with Paul – he and I don’t get on on the issue of women. But there is much to learn from Paul about true leadership. What is admirable is that he doesn’t interpose himself between God and the people. He is a true facilitator, a companion in faith. He’s no marshmallow of course – he believes that faith is a discipline for life. But he firmly, fully believes that faith is to be shared...his role as a faith leader is not a role of power but of service. Most of the surviving letters of Paul are written to burgeoning Christian communities. While he addresses issues for individuals , his emphasis is on the gathered community. For us at this time the idea of gathering together again is more hope than reality. Meanwhile we retain our “gatheredness “ through worship on the web, through prayer, through providing meals for each other, by contact with each other and in times of silent reflection.

In writing to the somewhat irascible Corinthians he writes that memorable line: And now abide faith, hope and love – and the greatest of these is love. These are the qualities of leadership. No raucous politicking, no virus, no recession can sway Paul – or us – from that conviction.

**SOME QUESTIONS:**

1. What qualities do you think make a good leader?
2. How do you love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength?
3. How do you love your neighbour as yourself

**Prayers for Others** Litany by Bruce Prewer read by Isobelle Gossip

**Let us pray**

**You, wonderful God, whose**

 **glory the heavens declare**

**And whose handiwork the whole earth sees;**

Be with astronomers and astronauts

 Artists photographers and bush walkers .

**You, whose Spirit brooded over the face of the earth**

**And brought breath to all that lives and grows;**

Be with health workers who control viruses and bacteria

 Or engineer genes and chromosomes.

**You for whom truth is not mere facts and figures,**

**But relationships and the gift of eternal love:**

 Be with those whose science has left them empty

 Or whose technology has become a slavery .

**You, who gave us faith that leads to many doubts,**

**And deep doubts that lead to a larger faith;**

 Be with all agnostics and those who despair,

 And all the pure of heart who hunger for you.

**You who have created us for fulfilment and joy,**

**And do not rest while one lost person is in misery;**

 Be with those who are lost in amusement arcades

**You, who should mother and father forsake us ,**

**Cherish us as your very own family;**

 Be with abused children and street kids ,

 Social workers, magistrates and foster parents.

**You, who when thick darkness covered humanity,**

**Leapt into the night bringing light and joy;**

 Be with night-shift workers and police,

 Evangelists, counsellors and pastors.

**You, whose first-born, perfect Child**

**Covered our sins and bore our griefs ;**

 Be with mothers and midwives,

 The falsely accused and sorely abused.

**You, who banish fears and bring a new dawn,**

**Who swallow up death in victory;**

 Be with those who risk their lives for others

 And all who today face death alone.

**You, who know our needs before we utter them**

**And do far more than we can ask or imagine;**

 Be with us as we offer these prayers

 And with all who have forgotten how to pray,

**Through Jesus Christ our Saviour AMEN**

**SONG: Touch the earth lightly TiS 668**

**REFLECTIVE PRAYER** reader Paul Gilbertson

Love our neighbour as we love ourselves

How, O God, do we live this command?

How do we love our neighbour as ourselves.

When loving ourselves can be so hard?

How do we love our neighbour as ourselves,

When our neighbours may be the ones who cause us pain?

How do we love our neighbour as ourselves,

In a world where love is so often given over to hate?

We live in a world where the difference of

Our politics, our wealth, our mental health, our race,

Our sexuality, our gender, is demonized.

We live in a world where what makes us “us”

Is so often condemned or discriminated against.

How can we show love, when we are so often denied it

By those closest to us?

Help us to see love, to show love, to know love,

And work always for a more just and loving world .

**THE LORD’S PRAYER** *- The New Zealand Book of Prayer | He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*

*Say the Lord’s Prayer. This version comes to us from the Anglican Church of Aotearoa New Zealand:*

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 trials 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 for ever.

**SENDING FORTH**  Leader: Nola Anderson

We have been given this new week in which to honour the God who is easy to love, by loving the neighbours who are sometimes difficult to love.

Not in our own strength are we so commanded but in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, and in the love of the Lord Jesus, through whom all things are possible.

Go on your way rejoicing, and the blessing of the Living God will always be yours.

**Thanks be to God. AMEN**

**Song A New Commandment** as credits roll

**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.*