**MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE – Easter 4B**

**30th April – 2nd May 2021**

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/mltrsnlGaRY](https://youtu.be/mltrsnlGaRY" \t "_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. 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.

**WELCOME & CALL TO WORSHIP**

Welcome to our time of worship this week, as we enjoy this beautiful autumn day in the Macedon Ranges. We continue to journey through the season of Easter, celebrating the Risen Christ and remembering how our lives are renewed and changed by our encounter with him. We pray that this time of worship invites you into a new experience of the Holy Three in One, who delights in your presence, who calls you into community, who offers you gifts and graces to enable you to share the good news wherever you are. You are invited. You are welcome. You have a place here with the One who greets you with open arms.

**OPENING PRAYER**

Holy and loving God,

As we enter this time of worship,

we remember that when you first saw

the beauty of your Creation

brought to life by your living Word,

you said “it is good”

We thank you that we are part of that good Creation,

intertwined with and interdependent upon

the earth, seas, sky, rivers,

and plant and animal life

We thank you that your Spirit breathes life into us,

and creates community among us.

We pause for a moment and think of all that connects us

to you

to your Creation

to each other

We give thanks

for where those connections are good and strong

and we grieve and pray

for the places where they are damaged or broken

God, our constant Gardner,

we thank you for your tender care

and pray that we might hear your word for us this day

So that we may bear fruit for you

in your Garden of life.

Amen.

**SONG: O LOVE! (PSALM 22:23-31)** by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan

***alternative suggestion:* TiS 152 Joyful, joyful we adore you**

**BIBLE READINGS:** **Acts 8:26-40**, 1 John 4:7-21, Psalm 22:23-31, **John 15:1-8**

**REFLECTION** by Ps Annette Buckley

At our house in Pascoe Vale, we recently had to cut back and remove an old kiwi fruit vine because we were replacing the fence it was attached to. The vigorous growth of this untended vine had created a tangled web of branches that grew over and through each other, in their case bearing much fruit! Unfortunately, they were not going to be ripe for some time, so we weren’t able to eat them ourselves, although apparently the pigs at Edgar’s Mission quite enjoyed them.

Grape vines, the subject of this week’s gospel reading, are different in some ways. Once again, Jesus is using examples from the daily life of the people around him to illustrate what he is trying to say. These verses come to us from Jesus’ last night on earth, after he and his disciples had finished their last supper together. On the vines Jesus refers to, the best grapes grows closest to the stem, so it is necessary to tend them if they are going to ‘bear good fruit’. Jesus talks about both removing the dead wood which is not producing fruit, but also the ‘good’ branches in order that they might be more fruitful.

The emphasis in this passage is on ‘fruitfulness’. It ought to be a correction to the idea that Christian faith is all about someone’s ‘personal faith in Christ’, even though that might be an important aspect. In this metaphor, each branch has its part to play and its contribution to make. It’s also emphasises the need for us to be connected to each other in community if we are to be ‘fruitful’. Going off on our own missions, leaving behind the support of our faith community and our responsibility to support them is not what Jesus calls for.

Instead this word ‘abide’ echoes through this passage. It brings an image of living, staying, remaining, being there for the long haul. We need to be grounded in our faith and remember the connection we have with all our brothers and sisters in Christian faith. It does, however, give us the permission to ‘branch out’ to try new things, to go seeking the sunlight where it might seem to be far off.

I wonder where you and your faith community are being called to branch out this week.

I wonder where you are being called to abide.

I wonder if there is anything in your life that could be pruned to help you find greater fruitfulness.

**TEAM REFLECTION**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

God of this world and of the whole Creation,

we pray today for all the places

that are disconnected from you

the true source of life, love and hope

We pray for people we know and love

who need to feel connected,

to you, to families and friends,

to those who can provide them with hope and healing

We pray for communities that are fractured

and damaged

so that they can’t provide the nourishment

that their people need

We pray for leaders who are cut off

from the needs of their people

so that they don’t understand

and can’t provided the best solutions

We pray for your church throughout the world:

may we worship in such a way

that the poor are satisfied.

may we always be grounded

in your Resurrection life

and live out our calling

to service and sacrifice,

and to love, hope and joy

beyond measure.

Jesus, the true vine

and source of our life

In your name we pray,

Amen.

**SONG: COMMUNITY** by Dave Brown

**alternative: TiS 473 Community of Christ**

**SENDING OUT AND BLESSING:** by Kelly Ann Hall, theworkofthepeople.com

Come close, Love.

there’s something that I want to take a look at together.

Are you in a place where you can hear me?

Because, I want you to really soak in what I have to say,

I come offering transformation, I come full of love,

and I so deeply want you to experience for yourself

what is so often only talked about or imagined:

My full presence to all things—my part in your being and your part in my being.

I want to clean you up, cut off what no longer serves you,

and show you how deeply and truly everything is enjoined to me.

What’s yours to do is going to sound simplistic,

but its hard—trust me, I know.

People tend to get in their own way when it comes to connection.

So, what I am asking you is to open, to show me where it hurts

because right there is where I come in.

I am meeting you sore to sore, wound to wound.

to nourish you by the intimacy of my own blood

and guide you into the mystery and miracle of my deep healing way.

I want to bring you closer in to me,

I want you to experience me and my love firsthand

Source to soul.

I want you to know, that you are soaked in me.

You are within my love everywhere, always,

and my love is never exhausted.

So share the spirit of it freely,

give without worry or desperation,

let love move among you, soul to soul.

My heart is set on you,

I am here, active and present—

I am yours and you are mine,

I will never leave you,

so trust, remain, rest assured,

be still and know:

You are within my love everywhere, always,

source to soul, and My love is never exhausted.

May you go into the coming days

knowing the words you have heard

to be true and good.

In the name of God:

Creator,

Redeemer,

Sustainer

Amen.

**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
* Mia Mia – Kyneton: Commonwealth bank, B.S.B. 063 517, Account no.: 1002 1775