**MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE**

**16th – 18th 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/OpGNrS-TzNA](https://youtu.be/OpGNrS-TzNA%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!

At whatever time of day it is,

on whatever day of the week it is,

you’ve made time, put some time aside,

to come together to worship the Lord.

We come to think about the wonder of God

We come to make our confession

and to be renewed for the coming week.

We bring thankfulness and gratefulness to our Lord.

Wherever we are, we say:

“Holy Spirit, come!”

and we are welcomed by

the outstretched arms of Jesus,

by the power of his Spirit

in community.

Welcome!

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

**SONG: Tremble by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan (Based on Psalm 114)**

**A PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND THANKSGIVING**

*A meditation written by a person close to passing as recorded in an article entitled: “Presence in a Heath Care Setting: Sacred Time, Sacred Space, and Sacred Touch”. Article by Hannah O’Donoghue and Scott Quinn in Presence Vol 17, No.4 Dec 2011*

**A MEDITATION FOR THE MOMENT**

I am thankful to be here in my existence another day, even if this day is filled with struggle……..

As the Creator of all Life, You have been there guiding me to reach this moment…

the gate of my earthly existence…….

When I allowed confusion, doubt, pride and shame to

populate my world they seduced the moment for me.

That precious moment was my life………

Then I struggled to take control of the pain and sorrow in my life, and be in charge of the eternal plan. When did I become my own god?............

My life unfolds moment by moment, painful or glorious.

I embrace them all.……

I’m not numb, but sometimes fear the watching.

Hearing every breath, feeling my heart beat in my chest,

 or even when my body aches all over, I may only know one true thing………….

I’m here… if only for this moment.

*Sometimes life can be a bit foggy, a bit uncertain, can’t see the future.*

*You might like to take this opportunity to offer any of your fogginess to the God who upholds you, who loves you, even in the midst of your uncertainty*

*Allow the love of Christ to wash over you, in gratitude and thanksgiving.*

**Thanks be to God**

**OUR READINGS FOR TODAY –**

Take a moment to read our readings for today: Exodus 33:12-23, Psalm 99, 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, Matthew 22:15-22.

**EXODUS AND** **MATTHEW** readings told by Annette

**REFLECTION** by Annette Buckley

Our readings for this week prompt us to ask “What does it mean to see the face of God?” The Exodus reading suggests that God’s presence is so overwhelming that we cannot see God’s face and continue to live. Prior to this, there are a variety of responses to seeing God “face to face.” Jacob survived the experience in Genesis 32. Moses is described as being afraid to look at God, and hiding, in his encounter with the burning bush in Exodus 3. The verse before today’s reading describes God speaking to Moses “face to face, as a man speaks to his friend”. It seems that the writers have drawn on a number of traditions about the experience of being in the close presence of God. Even this encounter shows an intimacy, even a confidence that Moses has in his relationship with God that enables him to make requests of God, and even to persist with a line of questioning that contemplates the idea that what God has promised might not happen! Moses asks to see God in all of his glory, and God obliges…after a fashion. This is not a master/slave relationship, where Moses is expected to forgo his own nature or to accept everything said without question. God’s grace is wide enough to allow Moses to ensure the place of his people in God’s care.

This reading is joined with the Gospel reading where Jesus asks the people to contemplate the image of Caesar on a coin in response to their questions about paying taxes. If this is an accident due to the relative places of these stories in their narratives, it is a useful one. Recently, someone suggested to me that Jesus is never doing “just one thing” in any given story. He might be showing God’s love and healing, but he’s also teaching his disciples, and saying something about the nature of the church, and…..much more. With the story of the encounter of God with Moses ‘face to face’ ringing in our ears, we hear Jesus holding up a coin and saying “Whose image do you see?” Those who are nearby in the story say that they see Caesar’s image. Those of us reading this story later can say that we see the image of God, Jesus, holding up a coin and making a point about….what? Not getting caught up in religious games? Saying that there should be a separation of Church and State? Saying that the political , the religious and the personal are intrinsically bound together? Saying, if you listen carefully, that Caesars may come and go, but ultimately everything belongs to God?

The writer of Matthew later depicts Jesus saying that, when the Son of Man comes “in his glory” we will be judged by how well we see the face of God in the people next to us in life: the hungry, thirsty, naked, strangers, sick and in prison.

It seems that the glory of God is indeed something that might scare us. It might be that the more we dwell in God’s glory and mystery, the closer we are drawn toward turning our faces towards the places where life is difficult. We can no longer live as we used to live, perhaps as people who “belong to Caesar”. As people on the way, seeking to live as the Body of Christ, a desire to experience God’s glory calls us to live and work for a world that is defined by the values of God’s kindom. It’s terrifying because it calls us to face up to the dark places in our own souls that we think keep us safe and secure, but instead prevent us from living with integrity. It’s terrifying, because it calls us to be transformed. It’s terrifying, because it calls us to accept that we have a place in presenting God’s face to the world. Terrifying, yet filled with the glory and presence of God.

**SOME QUESTIONS:**

1. What kind of tough questions are you confident to ask of God?
2. Where do you see the face of God in your community/world/daily life?
3. How do you present God’s face to the world?

**WE BELIEVE: WE ARE A PILGRIM PEOPLE** Adapted from the *Basis of Union* of the Uniting Church in Australia, as printed in Uniting in Worship II, The Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia,. © 2005

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
We proclaim Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen One,
confessing him as Lord
to the glory of God the Father.

In the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
we acclaim Jesus as the Lord of the Church,
the Head over all things,
the beginning of a new creation.

We acknowledge that we live and work
between the time of Christ’s death and resurrection
and the final consummation of all things
which he will bring.

We are a pilgrim people,
always on the way towards a promised goal;
on the way Christ feeds us with word and sacraments,
and we have the gift of the Spirit
in order that we may not lose the way.

We will live and work within the faith and unity
of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church,
bearing witness to that unity
which is both Christ’s gift and his will.

We affirm that every member of the Church
is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified.

Together with all the people of God,
we will serve the world for which Christ died.
And we await with hope the day of the Lord Jesus.

**SONG: Face of the humble poor (NCYC 2007)**

**PRAYER FOR OTHERS:**

Holy Three in One,

whose very nature is unity in diversity

We pray today for the vast array of your people

We thank you for the steadfast, the dependable, the faithful

who bring stability when we are uncertain and confused.

We thank you for the richness that is brought to our lives

by the unusual, the different, the unexpected

We pray for all who find it hard to fit in

And for communities that are unable to make room for variety

We pray for all whose poverty stops them from living life to the full

and for all whose riches do the same

We pray for those making life and death decisions

in Cabinet rooms, in boardrooms,, in hospitals and homes

We pray for all who suffer through fear and violence

whether as victim or perpetrator

We pray for all whose lives are damaged by addiction

and for all who work to bring healing and hope to them.

We pray for victims of injustice

And those who take advantage of their power

We pray for your beautiful and diverse Creation

groaning under the weight of our abuse

We give thanks and pray for all

who are serving your people in whatever way they are able

during the current situation

And we pray that we will learn from this experience

to value each and every member of our human family

and each valuable gift of your Creation.

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**

*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.
Amen.

*- The New Zealand Book of Prayer | He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*

**SENDING FORTH –**

May the road rise up to meet you

May the wind be always at your back

May the sun shine warm upon your face

The rains fall soft upon your fields

And until we meet again

May you be held in the palm of God’s hand

**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.*