**PENTECOST 17a – Proper 12a MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE**

**24 – 26 JULY 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/p7_KeJNPFtU>. 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.

The ministry team would appreciate you feedback on our services during this time of Covid restrictions. Please let them know your thoughts by completing the survey that is available on our web site Worship Services page. You can also request a survey by contacting them via repeterc@gmail.com or Rev Peter on 0434 310 862. 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 not forgotten.

**WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP** *© Moira Laidlaw, used by permission*

As we come together in worship during Pentecost week 8,

we ask for the presence of our loving God

we ask that you encircle us God with love as we journey into this day.

Fill us to over flowing that wherever we may walk

your love may radiate through and from us

and warm the hearts of those with whom we connect.

Blessing them, blessing us.

Let us sing praises for the wonders of God

Let us give thanks for the works of God

Let us rejoice in the love of God

Let us worship in the presence of God.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION** *© Moira Laidlaw, used by permission*

Gracious gift-giving God, you call us to live out our faith in ways which honour you and bless our neighbours, and we recognise that worship is an essential part of our faith journey.

We believe that what we do here in worship does shape our daily witness to Jesus whose disciples we profess to be.

We know that our faith is most visible when we live by your kingdom values of love, justice and peace - yet it is increasingly hard to resist becoming absorbed with the values of the world.

Values dominated by money, profit and production.

Forgive us when we fail to understand that planting seeds of faith and love point to the treasures of your kingdom being found and shared.

We pray that our hearts will be shaped and reshaped by the unfailing treasures of your kingdom, 0 God, and that our accountability as disciples of Christ will be evident in our worship, our witness and our service. This we pray in Jesus' name.

**ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS** *© Moira Laidlaw, used by permission*

Let us celebrate the assurance that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners

And so, I declare to you: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven

***Thanks be to God***

**OUR READINGS FOR TODAY:** Take a moment to read our readings for today: Genesis 29:15 – 28; Romans 8:26 – 39; Matthew 13:31 – 33, 44 – 52; Psalm 128 (or Psalm 105:1 – 11, 45c).

**REFLECTION** *by Paul Gilbertson***,** *using “spill the beans” and “Sermonwriter*"

The parables are not written to provide easy answers. I hope they engage our imaginations in exploring how a metaphor might expand our understanding, and raise further questions and discussion about the nature of the subject of the parable. I hope you all are challenged by today’s parables to ponder and think about what Jesus is describing.

No parable or metaphor will fully encapsulate its subject. However they can reveal a facet of the whole jewel. It can be overwhelming to be faced with a barrage of different parables as in this section of Matthew’s Gospel. But if we see them as describing different facets of the jewel, we can gain a good perspective of the whole jewel.

The parables today start to explore the massive implications of what Jesus has been revealing and the cosmic scale of what he was doing. They open our imaginations to see the Kingdom of Heaven beyond ourselves. Maybe the Kingdom of heaven is like Storing information in the cloud, something that has no limits.

Robert Louis Stevenson lived in many of the world’s beautiful places. He took a good deal of inspiration from the natural beauty that surrounded him. He had much for which to be grateful – fame and fortune among them. But he put things in perspective when he wrote about God’s blessings. He said,

 “The best things are nearest:

 Breath in your nostrils,

 Light in your eyes,

 Flowers at your feet,

 Duties at your hand,

 The path of God just before you.”

Today’s parables call us to put God and his Kingdom first in our lives. If we will do that, we will learn that what seemed in consequential turned out to be the most important thing in our lives – and we will receive blessing upon blessing from our God.

**QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

What image in your mind do you have of the Kingdom of God?

Is that image influenced by the values you expect to find in the Kingdom?

 - love, justice and peace.

What gifts will you bring to the kingdom?

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE** *© B D Prewer, used by permission*

Merciful God, work through our prayers,

***Just God, work through our deeds*...**

Concern for needy neighbours, and strangers, can be channelled into both prayers and deeds. Let us pray

To you who seek justice and mercy, we pray for all who are wronged and neglected, and for those to work and suffer, to right wrongs, champion the oppressed and rescue the lost.

Merciful God, work through our prayers,

***Just God, work through our deeds*...**

To you who foster health of body and mind, we pray for the diseased, badly injured, deranged or spiritually dying, and also for all your human agents of healing and comfort.

Merciful God, work through our prayers,

***Just God, work through our deeds*...**

To you who want the church to be at one in prayer and mission, we pray for the church in its divided and scattered condition, and also for those who work tirelessly for reconciliation

Merciful God, work through our prayers,

***Just God, work through our deeds*...**

To you who seek the salvation of the world from evil and alienation, we pray for those without faith and hope, and for your servants who humbly and lovingly spread the gospel of Jesus.

Merciful God, work through our prayers,

***Just God, work through our deeds*...**

To you who want each of us here to live with freedom and confidence, we pray for any among us who are feeling crushed by circumstances over which they seem to have no control, and we also pray for those of us who unobtrusively minister to each other like angels of mercy.

Merciful God, work through our prayers,

***Just God, work through our deeds*...**

Most loving God, we pray with faith and with thanksgiving, knowing that you are already doing things far beyond our capacity to understand or imagine –

Through Jesus Christ our persistent Saviour. *AMEN.*

**PANDEMIC PRAYER:** © *Cameron Bellm*

Prayer for a Pandemic

May we who are merely inconvenienced

Remember those whose lives are at stake

May we who have no risk factors

Remember those most vulnerable

May we who have the luxury of working From home

Remember those who must choose

Between their health and making the rent

May we have flexibility to care for our children

When the schools close

Remember those who have no options

May we who have to cancel our trips

Remember those who have no place to go

May we who are losing our margin money

In the turmoil of the economic market

Remember those who have no margin at all

May we settle in for quarantine at home

As fear grips our country

Let us choose love

During this time when we cannot physically

Wrap our arms around each other,

Let us find ways to be the

loving embrace of God to our Neighbour

Amen

**SENDING OUT:**

You hear our cries, O God.

You renew our hearts.

You lead us into new and surprising places.

So may the living water restore each one of us to life.

May the Spirit of love uphold us all in joy.

And may we be awed by the riches of belonging under the reign of God.

**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.*