**MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE**

**30th Oct – 1st Nov 2020 – All Saints weekend**

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/GkrrMipOd-0>. Our service invites you to read the scriptures, pause, meditate and pray. The Sunday of this weekend is All Saints Day and so the readings have been chosen accordingly. 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.

**Call to Worship**

Covid has disrupted community as never anticipated.

One thing Covid has shown is community is central to who we are.

Some think real community is found at the footy.

Others think it is found at the pub.

Some think it is centred on the coffee shop.

Others think it is found shopping.

These ways of connecting all have a part to play but do not express community in its fullness.

Community has always been at the heart of being a follower of Jesus.

The relaxing of restrictions in Victoria this week have allowed us to move towards physically reconnecting.

This Sunday is All Saints Day. It invites us to remember the saints who have gone before us and made us who we are. It invites us to explore what it means being saints. It invites us to recognise what it means to have the presence of God with us even in the midst of struggle. It is a reminder of the hope we have in Christ that goes beyond the struggles of the present time.

And so we worship our God, along with the saints of all time and places.

Even though we may have time and distance between us, we are made one in the Spirit of God.

**Opening Prayer**

God of community, this week has seen tears of joy in Melbourne as the easing of the Covid restrictions have been announced. Relief has flooded through the community. The rest of Victoria and even Australia rejoices with Melbourne as we take a new step forward to be able to reconnect and be a community of faith.

As we reconnect, may we remember that at the heart of life is your Spirit which joins us together. As we worship, may we remember those still unable to connect, many due to Covid, others to age, others to other ailments and many due to persecution.

May your Spirit open us to love and grace in humility.

Amen.

**PRAISE AND CONFESSION**

Read Psalm 34. Pause and reflect on the following questions:

*Covid has asked questions of us.*

* *Where do we find sustenance?*
* *Where do we find strength?*
* *Where do we find hope?*
* *What really matters?*

Conclude by reading 1 John 3:1 – 3 as a word of affirmation.

**WE SING: I SING A SONG OF THE SAINTS OF GOD (words Lesbia Scott adapted by © Rev David MacGregor 2019 )**

I sing a song of the saints of God,

patient and faithful too

who toiled and served and lived and died

for the Lord they loved and knew.

And one was a doctor, and one fought fires,

and one was a sparky there fixing wires:

they were all of them saints , seemed never got tired

God help me to be one too.

They loved their Lord with all their heart

and God’s love - it made them strong;

and they followed the right, for Jesus’ sake,

the whole of their good lives long.

And one was a painter, and one taught at school

and one was a builder with all their tools

and there’s not any reason, not any rules

why I shouldn’t be one too.

They lived not only in ages past;

there are hundreds of thousands still;

the world is bright with the joyful saints

who love to do Jesus’ will.

You can meet them in school, on the street, in the store

in the church, at the beach, in the house next door;

They are saints of God, whether rich, whether poor

and I want to be one too!

**READ: MATTHEW 5:1 – 12**

**5** When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

8“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**OUR OTHER READING FOR TODAY**

Take a moment to read our other reading for today: Revelation 7:9 – 17.

**REFLECTION** *by Ps Annette Buckley*

For a good part of this year, I’ve been wrestling with what it means to be ‘blessed’. In early August, we had the story from Genesis of Jacob wrestling with… an angel? God? All through the night. He insisted that he would not let go until he had received a blessing. Jacob was blessed, but left somehow altered. He limped away, his name changed, to face his brother and the consequences of his bad behaviour.

This story has stayed with me, along with the sense of struggling through difficult times to see where the blessing might lie – to see where the presence of God might be revealed in circumstances which have at first glance appeared like a long, dark night. We have already spoken about the places where God has broken through the difficult times we have shared during the COVID crisis. There have been others, though; personal issues and minor crises where it’s been difficult to discern the hand of God. Through these, I’ve tried to cling on, waiting for the blessing to emerge.

There’s a sense, though, in which the idea of striving and wrestling is unhelpful, even a hindrance. Sometimes it’s been necessary to do the opposite, just hand things over to God trusting that God’s presence *is* there, day and night. When I’ve reached that kind of place it’s been a relief to step back from the struggle and just…be. This doesn’t leave me inactive and allow me to be tossed around by circumstances. Rather, it calls me to refocus on just returning to the path, taking one step at a time, dong the next right thing, allowing myself to be on a journey with God and God’s people.

1 John 3:1 says “See what love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.” Sometimes we need to strive and wrestle. Sometimes, though, we need to allow ourselves to be swept up in the all-encompassing embrace of God, for ourselves, the rest of humanity and the Creation.

Is there blessing in that for you? Can you see how that enables you to live a life which blesses others around you and God’s good Creation?

**WE SING: HYMN TIS 473 COMMUNITY OF CHRIST**

**PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

We pause and pray.

In struggles

 And in pain

You are there

In past

 present

 future

You are there

In loss

 And in emptiness

You are there

We thank you for blessing with challenge

Help us to see your blessing in the midst of loss and absence

Help us to remember you have not abandoned us

Help us to be a blessing alongside all who struggle

Amen

*Prior to saying the Lord’s Prayer, pause to remember and give thanks for those who have made you who you are, for those who have blessed you with both joy and pain.*

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**

Say the Lord’s Prayer.

**A FRANCISCAN BENEDICTION** *(The Work of the People)*

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships

- so that you may live deep within your heart

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people

- so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war

- so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and turn their pain to joy

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in the world...

- so that you can do what others claim cannot be done...

To bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor...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.*