**PALM SUNDAY LENT 6A 2020**

*Even though we are a scattered people, we are united in Christ as we come together in worship. Before we begin the service together, we invite you to pause the video and collect a few items that will be used in the worship.*

*Collect a small branch, light a candle, have your Bible to hand and have a pen and paper handy. The lit candle reminds us of Christ’s presence even in lonely and dark places. The pen and paper are for notes you may want to make. Our readings for this service are from Matthew 21:1 – 1, 1 Philippians 2:5 – 11 and Isaiah 50:4 – 9a. The Psalm for today is Psalm 118:1 – 2, 19 – 29. The branch will be used at the end of the service. The service today has as its focus the entry of Jesus to Jerusalem.*

*You may find the following music useful. Hymns and songs such as “Great is they faithfulness”, “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases” and “Hosanna” from* ***Jesus Christ Superstar*** *all come to mind. You may have others and like to play them before, after or during the service.*

*You may use this text of the service in conjunction with the video. You can find the video on our Worship Services web page (*[*https://www.macedonrangesunitingchurch.org.au/worship-services*](https://www.macedonrangesunitingchurch.org.au/worship-services)*) or at* [*https://youtu.be/C4JuV91ynHE*](https://youtu.be/C4JuV91ynHE)*.*

**THE SERVICE**

**GATHERING TOGETHER**

Firstly let us acknowledge all the Aboriginal Groups who have cared and nurtured the land on which we meet: the Wurundjei; Woi Wurruung; Tuangurang and Dja Dja Wurrung.

We acknowledge their leaders: past, present and emerging for it is in them that Australia’s future lies.

We also acknowledge all who have gone before us and now lead us. We have been gifted much. We have a responsibility to nurture and bless those who come after us.

**INVITATION TO WORSHIP**

Even though we are a scattered people, we are united in Christ as we come together in worship.

God’s love embraces all and continues through all times. It has been known by those of ancient times and is known to us now. It is known in its depths when we are humble and seek after God. So in the words of the ancient song writer, “Give thanks to God for God is good. God’s faithful love endures forever.”

**PRAYER** *(adapted from selections of Psalm 118 ©2002 Nathan Nettleton LaughingBird.net)*

Today is your day, LORD, a day to honour you; we will celebrate with joy and laughter.
Get us through the struggles we face safely, LORD!
In the journey ahead, get us to our goal.
The one who comes in your name, LORD, is the one who is truly blessed.
Gathered here in your presence, we praise you for sending him.

Amen

**PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING – Psalm 118**

*L: O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;*

**P: his mercy endures for ever.**

*L: Let Israel now proclaim,*

**P: ‘His mercy endures forever.’**

*L: Open to us the gates of righteousness,*

**P: that we may enter and give thanks to the Lord;**

*L: the righteous shall enter through it.*

**P: We will give thanks to you, for you have answered us…**  (continue)

L: Loving God, in this time of uncertainty, of walking on paths that have never been walked on before, we give you thanks for Your unfailing love. We in faith acknowledge that Your love is able to shine light on and reveal to us more of You even on these less known and unfamiliar pathways of life.

L: This is the day that the Lord has made;

**P: We will rejoice and be glad in it.**

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: Loving God, Creator of the Universe we confess that during these uncertain days we can feel overwhelmed with media information, new laws dictating what we can and cannot do. We can struggle to take time to be present and to soak in the unexpected blessing of more time at home to sit, to reflect and to pray.

Be with us in our uncertainty and our sense of feeling overloaded with information and help us to turn our face again to your life-giving light.

Together we confess…

**P: We bring forward to you our God, our shortfalls, both known and unknown and we confess them to You.**

(Silence)

L: In faith we affirm that our sins are forgiven

**P: In the name of the Father, the Son and the Spirit of Truth. Amen**

**READINGS**

*Our reflection focuses on Matthew 21:1 – 1 but also refers to 1 Philippians 2:5 – 11 and Isaiah 50:4 – 9a.*

**REFLECTION**

Up until a few months ago, I was often hearing complaints from older people about how the younger generation had lost a sense of real community and connectedness. It was said they spent too much time on their phones, on their screens and in their apps and not enough time face to face with real people.

While there may have been some truth to those criticisms, it is quite ironic that the rest of us have to catch up to try and find and create real community and connectedness using our phones and screens! But even strangely also recapturing some of the real old ways using snail mail and waving to our neighbours across the street. We have to find alternative ways of connecting and it is not easy.

Our reading from Matthew is a high point after a long journey for Jesus and his followers. They have finally arrived at Jerusalem, the city of David, the centre of worship and the capital of their (Jewish) world. They have journeyed together seeing all sorts of new things. They have heard a message of the Kingdom of God that made sense and had a place for them.

It is no wonder the crowd cried out “hosanna, to the son of David”. It is no wonder they spoke of the new prophet that had come. Did they dare think he was the Promised One? Some certainly did maybe some others not sure yet but hope was rife. It was truly a community of hope.

There was some striking features of this new community. It was made up of disparate people. Children, outcasts, the healed, the forgiven (but not by all), strangers, women and the uneducated.

A question of authority is raised but the answer does not come as any expect. I don’t mean the words, there are plenty of them yet to be said. An authority affirmed in the strangest and most unexpected of ways. An authority found in the midst of vulnerability and weakness. But I get ahead of myself.

The beginnings of community are there. A community based in hope.

At this point the foundation of their hope is not understood and it may well be fickle. It is based in external experiences, observations and what they can work out.

The real hope is yet to come. But to find it we need to continue on the journey through pain, struggle, vulnerability and weakness. And then to wait… So we wait…

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS**

**POEM:** ***Palm Sunday: Come Lord,*** from “Prayers for Feasts” (Charles Singer 2002)

You are not coming Lord,

like a haughty king with a glowing red crown!

You are simply coming to be among the poor

and to offer them gently the great tenderness of God.

You are not coming Lord,

like a judge with terrible tribunals!

You are coming with mercy to lift up sinners

and offer them with kindness

the overabundant forgiveness of God.

Come, Lord,

enter our city, enter our life!

Come, Lord, speak,

we will listen,

and we will become great and good in your image!

Come in, Lord,

and may the music of your gospel

resonate in us!

*I invite you now as we pray to respond to the words: God in your mercy*

 *with* **Hear our Prayer**

God of Palm Sunday, please endower each of us with the courage and humility of Christ, that his love at work in us may enable us to do much better than seems humanly possible. May his hands take even that which is twisted or scarred and shape it for a greater purpose and your glory.

Eternal God, we turn to you knowing you are the source of the living water for which we thirst.

\* God in your Mercy: **Hear Our Prayer**

We pray for those, who like the crowds that first Palm Sunday simply go along with the flow of the masses. May they know your direction as they set out on new journey.

\* God in your Mercy: **Hear Our Prayer**

We pray for those who are isolated in their homes.  For those whose jobs and livelihood are effected, for those who feel afraid about their future.

May they know your hope as we travel through darkness.

\* God in your Mercy: **Hear Our Prayer**

We pray for those who are ill and those whose relationships are strained.

May they know your healing as they pass through pain, sadness and grief.

\* God in your Mercy: **Hear Our Prayer**

We pray for those who are nearing the end of their earthly life.

May they know your peace as they tread their final steps.

And we pray for the families, friends and communities of those who have succumbed to the Corona virus.

\* God in your Mercy: **Hear Our Prayer**

We pray for our church and for all who worship around the world today.

We pray for those who like us have church doors closed, like the people of the MRP, our synod, presbytery and all the churches and faiths of Australia and the world we might connect with one another and you through prayer and song.

We give thanks that technology can help people in isolation stay connected.

\* God in your Mercy: **Hear Our Prayer**

This Lent, we, too, feel like we are wandering in the wilderness.

Protect us from temptation.

May every person sense your presence as we journey through these unknown and sometimes frightening times together yet sometimes alone.

May we remain calm and act responsibly, under your guiding hand.

\* God in your Mercy: **Hear Our Prayer**

We pray for nations finding their path through these complicated and challenging times.  May leaders know your wisdom as they discern the way ahead.

\* God in your Mercy: **Hear Our Prayer**

We pray for one another and everyone on our hearts, beloved and stranger.  *(Pause)*

May we all know your love every step and every day.

May we drink deeply of the water of life you offer, so that our nourishment, strength and courage come from you.

In faith, we lift our prayers to you knowing that you journey with us.

These are the prayers of your faithful people.  **Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer:**

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name.

Your Kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom,

the power and the glory are yours.

Now and forever. **Amen.**

**COMMISSIONING**

Go into your day and the coming week with the same attitude Jesus had, not to pursue your own interests but the heart and will of God. As you journey on, may the Spirit hold you in love, may the Christ lead you on straight paths and your lives give praise and honour to the glory of God.