**PENTECOST 18a – Proper 13a MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE**

**31 July – 2 August 2020**

Welcome to everyone from around the Presbytery of Port Phillip West who are joining us for the first time. You are welcome to use this text version as a guide to the video service but the two can be used independently.

If you would 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/sugJ9Qh8law>. 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 the alternative Psalm of Ps 145, the Genesis story and the Matthew reading in one way or another. Unless otherwise stated, the liturgy is written by Rev Peter Cannon.

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; Wathaurong; Taungurung; Boon Wurrung; 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 GREETING FROM THE PORT PHILLIP WEST PRESBYTERY MINISTRY TEAM**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

While we need to be cautious about where we visit, you are welcome here.

While many are required to stay at home, we appreciate being welcomed as your guest.

Times such as these create struggles for all.

But where God is, there is hope of blessing and grace.

There is generosity and love.

There is justice and transformation.

**PRAYER** *by © B D Prewer, used by permission*

Loving God, more, much more

to learn of you and trust you,

 to cherish and serve you

to love, worship and adore you,

 this is our prayer;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Amen.*

**CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE OF GRACE**

*Inspired by Psalm 145: 8-9, 14-21*

God we look to you for our needs.

 Often we lack the patience to wait for your provision.

Lord forgive us,

***Lord hear our prayer***

God you are good to everyone and care deeply for your creation.

Often we care only for those we know and that which serves our interests.

Lord forgive us,

***Lord hear our prayer***

God you are generous and compassionate.

Often though we are reluctant to share and withhold hospitality.

Lord forgive us,

***Lord hear our prayer***

Justice for all is in your character. Love colours everything you do. Transform us to be like you and to live under your reign. May your face be seen in us and all we do.

LORD, you are generous and compassionate, slow to anger, and rich in love and grace. You put us back on our feet and lift us up again. We trust in your generous and compassionate grace.

**READINGS:**

Take a moment to read our readings for today: Genesis 32:22 – 31; Romans 9:1 – 5; Matthew 14:13 – 21; Psalm 145 (or Psalm 17:1 – 9, 15).

**REFLECTION** *by Rev Linda Young, Macedon Ranges Partnership*

**When to hold tight and when to hold loosely.**

In the past few weeks as we have journeyed with Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Rachel, and Esau through the Scriptures. Today’s reading from the Hebrew Bible brings us to the story of Jacob wrestling with a man who later is described as God. Gen 25:25

This week we continue with Jacob. Jacob has a history of holding on and tenaciously pursuing his destiny and his desire throughout his life.

Even during birth, we read Jacob was grasping onto Esau’s heal, tenaciously holding on to his twin brother; a pattern that continued to play out through plotting and scheming to receive blessings.

In today’s reading, the wrestling with God conjures up a very real image of one fighting for life. Hanging on for all he is worth to receive blessing.

I wonder how often we do this; hang on to things, to the past, to the known rather than allowing space in our lives for God to lead, to open up or close doors, to gently guide us and bring us blessing.

Rebekah, Jacob and Esau’s mother had a prophetic word placed on her by God while she was pregnant with the twin boys – Genesis 25:23

“Two nations are in your womb, and two people from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.”

I wonder how different Jacob’s life would have been if instead of striving and holding on tight to every opportunity to push his case forward, he rested in the knowledge that God was at work and all was well.

Today we read that Jacob would not rest till he received a blessing from God albeit through force and determination and in return did receive the blessing but also a debilitating physical reminder that he had to wrestle with God to get it. I suggest that the blessing was always his but that he was so busy holding tightly and fighting for it that he just did not see it.

**SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER:**

Where are we finding God’s blessing in our lives and are there things that we are holding tightly to that are preventing God’s blessings?

In the church are there places, rituals, traditions that we have held tightly on to that may need to be held more gently? What blessings may there be by holding some of those more gently? What might ‘holding more gently’ look like in your congregation?

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS** *by © B D Prewer, adapted, used by permission*

For the thin skinned who wear every comment as a thorn, and the tough-hided who are insensitive to the needs around them.

For the too-generous who can’t seem to say no, and the mean-spirited who shut their hearts tightly against compassion.

For the peacemakers who risk themselves for the cause of reconciliation, and for the belligerent who put others at risk to attain their selfish ends.

For politicians who well understand their ignorance and weakness, and those who are self-deluded enough to see themselves as the wise and infallible.

For the churches who act as if they have all the answers, and for the churches that are too reticent about the Gospel committed to their stewardship.

For the sick and injured who long for healing, and for some who become so attached to the sympathy they remain an invalid.

For the dying who pray that the end will come quickly, and for others who cling frantically to every moment of breath.

For the grieving who wonder if their tears will ever stop flowing, and for some whose grief seems banked up like a dam within their hearts.

We ask for your truth and grace.

***Loving Friend, hear our prayers.***

**LORD’S PRAYER**

Say the Lord’s Prayer as is familiar to you.

**BLESSING**

As you go into the coming week,

A week with tightening Covid restrictions,

May you see the face of God behind the masks.

May the struggles you face, bring blessings in abundance.

And may you be transformed by the grace that surrounds you.

So greet one another in peace and generosity

And the abundant love of God, feed and sustain you.

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.*