**Worship Liturgy for Easter 7a Macedon Ranges Partnership**

**23rd-24th May 2020**

And so we continue on our Easter Resurrection journey, encountering the Risen one who offers abundant life for all. This invitation brings struggle but also hope for those willing to step out. The Spirit is promised as a reassurance of faith.

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/rhbZJPQIP6U>.

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 all the scripture readings in one way or another this week.

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Wherever you are,

God is with you.

The Spirit welcomes you with open arms

and dances with delight as you draw near

**PRAYER**

Our God, we long to see you

Our hearts yearn for you

Like those who were present at your Ascension

we look to the sky for signs of your presence

You are indeed

bringer of life and hope

the One who rules the clouds and rain

the One who makes the mountains tremble

the One who restores fertility

to a weary land

the One who provides

for all our needs

We come into your presence with awe and wonder

…and find your feet on the ground beside us

You are

the loving parent to the orphaned

the protector of the needy and vulnerable

releaser of prisoners

guide to the lost

You are the melody in our song

the rhythm in our dance

the strength and energy in our work

the heart and soul of our praise

the path of our life

Wherever we are when we find you,

we have first of all been found by you.

We come to worship you

our hearts yearning

and full of hope

Amen

**MOMENT OF REFLECTION**

We pause now to reflect on our week… the highs… the lows… the in-betweens. And we pray:

God, We give thanks for the golden moments….

We are sorry for the moments when we have hidden in the shadows….

We acknowledge that you have been with us, through it all Black, gold and in between.

For the times we have missed or ignored your presence,

forgive us, we pray

Open our eyes,

Turn our feet to your path of goodness and light

We give thanks for your mercy and grace to us

Granted to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer

Amen.

**PAUSE TO READ THE READINGS FOR TODAY BEFORE PROCEEDING.** They are: Acts 1:6-14, Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35, 1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11, John 17:1-11

**EASTER 7a Reflections by Rev Linda Young:**

As I was reflecting this morning, writing my journal, a sense of ‘uncertainty’ came to me. I am sure that is a word and a feeling that is very prevalent in lots of places, for lots of people, now. As read the Scriptures for Sunday there it was again, in the Scriptures, a sense of uncertainty.

In Acts 1: 6-7, the Disciples are experiencing uncertainty. They pressed Jesus for answers, but Jesus’ answered their questions in a different way than they expected. Jesus’ answers centred around trusting God, in having faith and in being assured that they were not alone and that the Holy Spirit would come to them in truth and comfort them.

A bit later, when Jesus ascended into heaven, the ones who were with him at the time, stood in awe and looked up and watched. They were dumbfounded. What do you say in situations when things just do not make sense, that are out of your known experience? I imagine that in their minds were a massive clash between thinking things that Jesus had said, thinking of things that Jesus had done and performed and what Jesus said not to do, and to do! Simultaneously, they were totally immersed in seeing of Jesus being taken away. What was that going to mean for the future, for them? I imagine a type of “eye in the storm” calmness. So many things going around their minds yet in the middle of that Jesus ascending and a calmness.

We have all been living in a time of uncertainty, haven’t we? The whole globe, everyone has been living in a time of uncertainty for a few months now. We might have questions of why and how and try to make sense of it. Of trying to think about what is coming up in the future and when it will be over and what the ‘new normal’ will look like. But I suggest that if we go to God with that sort of questions that He would redirect us, just like Jesus did, to think about the bigger picture. To think about the importance of trust in God. To think about having faith, that things are going to be okay. The answers are about trust and faith and that we are not alone in this process. We have the Holy Spirit and we also have each other. Even though social distancing is narrowing and soon we will be able to gather freely, we still do have each other now. We have each other spiritually and prayerfully even if we cannot meet closely, in person.

The Holy Spirit of God is with us, to guide us and to console us. But it does not end there. We are not just to sit around in the glory of God knowing that God is with us and the spirituality of it all we are fine. The bigger picture is about action. It is about taking the gifts and the understandings that we do have and applying them in our lives and further afield.

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In the 1 Peter reading we had today, there were lots of highlights of what that action can bring. Here are a few of them:- In being humble, that we be exalted by God, in due time. – by laying down our anxiety because God cares for us. – by being disciplined and sobor, that we might be alert to the things around us and the opportunities around us. – to resist evil, to be steadfast in the faith. There is a multitude of ways that we can exhibit that action. When we see injustice around us. When there is a ‘voiceless’ person or group that need others to speak up for them. For our environment, that cannot speak, but that we who are passionate can speak up when it is not looked after.

You might like to spend a few moments to reflect on what action has been put on your heart to do?

Some of that may be personal action.

Some of that will be action for others, on their behalf – a phone call, or a meeting down the street.

What might the blessing be as you intentionally move and take that action that God puts on your heart, in faith?

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS**: **Prayer in the time of Coronavirus**

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.

**SAY THE LORD’S PRAYER**

**BLESSING AND COMMISSIONING**

As you go into the week from here,

I invite you to remember the gifts you offered to God

What will you take with you,

what will you offer tomorrow, and the next day, and the next

How will you respond to God as you go into the week.

As you go, may you be blessed by the Holy Three in One

who Created you, who Redeemed you, who Sustains you on your journey.

And my you be blessed by this prayer from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King

Amen

**REV. DR. MARTN LUTHER KING’S PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH**

Lord…
We thank you for your church, founded upon your Word, that challenges us to do more than sing and pray,
but go out and work as though the very answer to our prayers depended on us and not upon you.
Help us to realize that humanity was created to shine like the stars and live on through all eternity.
Keep us, we pray, in perfect peace.
Help us to walk together,
pray together,
sing together,
and live together
until that day when all God’s children
- Black, White, Red, Brown and Yellow -
will rejoice in one common band of humanity
in the reign of our Lord and of our God, we pray.
Amen.
- *The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.*