**Worship liturgy for Easter 3a Macedon Ranges Partnership**

***Weekend of 25th – 26th April 2020***

And so we continue on our Easter Resurrection journey, encountering the Risen one in so many surprising ways. Such encounters can be life transforming. Our eyes are opened, our hearts softened and we are encouraged to step onward in love and grace.

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/K3Ms9HofLq0>.

Our service invites you to read the scriptures, pause, meditate and pray. Allow the stories told there to lead you. Our readings are: Acts 2:14a, 36 – 41, Psalm 116:1 – 4, 12 – 19, 1 Peter 1:17 – 23 and Luke 24:13 – 35. We suggest reading the relevant passages prior to the specific prayers and litanies. We focus on the story from Luke’s Gospel of the “Road to Emmaus” in our video.

**CALL TO WORSHIP**:

Life has many puzzles.

To some we find answers.

Others remain shrouded in mystery.

For wisdom and insight we are thankful.

But to journey in mystery,

Accompanied by the one who reveals in grace

Is life in its fullness.

In a mysterious togetherness, separated but united, we gather to worship.

**PRAYER** *by Janet Wood based on Psalm 116:1 – 4 & 12 – 19*

**Great is the Lord, and righteous**

**Our God is merciful**

Hundreds of years ago, among the Hebrew people were the poets of praise, writers of the psalms

**What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty to me?**

*Pause to reflect*

Over the ages, Jews and Christians have turned to the psalmists for their honest statements of doubt and for their robust reassurance of God with us

**I will pay my vows to the Lord**

**in the presence of all his people**

*Pause to reflect*

The writer of this psalm 116 has recovered from an illness, and this is what we hope for thousands across the world

**I kept my faith even when I said I am greatly afflicted**

In this time of great affliction, we join with the psalmist praying that the lives of many will be saved

*Pause to reflect*

**In the courts of the house of the Lord**

**Praise the Lord**

In our homes, in our driveways and in our backyards

**Praise the Lord!**

**CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE OF GRACE** *inspired by 1 Peter 1:17 – 23*

We are sojourners on the way.

For by God’s work of grace in Jesus, we have been made citizens of a new community.

A new way of life is part of this community.

**But sometimes old habits die hard.**

**Grace is distant from the way we act and speak.**

**We hold tight to the things of this world.**

Sincere love for each other as brothers and sisters is at the heart of this new life.

Loving each other deeply with all our heart.

For we have been born anew into this life.

**Hold us anew in love and grace, O God.**

**Move us forward in hope and peace.**

**Renew our faith as people of the resurrection. 13 - 35**

So as we take hold again the gift of God, faith is renewed.

The cleansing of God’s Spirit restores us for life.

Be at peace. Love and serve the Lord.

**SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER** *around our reading from Luke 24:13 – 35*

The Greek seems to give the impression that the disciples were having a debate about the evidence, a rational discussion about what had happened. Jesus explained what had happened in terms of the Scriptures, and how they pointed to the Messiah. And yet, there is much in this story that is about emotion and experience. How do you find a balance in your faith between reason and rational understandings and the experience of faith which is grounded in mystery and wonder?

The two on the road to Emmaus talked about their hearts ‘burning within us’ when they encountered Jesus. Have you had an experience or experiences of your heart burning within you in response to someone or something?  Is it possible/necessary/desirable for our faith to ‘burn’ like this constantly?

Have you ever had an experience with a stranger that changed your understanding of something, especially your faith?

**WALKING THE ROAD – a reflection** by Rev Linda Young

In this time of isolation, walking is one of the few things we are allowed to do, at this time. As I walk around my local streets it has been delightful to greet and be greeted by other people doing the same thing; exercising, breathing the fresh air and often walking their dogs.

The greetings seem to be much more intimate now than they used to be. Although we are maintaining the correct social distancing, there is a deeper connectedness in the recognition that we are all going through the same things together and we all need extra acknowledgement at this time. We ask, “How are you going?” and rather than the automatic response of, “Good thanks,” there is a recognition of restriction, of uncertainty and yet compassion.

As two people, who had experienced unprecedented events, walked the dusty road to Emmaus I can imagine the toing and froing their dialogue must have consisted of. Recalling experiences, third-party information and speculation of what the death and resurrection of Jesus might mean to them and to the band of believers who followed Jesus; attempting to make sense of facts and experiences that were out of their field of understanding. Then, in the midst of their conversation, Jesus walked among them, shedding light on their discussion, their concerns and their uncertainties.

Today the resurrected Christ still walks alongside us on the path of life. He still offers us his “peace that surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7) as we recognise that he is with us and will never leave us. In our isolation, appearing to be alone, we have a Companion who journeys with us too.

At this time, I am also reminded of this verse:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” (Philippians 4:6)

Until we can gather together to worship may you know his peace, whilst navigating down this unfamiliar road of isolation and be comforted by remembering we are all in this together and that you are never alone.

**WE ARE A PILGRIM PEOPLE**

We believe in one God,

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We proclaim Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen One,

confessing him as Lord

to the glory of God the Father.

In the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,

we acclaim Jesus as the Lord of the Church,

the Head over all things,

the beginning of a new creation.

We acknowledge that we live and work

between the time of Christ’s death and resurrection

and the final consummation of all things

which he will bring.

We are a pilgrim people,

always on the way towards a promised goal;

on the way Christ feeds us with word and sacraments,

and we have the gift of the Spirit

in order that we may not lose the way.

We will live and work within the faith and unity

of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church,

bearing witness to that unity

which is both Christ’s gift and his will.

We affirm that every member of the Church

is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified.

Together with all the people of God,

we will serve the world for which Christ died.

And we await with hope the day of the Lord Jesus.

Adapted from the *Basis of Union* of the Uniting Church in Australia

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

Praying for other people is not an escape from reality, but an engagement with it. Let us do so now.

Most loving God, source of resurrection life, we offer you our lives, along with the prayers we bring to you, so that our prayers and our deeds may work together in unison for the healing of the world for which Christ lived, died and arose.

Teach us so to pray, loving God.

***Teach us so to live, loving Christ.***

Uplift believers around the world who are also accepting the hospitality of your Table today. In spite of our superficial differences, may we all be drawn closer together in worship and outreach, that the world may see that we are the disciples of the Master of love.

Teach us so to pray, loving God.

***Teach us so to live, loving Christ.***

Uplift your church in its attempts to serve the world. Strengthen the members who work for justice and peace, inspire those who work with the poor and outcaste, give encouragement to those who seek to rehabilitate drug addicts, and reinvigorate those who are weary but cannot yet seek rest from their labours.

Teach us so to pray, loving God.

***Teach us so to live, loving Christ.***

Uplift Christians who take their place in political life; independents and minor parties, members of the government and the opposition, government ministers and back benchers. Enable them to maintain their integrity and faith-optimism among so much double talk and through numerous setbacks and compromises.

Teach us so to pray, loving God.

***Teach us so to live, loving Christ.***

Uplift all the people, both within or outside of the church, who this day watch with the dying, comfort the sorrowful, feed the hungry, tend the sick, befriend the loner, teach the young, counsel the bewildered, encourage the timid, and forgive the enemy. By your grace, multiply the effect of their individual efforts, that the curse of human misery may recede and the joy of living increase.

Teach us so to pray, loving God.

***Teach us so to live, loving Christ.***

**SENDING OUT** © B D Prewer used by permission

There is no evening tiredness that Christ will not share;

no anxious day that can dawn, without Christ being first there.

***Amen!***

There is no road to travel, without Christ’s guidance,

no enemy to face, without Christ’s grace.

***Amen!***

There is no joy to celebrate without Christ’s laugher,

no sorrow to bear without Christ’s care.

***Amen!***

The awesome blessing of God Most Holy,

the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

be with you now and evermore

***Amen!***