**Worship Liturgy for Pentecost 11a (Proper 6a) Macedon Ranges Partnership**

**13th – 14th June 2020**

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/mXYkBPTiOQU>. Thank you to Jay Brooks for her contributions to this service of worship.

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 several of the scripture readings in one way or another this week.

This week follows Trinity and Pentecost and comes during the continuing protests in the USA protesting the killing of black Americans. We remember as well the oppression of our First Peoples. You may like to keep in your prayers all those who suffer oppression at the hand of another.

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.

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

From north and south,

Think of people from across the Partnership.

east and west,

from Gisborne and from Mt Macedon,

from Mia Mia/Kyneton and from Romsey,

from Lancefield and from Tylden,

and from the ministry team,

God calls us together from our isolation.

From poverty or wealth,

This stanza relates to COVID-19 and economic circumstances

From health or disease,

From whatever our circumstances,

God calls us together from our isolation

From a spirit of joy or despair,

This stanza relates to ‘black lives matter’ protests and riots

From times of fairness or injustice,

From wherever we stand,

God calls us together from our isolation.

Let us worship God.

**PRAYER OF APPROACH** © B D Prewer

O majestic Lover of humanity, we come to you gratefully, for you have not left us like orphans in a cold universe but embraced us through Christ Jesus. You call us to be his sisters and brothers and joint-heirs in the kingdom of your love. You who have blessed us so remarkably, please bless us again as we bow before you. May our worship clear our smudged vision, liberate our stodgy spirits, and uplift our lives in joyful praise. Through Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Amen!*

**PAUSE TO READ THE READINGS FOR TODAY BEFORE PROCEEDING. They are:** Genesis 18:1 – 15; Psalm 116:1 – 2, 12 – 19; Matthew 9:35 – 10:8; Romans 5:1 – 8

Poem - **HE HAS NO HANDS BUT OUR HANDS**

*From ‘Listen to the Wind – Poems of the Spirit’, By Margaret Williams, Mountview Uniting Church, Mitcham*

She went into the church,

drawn by the quiet voice of memory

recalling from her childhood

some long-forgotten words:

"God so loved the world ..."

That was all ·-·

it was enough.

She needed to be loved

as a flower needs the sun.

The bright lights and the warmth

shut out the cold wet darkness of the night.

She looked about her.

No one stirred or looked her way,

busy all in dreaming,

or, perhaps, in prayer.

She sat down near the front

and gazed up at the Figure on the wall,

expensively carved in beautiful, rich-grained wood.

"Christ ! are you only wood?

Or are you real?"

The organ played.

The words began.

The people stood and sat and knelt and sang.

But there was no response from the Figure on the wall.

The words went on -

but she had had enough of words

·· words of hate and hurt,

or recrimination and of blame.

Suddenly, she sobbed,

a deep, wracking, shaking, gasping sob,

that held a desperate plea

for help, for comfort,

and for love.

No one among the tiny group of worshippers

made any move,

except to turn and look with pained embarrassment

at this sobbing stranger in their church.

They stood and sang and knelt and prayed.

She wept,

quietly,

head bowed.

The words went on.

She rose, and left,

and no one saw her go.

As she reached the door, she turned ,

and, looking at the Figure on the wall,

she said aloud :

"You are, after all, just a wooden Christ.

They lied who said to me you love enough to die!"

Then she stepped outside,

and the cold darkness met her there ,

akin to the cold darkness of her heart,

for she knew now the ultimate despair.

**CONFESSION**

**Psalm 116:1-2**

“I love the Lord, because he has heard

my voice and my supplications.

Because he inclined his ear to me,

therefore I will call on him as long as I live.”

Let us bring our confession to God.

When we turn a blind eye to the suffering of others *(Picture of Locust plague – East Africa)*

***Please forgive us***

When we turn a blind eye to past events to focus on the latest news *(Bushfires – Australia)*

***Please forgive us***

When we turn a blind eye to the needs of others *(Floods - Jakata, Indonesia)*

***Please forgive us***

When we turn a blind eye when we feel we have seen too much suffering *(Taal volcano – Island of Luzon, Philippines)*

 ***Please forgive us***

When we turn a blind eye to events that seem too far away *(earthquake - Turkey)*

***Please forgive us***

When we turn a blind eye to others when we are caught up in our own problems *(COVID-19)*

***Please forgive us***

**ASSURANCE**

We know that God has listened to us,

heard our prayers

and that we will be forgiven.

***Thanks be to God***

**SOME THOUGHTS ON MATTHEW’S GOSPEL READING**

In the Greek-Roman world, showing compassion to others was considered a serious flaw in one’s character. Greek culture thought compassion to be unenlightened human weakness
The Romans believed it destroyed one’s dignity.
Therefore the revelation of Jesus that God’s realm is one of generosity and grace was a dramatically different mindset.

So much has happened in Australia, and around the world so far in 2020, that we have the danger of ‘compassion fatigue’. Very few of us can say that they have been unaffected by any of it. So how can you continue to be compassionate when you are in the midst of it?

**REFLECTION**

Following on from the Creation story and God in the midst, this week we look at the story of Abraham and his meeting with the three men. On the surface it may seem like Abraham was just offering hospitality to three travellers who happened past his caravan, but it was to be much more than that.

Abraham offers the men a meagre, humble service of ‘a little water’ to wash and ‘a little bread’ for refreshment but what he delivers is bread freshly baked with choice flour and yoghurt and freshly prepared meat. He promises little and gives a lot! Also, there is an urgency in not only meeting the men as Abraham runs to them, but in the hastening of the food prepared for them. Despite his offer, he delivers is a great feast which would have taken several hours to prepare.

At a time when our hospitality has been intentionally limited and begins to re-establish, I wonder what we can take from this passage?

And as we think about others, I cannot help but think about the riots in the United States. The footage of George Floyd in the gutter, the rioting and looting, the attack on the police force, the devastation. Whilst there is no doubt that injustice has happened repeatedly, especially for people of colour, how can we support the victims and promote change, without the violence and disrespect of people and property? What would Jesus say and do? What can we say and do? What ‘little water’ and ‘little bread’ can we offer and what can we do to provide a banquet of justice and love in our communities where we serve?

Abraham was blessed over and above his gift to the strangers. What blessings may arise as we live out of kindness and consideration for others, with compassion and generosity? Who knows, we too might end up entertaining angels!

Blessings,

Rev Linda Young

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS** © B D Prewer

Let us seek God’s merciful aid for the church and the world, for individuals and communities, for the famous and the obscure. Let us pray.

For those who have power without the wisdom to use it well,

and for those who have wisdom without the power to apply it.

Holy Friend hear our prayer,

***Loving God make us into a blessing.***

For people who want to learn but have no teacher,

and some who have much to teach but no one will listen to them.

Holy Friend hear our prayer,

***Loving God, make us into a blessing.***

For those who have been forced to retire too early,

and for those who are overworked and long for retirement.

Holy Friend hear our prayer,

***Loving God, make us into a blessing.***

For some people who are famous yet long for some privacy,

and some who are lonely and long for recognition and company.

Holy Friend hear our prayer,

***Loving God, make us into a blessing.***

For those who are too tender-hearted and need to be toughened

and for those who are tough and need to be made gentle.

Holy Friend hear our prayer,

***Loving God make us into a blessing.***

For the wounded and diseased who have inadequate care,

and for the pampered who turn ill health into an obsession.

Holy Friend hear our prayer,

***Loving God make us into a blessing.***

For people who are dying with no one to mourn them,

and for those who mourn with no one to comfort them.

Holy Friend hear our prayer,

***Loving God, make us into a blessing.***

For all who remain cheerful in the midst of poverty and grave handicap,

and for some who are disgruntled in spite of plenty and good health.

Holy Friend hear our prayer,

***Loving God, make us into a blessing.***

Holy Friend, you love all as one human family, yet deal with us individually

as if we were the only child you have. Please give to us your generous and practical spirit,

so that our prayers may be converted into deeds, day by day.

Through Christ Jesus our Redeemer.

***Amen!***

**COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING**

So much needed.

And oh so few to help.

The Spirit has gone before you.

Ask for help and do your bit.

Roll up your sleeves then and pitch in.

Show love,

Bring hope,

Support those who hurt.

The amazing generosity of God has been given to you.

Life, healing and peace

be in

and flow through you

to all.

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

*I will publish other congregation’s details as they come to hand. Contact you congregation’s treasurer for details if they are not here.*