**PENTECOST 19a – Proper 14a MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE**

**7 – 9 August 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/6p53au0PyhM>. 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.

The ministry team would appreciate your 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](mailto: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; Taungurung 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 remembered.

**WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP**

What brings you to worship in this time and place?

Do you come joyfully to offer praise?

Do you come with a heavy heart?

Do you come with unanswered and unanswerable questions?

Do you come without really knowing why?

Do you come because there is nowhere else you’d rather be?

Do you come because you have nowhere else to turn?

All of the above, or none…

You are here because you are beloved

and because you’ve been called

Breathe in – God is waiting for you

Breathe out – God bids you welcome

**POEM/PRAYER COME, SPIRIT, COME NEAR** Rev. Dr. Sarah Agnew <http://praythestory.blogspot.com/> Used with permission

How long, Holy One? How long  
till we find a cure  
till we can stop its spread  
till we can be protected  
till it causes no more death –  
how long, Holy One? How long?  
 How long, Holy One? How long  
will we remain bound  
will life be unwound  
is work to be suspended,  
learning upended –   
how long, Holy One? How long?  
 Come, Holy Spirit, meet us here,  
in turmoil, in fear,  
come Spirit, come near.   
 How long, Holy One?   
How long will we hold   
to the wisdom we have gained  
the presence, the simplicity,  
the compassion and kindness –  
Holy One, help us to hold on.  
 How long, Holy One?   
How long will we remember   
the stories and songs?   
Help us not to forget  
the poems and pictures   
that held us in our need,   
but to carry them and remember  
the better story we sought to live.

Come, Holy Spirit, meet us here,  
in hope, in yearning,  
come Spirit, come near.   
Amen.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Sometimes we pray with our eyes open.

Aware that we are woven together with all that is,

we delight in the beauty of creation

and the great capacity for love among humans.

The joy of others is our joy.

But with our eyes open we also perceive the desecration of the land

and the incredible suffering that is also part of being human.

Our hearts join in the weeping.

Bring to mind the images of the past days.

Where was the beauty? When were you part of creating beauty?

Where have you encountered suffering? When have you been part of inflicting suffering?

Speak now with the Holy Weaver  about what you perceived... *(silence)*

**WORDS OF ASSURANCE** ~ written by Nancy Townley, and posted on the *Worship Connection* page of the Ministry Matters website. http://ww.ministrymatters.com/

Let the light of God’s eternal love flood into your hearts this day.

Feel the healing presence of God in your lives.

Accept God’s love and hope for you.

This is the gift freely given for you by Jesus Christ,

God’s risen Son our Lord. AMEN

**OUR READINGS FOR TODAY:** Take a moment to read our readings for today: Genesis 45:1-15; Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32; Matthew 15 (10-20) 21-28.

**REFLECTION** *by Rev Annette Buckley*

Can you remember a time when you were treated as an outsider? Some of us will have had experiences of being rejected or ignored because others have perceived us to be too young, too old, not cool enough, not sporty enough, not wearing the right clothes….the human capacity to treat the ‘other’ with suspicion and scorn is nothing if not creative in finding ways to exclude. Sometimes single incidents can leave us feeling inferior or unheard, or a particular person might have constantly looked down on us. That feeling is bad enough, but systemic, ongoing abuse and marginalisation is an enormous burden that denies the personhood of those who experience it, whilst those who profit from it can be completely oblivious to what is really going on.

The Canaanite woman in our story has been treated in such a way, and Jesus’ treatment of her at first seems no better. His disciples see her as a nuisance, wanting to send her away because of her shouting and, presumably, following them around. It’s a strange way for them all to behave, following the conversation they’ve just had about “what comes from the heart”. There is not much that is positive coming from their hearts in respect to this woman.

Why should they treat her well? She is an outsider; the use of ‘Canaanite’ to describe her emphasises that her people are hated enemies of Israel. She is a woman, alone, with a demon-posessed daughter. No self-respecting rabbi would have anything to do with her. Jesus’ and the disciples’ initial responses to her may simply show people of their time and place reacting how you would expect them to.

And yet, she persisted. Perhaps she’s at the end of her tether, terrified about what will happen to her daughter. Whatever it is that makes her chase Jesus down and practically insist that he help her, Jesus eventually recognises it as great faith. In the encounter, when Jesus finally sees her in all her dignity as a human being, something in Jesus shifts. The consequences are not just for this woman, but for Jesus’ understanding of his earthly mission.

What does it mean to keep thinking in terms of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’? It has nothing to do with God’s inclusive kin-dom, where there is a place at the table for all. Where will you look this week for pointers to God’s inclusive love? Who do you need to welcome to the table? As we live through this time when there is a renewed focus on race and gender relations, who is God asking you to really see and hear in order for our communities to be places of hope and transformation?

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE***by © B D Prewer, used by permission*

Holy Friend, hear our prayers for the salvation of many.

Where there are Christians whose faith has been shaken by suffering and tragedies,

Let there be light, ***let there be trust,*** let there be hope, ***let there be peace*.**

Where there are cynics whose protective coating has been cracked by genuine love,

Let there be light, ***let there be trust,*** let there be hope, ***let there be peace*.**

Where there are seekers who have come close to belief but hesitate on the brink,

Let there be light, ***let there be trust,*** let there be hope, ***let there be peace*.**

Where there are the dying and the bereaved who face the darkness without hope,

Let there be light, ***let there be trust,*** let there be hope, ***let there be peace*.**

Where there are political leaders who admit their fallibility and now look for guidance,

Let there be light, ***let there be trust,*** let there be hope, ***let there be peace*.**

Where there are church leaders caught up in a web of details but forgetting their first love,

Let there be light, ***let there be trust,*** let there be hope, ***let there be peace*.**

Where there are welfare agencies and overseas aid groups who have become self-serving,

Let there be light, ***let there be trust,*** let there be hope, ***let there be peace*.**

Where there are members of this congregation who carry deep hurts, fears, guilt or anger,

Let there be light, ***let there be trust,*** let there be hope, ***let there be peace*.**

God our Holy Friend, help us to do for one another all those deeds of love which are within our capacity, and where the issues are beyond us, fill up our emptiness with your eternal wisdom and strength. Through Christ Jesus our Saviour,

***Amen!***

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**

Say the Lord’s Prayer.

**SENDING OUT AND BLESSING**

As you go into your day and week,

May your joy be multiplied and shared with others

May your heart be lightened by the Spirit’s song

May your questions lead you to ever deeper faith

May your uncertainties help you stand beside

those whose life is never certain

May you find your home in Christ’s eternal family

May you know that you can always turn to God

May you know yourself to be beloved, called, welcomed

by the holy Three in One who whose presence blesses every time and place. **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.*