**PENTECOST 15a MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE**

**10 – 12 JULY 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/rWN6p5lIuOk>. 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.

**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 not forgotten.

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Welcome to this place that you now set aside, to worship God, to wonder at God’s marvels, to bring confession and thankfulness to the fore. Wherever we are, at whatever day or hour we come to this place we are welcomed by the outstretched arms of Jesus, by the power of the Spirit and by the community of saints. Welcome.

**OPENING PRAYER: PSALM 119: 105-112** *©2002 Nathan Nettleton LaughingBird.net*  
What you say, LORD, lights up the track in front of me  
so I can see where to put my feet.

I am committed to doing what you say is right;  
I’ve given my word and signed on the line.

I have been put through the wringer here, LORD;  
put me back on my feet, just as you promised.

I am giving you the credit for everything, LORD;  
accept my gift and teach me how to do things your way.

Even though my grip on life is shaky,  
I never forget what you have taught me.

Ruthless thugs are always trying to derail me,  
but you have shown me the right track and I’m sticking to it.

Your guidance is a rich heritage for my future;  
it has put a smile on my face forever.

My mind is fixed on following your directions,  
come what may, forever.

Today we continue the journey in Genesis with Isaac, Rebekah and their children. Like any family there are joys and triumphs, struggles and intrigues, prayers and regret. The gospel reading from Matthew unfolds Jesus’ telling of a parable and the generosity of the Sower’s abundant seed throwing, and the outcomes that may prevail. The letter to the Romans punctuates our journey reminding us that, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” 8:1

May the Word of God, *be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path*. Ps 119:105

**READ: GENESIS 25:19-34**

**REBEKAH’S SONG**

*Words by Annette Buckley,* *©2011 Annette Buckley, 2 Snell Grove, Pascoe Vale, Vic, 3044, Australia*

*Music by Linda Young, ©2020 Linda Young, 13 South Road, Woodend. Vic. 3442, Australia.*

*May be used freely in worship with appropriate acknowledgement.*

Rebekah, child of God,

Intriguing matriarch

Her life unfolds in tales, like ours,

both light and dark.

A woman of her time,

a woman of her place,

Responding to God’s call to mother

Isaac’s race.

A woman at a well,

a stranger coming by,

requests a drink, and she runs quickly

to comply.

Her life, forever changed

through hospitality;

she boldly enters God’s new life

and family.

For twenty years or more,

no promised son as heir

Rebekah, childless, still,

till Isaac’s desperate prayer.

The struggle in her womb

the portent of their life;

Esau and Jacob, bound for

bitterness and strife.

By famine driven out,

to be a refugee.

The promise lives, but danger lurks

through jealousy.

A pawn in husband’s plans,

but truth will be revealed;

are kinship games the only power

that women wield?

The family table groans

beneath Rebekah’s brood;

birthrights and blessings bartered

over plates of food.

The firstborn’s blessing spent

by Isaac, vision blurred.

Rebekah sees her subterfuge

fulfill God’s word.

Rebekah, child of God. Rebekah.

While fear and anger seethe

in members of the clan

Rebekah, wise, sends Jacob;

“Leave, flee to Haran.”

Her sons’ lives through her saved

but now Rebekah’s lost.

No-one to mourn her death,

what has her boldness cost?

Rebekah, child of God. Rebekah.

God’s children, too are we

and like Rebekah’s tale

our stories, intertwined with God’s,

we soar and fail;

as people of our time,

as people of our place,

responding to the call we hear

to share God’s grace.

Rebekah, child of God. Rebekah.

**READ: MATTHEW 13:1 – 9, 18 – 23**

**REFLECTION ON Matthew 13:1 – 9**

There could have been many times when you’ve heard the message about the kingdom and not understood it, but how would you know? In those times, maybe you were like a path - heading in a fixed direction, not expecting to have a message from God planted in you. Maybe sometimes now you can still be like that. Heading on a fixed course, not open to the possibilities from God. Think about those times.

Maybe sometimes you’ve been like rocky ground. God’s message of love is attractive, and easy to accept. But it comes with a price. Others don’t always understand your faith. Following God can be difficult when we have to accept people we don’t like, or do things we don’t want to do. Think about the times when your faith has flowered - only to shrivel and die at the first sign of difficulty.

Sometimes your faith has grown up among the thorns. It’s easy to get distracted - life’s so busy and there’s always something important to be done. Some things are so important that they call us away from spending time with God. Even our work for the church can be a distraction that stops us nourishing our spirit. And so, our faith seems stunted and choked. Have you had times like that?

But then, there are times when we are good, fertile soil for God’s message. Think for a minute about what makes good soil. It’s the rotting down of all that went before. The good things, the bad things, they all go into the rich compost of fertile soil. And having fallow time is important too. Resting the soil so that it can be productive.

What are the things that have made you fertile soil? Think about the people who have nurtured you and your faith. Think about your life experiences - good and bad. Think about the choices you’ve made - good and bad. All of these things make up the fertile ground that is you. But it can be hard. Other things have to die to make way for new life. Is there something in your life that needs to die to help you to be good soil?

God is scattering his message into your life. It’s not neatly planted in rows. God doesn’t dig holes and force the seed into you. It’s scattered over you, for you to do with what you will. What are the messages that God is scattering in your life now? What unexpected places could they be coming from? Think about how you can be prepared to accept them, and send down deep roots, and water them, and encourage them to grow.

This week, remember that your life has made you fertile soil for God’s message. Look for God’s scattering of seed in your life.

**PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE**

Loving God of all creation, we pray for the people of the world, bringing our joys and concerns to you our God:

For those with a voice, may they use it for the greater good

For those with no voice, may they now be heard.

For those with power, may they use it with love, justice and mercy

For those without power, may strength, honour and compassion be theirs.

For those who are health care givers and those who keep us safe,

may they be kept well and blessed in their care

For those who have lost their health, may they seek their Creator and know they are loved

For all of us in our sphere of influence may our power by couched in love and grace, God’s guidance and light.

Together, as we are apart, may our prayers be a sweet anointing on the world through Christ Jesus. Amen.

**BLESSING**

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face,

The rains fall soft upon your fields,

And until we meet again,

May God hold you in the palm of his hand.

**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.*