**MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE PENTECOST 2B**

**4th – 6th June, 2021**

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/cXc7Dsid7uI](https://youtu.be/cXc7Dsid7uI" \t "_blank)

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. If you would like to look at previous videos on our Youtube channel, go to [https://youtu.be/z79fBDXZ3U8](https://youtu.be/z79fBDXZ3U8" \t "_blank)

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** 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**

Welcome to worship in the Macedon Ranges Partnership this week. As I write this, we are looking forward to the easing of restrictions in our part of the world, but we recognise that this is not the case for our fellow Victorians. We also recognise that it the relative comfort and safety we have is not shared by everyone, and there are many people around the world who continue to suffer. We hold them all, we hold you all, in our prayers.

We are now entering the period of the church year called ‘Ordinary Time’. The great feasts and festivals of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and Trinity Sunday are behind us. We are moving into the depths of winter, and the hunkering down that comes with that. We might be tempted to close down, so seek to nurture our own inner life, to attend to our inward journey with God – and they are all good things to do. But we are also called during this time to look and see where God is active and calling us into abundant life outside our walls We are called to look beyond ourselves to see and hear where God’s story is calling us to share in the story of our communities.

The lectionary readings return to the Gospel of Mark, and the Hebrew Scripture readings focus on the fascinating stories of I and II Samuel. We will spend time hearing the lectionary stories, and some of those the lectionary leaves out, about Saul, David and the people they are called to lead. We’ll ask how these ancient stories can shed light on our lives today. Wherever you are, whenever you join us, you are most welcome:

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

A candle is lit to remind us that Jesus Christ is the light of the world, and we are called to worship and live in the light of Christ

**OPENING PRAYER of PRAISE: Psalm 130**

I bow down toward your holy

temple and give thanks to

your name for your steadfast

love and your faithfulness;

For you have exalted

your name and your word

above everything.

All the kings of the earth

shall praise you, O LORD,

for they have heard

the words of your mouth.

They shall sing of

the ways of the LORD,

for great is the glory of the LORD.

For though the LORD is high

he regards the lowly;

But the haughty

he perceives

from far away.

Though I walk in the

midst of trouble,

you preserve me against

the wrath of my enemies;

you stretch out your hand,

and your right hand

delivers me.

The LORD will

fulfil his purpose for me;

your steadfast love,

O LORD, endures forever.

Do not forsake the

work of your hands.

**SONG (**suggestion)**: TiS 468 We are your people**

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION : SONG: Again and again** by The Many

You might like to spend a moment in silence before you pray:

Why are things so broken?

Again and again we pray..

When borders are being drawn,

and families torn at the seams

It’s getting harder and harder to see

what any of this means.

When hate is having its day,

and children are shot in the street;

sometimes there’s no way

death has lost its sting.

Why are things so broken?

Again and again we pray

Where has all the mercy gone?

The writing’s on the wall

We just wish that we could sleep.

We want to close our eyes,

we’re not who we want to be.

We look in the mirror

and we don’t like the face that we find,

we pray that you are listening,

God forgive us one more time.

Why are things so broken?

Again and again we pray

Where has all the mercy gone?

We are looking for your face,

we are calling out your name

and if we’re silent

even the stones will cry

Hold us, show us,

again and again;

your loving face

your love remains

Everything’s so broken…

…still your love remains

**READINGS : I Samuel 8:4-20, Psalm 138,** 2 Cor 4:13-5:1, Mark 3:20-35

**REFLECTION: WHO WILL BE OUR LEADER?** by Paul Gilbertson (and *Spill the Beans*)

At the heart of this passage is vulnerability.

Left without a king, or a strong leader, the people worry about their future. Perhaps like us in Victoria with lockdowns. The threat of social implosion without rules, systems and proper governance is one thing. Threats are real to people today and in times past. In our reading the people feel that their leader Samuel is not as strong as other rulers and they are vunerable. Samuel takes this as a personal attack, naturally, yet God seeks to put Samuel at rest by telling him that the people are really expressing anger at the kingship of God. The One who brought them out of Egypt, gave them a new land to call home, provided them with rules and a system of lawful living. This has been the focus of the people’s criticism for an awfully long time.

I want to reflect on the human need to build confidence and the feeling of security, and how so often this comes from the sense that all is well because others who have the responsibility for such order in our communities can give peace and opportunity *within* our country and a feeling of safety *in* our Country. They do this by giving the impression they know what they are doing, appearing knowledgeable, strong and trustworthy. If we were left to our own devices would we have self-doubt in our ability? I’m sure we thrive when people around us are strong; sharing the burdens of life, but at other times happy to pass on such responsibilities and slip into a mode of reliance on others.

We can reflect too on who speaks for God. Or more accurately perhaps ask does God provide us with leaders who serve God’s purposes? I was surprised by our Prime Minister saying he was called by God to become Prime Minister. I believe it asks a lot of questions about policy when you make this statement. There can always be this question; can leaders be considered the representatives of God, or to be divinely appointed? Or are leaders elected to the horror of God, this despite God’s providence and sovereignty over all things. If it were easy and God was able to control all things, then surely we would not have a deadly virus that inflicts pain across the world, we would not have the means to desecrate our planet. So I find it hard today to accept that our rulers and leaders Kings, Queens and Presidents, or Prime Ministers can speak for God.

But, yes, we all have the potential to speak for God and the ability to carry out actions for God. As individuals we can have a knowledge of God and live surrounded by God’s wisdom. We have elements of the truth about God, but no one person has all the truth. Only God holds such truth. We can reflect on the people’s understanding of leadership. The people’s understanding of the King is very black and white. It is about being strong in military terms and having political raw power. It’s about the ability to control and manipulate and prevent others from undue influence. This is not the same as the Biblical prophet’s understanding of a leader. We might compare such a contrast to people’s misunderstanding of who and what Jesus came to be as Messiah: was he going to be conquering and all-powerful, or, meek mild, and filled with love?

Which Jesus do you portray?

**TEAM REFLECTION**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: Song *Leaning in***  by Christopher Grundy

We pray for the lonely ones

knowing that some of us are lonely

and we pray for the heartbroken ones

knowing that some of us are heartbroken

*Refrain: All our hearts and minds*

*are leaning in with clear intention*

*joining in your wayof love in the world*

We pray for the wounded ones

knowing that some of us are wounded

and we pray for the regretful ones

knowing that some of us are regretful *Refrain*

We pray for the starving ones

knowing that some of us are starving

and we pray for the imprisoned ones

knowing that some of us are imprisoned *Refrain*

We pray for the dying ones

knowing that some of us are dying

and we pray for the newly born ones

knowing that some of us are arriving *Refrain*

**SONG: TiS 256 From heaven you came, helpless babe (Servant King)**

**SENDING OUT & BLESSING:**

So go into your day, into your week, into your life,

Seeking God’s wisdom about the values and the people

in whom you put your faith and trust.

Actively living out of the values God has given you

and honouring those people who bear Gods’ image

Doing what you can to share the values of God’s kin-dom

in the community in which you live here and now

Be confident in the promises of God

Speak out! Be renewed!

Share the grace that has found you

to the Glory of God

And may the Holy Three in One

keep you in steadfast love

preserve you from all harm

and guide your steps

along the way of truth.