**MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE – Proper 19B**

**10th – 12th September 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/X39tswf-9ro](https://youtu.be/X39tswf-9ro" \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. We are touching on several of the scripture readings in one way or another this week. 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 (Video Acknowledgement is from Common Grace)**

We acknowledge all the First Nations people who have cared for and nurtured the land on which we meet: the Wurundjeri; Woi Wurruung; Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung.

We pay our respects to their elders, past, present and emerging

We commit ourselves to the work of justice and reconciliation with all people, and with God

**WELCOME and CALL TO WORSHIP**

Welcome to this time of worship together with the Macedon Ranges Partnership. Today we’re going to continue on with our Season of Creation theme, and this time paying particular attention to God’s wisdom as it’s expressed in nature. Let us gather in and prepare ourselves for this time of worship. Let us pray:

Loving God,

you bless us with an abundance of creation,

you bless us with your wisdom,

you bless us with Jesus

to teach us and show us your ways.

We know that your wisdom

doesn’t always match up with our cleverest thoughts,

and we pray that this is a time

where we can be taught

to be led by your Spirit to

follow your ways,

even when they seem strange and difficult.

Bless us as we journey together,

through this time

and through this season.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

**SONG: Stars and planets flung in orbit (TiS 186)**

**PSALM 19 (New English Translation)**

The heavens declare the glory of God;

the sky displays God’s handiwork.

Day after day it speaks out;

night after night it reveals God’s greatness.

There is no actual speech or word,

nor is its voice literally heard.

Yet its voice echoes throughout the earth;

its words carry to the distant horizon.

In the sky he has pitched a tent for the sun.

Like a bridegroom it emerges from its chamber;

like a strong man it enjoys running its course.

It emerges from the distant horizon,

and goes from one end of the sky to the other;

nothing can escape[t] its heat.

The Torah of the Lord is perfect

and preserves one’s life.

The rules set down by the Lord are reliable

and impart wisdom to the inexperienced.

The Lord’s precepts are fair

and make one joyful.

The Lord’s commands are pure

and give insight for life.

The commands to fear the Lord are right

and endure forever.

The judgments given by the Lord are trustworthy

and absolutely just.

They are of greater value than gold,

than even a great amount of pure gold;

they bring greater delight than honey,

than even the sweetest honey from a honeycomb.

Yes, your servant finds moral guidance there;

those who obey them receive a rich reward.

Who can know all their errors?

Please do not punish me for sins I am unaware of.

Moreover, keep me from committing flagrant sins;

do not allow such sins to control me.

Then I will be blameless,

and innocent of blatant rebellion.

May my words and my thoughts

be acceptable in your sight,

O Lord, my sheltering rock and my redeemer.

**BIBLE READINGS:** Proverbs 1:20-33, **Psalm 19**, James 3:1-12**, Mark 8:27-38**

**REFLECTION** By Karen Eller

There is much to learn from the olive tree.

The olive tree has a significant role in Jewish literature. For example, it was an olive leaf the dove brought back to Noah in Genesis, a symbol of life after the devastation of the flood (Gen 8:11).

In the Middle-East it is not easy to grow olive trees. And yet, olive trees will grow in rocky terrain with poor soil quality, with little water and they grow for a long, long time withstanding winds and saltiness. The olive tree is a tough and resilient tree. It seems not to be in a hurry. To “grow like an olive tree” is to grow with not much help, to grow hardy, to grow long and to grow on very little nourishment. The olive tree does not need much to develop and it gives good hard timber with a beautiful grain. It has adapted to lean water supply by producing leaves that are hard and thin and resistant to water-loss.

*Consider…your own hurriedness, the grain of your wood, the shade you offer those around you, your capacity to adapt*

The olive tree has a talent for life. It is the oldest cultivated tree in existence. It is possible that some olive trees in the Garden of Olives today were there in Jesus’ day. And the olive tree produces more than dense wood. Its oil has been used in the anointing of royalty for thousands of years. Its capacity to sustain life has been valued for even longer. Oil is used for softening the skin and has been burned for heat and for light. The oil and the fruit can be eaten and the leaf extract is used medicinally even today.

*Consider…what are your life-giving qualities, what oil and fruit are you producing, do you provide generously, how do you replenish?*

Olive trees like other trees have their own seasons. There is a season for pruning and a season for new growth. There is a season for flowering and a season for setting fruit. In most seasons the olive tree does best if fed. In all seasons the olive tree does best in the company of other olive trees.

*Consider…what season are you in, where is the compost, what hinders your growth, who helps you to fruit, what other resources do you need?*

Once established, olive trees are very hardy and difficult to kill. Furthermore, olive trees do not require fancy pruning, but respond to a pragmatic approach – prune them to a height suitable for picking – no need to count buds – keep it simple. We have much to learn from the olive tree!

**TEAM REFLECTION**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Creator God,

Creating God,

Creative God,

We bring our prayers for your Creation.

We pray that your seeds of love

would be sown in places where hatred rules.

We pray for a rich harvest

of compassion, courage and generosity

where people live with too little

or too much.

Where there is despair,

we pray for oceans of kindness

and rivers of drought-breaking hope

We consider the lillies of the field,

that neither toil nor spin,

but we pray also

for people who are toiling to keep us safe.

We look to the hills,

and ask for your help

for those who are feeling helpless today.

We pray that you would give us ears

to hear the groaning of Creation.

We ask that you help us to be

as wise as serpents

and as gentle as doves

as we hear your call

to join in the work of heralding

a new Creation for all.

Amen.

**SONG: Community (Part of a family, interconnected)** by Dave Brown

*Alternative suggestion: Community of Christ TiS 473*

**SENDING OUT AND BLESSING:**

So go from here.

May your roots be nourished with plenty of

love, companionship, enthusiasm and joy.

May your branches protect and hold

your near and loved ones,

and extend to your neighbours.

And may you bear fruit,

fruit that is grounded in God’s love and generosity.

May you share it generously

and with abundance.

Go in Jesus name

to love and serve the Lord.

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
* Mia Mia – Kyneton: Commonwealth bank, B.S.B. 063 517, Account no.: 1002 1775