



## **Fifth Sunday of Easter, April 28th, 2024**

### **The Fig Tree Worship Resource**

#### **Call to worship & Lighting the Candle**

*Psalm 22:27 - All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.*

God of all,  
gather us in,  
with your love in our hearts,  
your words in our ears  
and your praise on our lips:

#### **Singing - In the presence of your people**

**TiS 727**

*Light the candle - Christ is with us.*

#### **Acknowledging**



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander  
Christian Congress

As we gather, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of these unceded land and waters. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.

#### **Singing - Love divine, TiS 217**

OR: Come as you are TiS 693

#### **Prayer**



*1 John 4:7 - Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*

God who is love,  
we lift our hearts in thanks to you  
for all those who show us your love.

We remember from our early years,  
the ones who nurtured us

and taught us about life  
through their loving words and actions.

*Beloved, let us love one another,*  
**We thank you for their loving presence.**

We remember old friends  
who celebrated our joys with us,  
and stood beside us when things got tough.  
Who held our hands and guided our feet  
along the path of lovingkindness.

*Beloved, let us love one another,*  
**We thank you for their loving presence.**

We remember members of our family,  
those with us, and those gone before,  
who have shown us love despite our differences,  
or because of our differences.  
Who have taught us quiet wisdom  
and practised deep love to teach us your way.

*Beloved, let us love one another,*  
**We thank you for their loving presence.**

We recall those who surround us now;  
friends and family, neighbours, lovers, pets...  
who bring your gift of love alive for us,  
generously,  
often when we least expect it.

*Beloved, let us love one another,*  
**We thank you for their loving presence.**

And we confess  
that there are times  
when we have not returned that love  
or have not offered it freely, without strings.

*1 John 4:20 & 21: Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.*

We remember those we have struggled to love.



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Siblings in love, in the past, and in the present,  
who we have ignored, shunned,  
shamed or rejected.  
We ask forgiveness for our falseness.

In the quiet, we recall their names:  
*time of quiet*

God who is love. You forgive and renew us.

Give us courage, hearts full of brave love,  
to show up when we're needed,  
to see people through love's eyes,  
to go where we are sent,  
and to always abide in your love,  
in Jesus' name. Amen.

#### ***Passing the peace***

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Peace be with you:  
**and also with you.**

#### ***Listening***

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Read: John 15: 1-8  
Acts 8:26-40

For these words of faith  
and for Jesus the Word  
**Thanks be to God.**

#### ***Reflecting - Rev. Moira Dodsworth***

The passage in Acts about Phillip and the Eunuch has always fascinated me. I think the appeal has been as it is about an outcast.

I have often lived on the edges. My childhood in Johannesburg, where my parents disagreed with the regime, and I was outspoken among my peers. In Zimbabwe/Rhodesia where we were part of the minority and my husband spent time as a conscript, a medic in the air force. In a time of great uncertainty, we moved from being part of the ruling class to being labelled by our skin colour whether we agreed with the past regime or not. In Swaziland we were tolerated for the skills we brought and the education we could offer but knew we could not stay beyond 7 years,

and finally as immigrants in Australia. Many in our society live on the edges, the margins, and I wonder whether we in the institutional church make it easy for them to seek and find God.

The Ethiopian was a double-outcast, he lived in Ethiopia which made it hard for him to travel to places where he could worship regularly, and by his sexuality, he had been castrated. We do not know his religious background, but we are told that he had "been to Jerusalem to worship". He was trusted by the Ethiopian queen, "in charge of her entire treasury" (8:27). He was reading the scriptures but puzzled by them; I'm sure of a situation in which we have all found ourselves. Phillip is sent by the Spirit and says:

*"Do you understand what you are reading?" He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" (8:31)*

In today's world where the authority of scripture is debated, I believe there is wisdom in this passage for us and all who seek God. Scripture has authority. In the UCA, we acknowledge this in the Basis of Union, but here we discover that not only Scripture is important in the search for God, so is the interpreter.

Over the Easter season, we hear in our readings on several occasions that "we are witnesses". People are needed in the interpretation of the scriptures and the leading of people to God, actions are not always enough.

Phillip is sent by the Spirit. He is given guidance and directions. He is moved and assisted in his interpretation. He offers the Ethiopian, not only an interpretation of the scriptures he reads, which is a tricky passage, but also proclaims the good news. The Ethiopian responds and asks for baptism. Is this the call to us as "witnesses"?

The passage from John's gospel calls us to abide in Christ. We have been cleansed by the word that has been spoken. Apart from Christ, we can do nothing:

*If you abide in me, and my words  
abide in you, ask for whatever*



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*you wish and it will be done for you. (John 15:7)*

The Ethiopian asked for help, wished to know more, to understand, to find God. Phillip was sent and provided the human help that was needed. As we are called to be witnesses, are we abiding in Christ and are we ready?

#### ***Singing - Faith will not grow .. TiS 691***

OR: Holy Spirit, go before us TiS 420

OR: Lord, your word abiding TiS 427

#### ***Offering***

Accept these gifts of love, enabling Spirit. Use them and send us wherever we are needed to let your love loose, in Jesus' name. Amen.

#### ***Notices***

#### ***Prayers for World & Community***

Holy Triune Communion of love,  
we pray for the world you love so much.

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the people who live in fear;  
victims of violence and their loved ones,  
in homelands that are warzones,  
and in ordinary houses in our street.

Holy Triune Communion of love,  
we pray for the world you love so much.

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the earth and all living things,  
struggling to survive,  
reaching for air under rising tides,  
bleaching colour, losing life.

Holy Triune Communion of love,  
we pray for the world you love so much.

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who risk their lives  
to walk your way of love,  
bringing aid,

building shelter,  
bridging great divides of time and troubles.

Holy Triune Community of love,  
we pray for the world you love so much.

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who feel all out of love,  
for reasons of their own making, or not.  
For families divided, for the lonely ones,  
the forgotten ones and the lost ones.

Holy Triune Community of love,  
We pray for the world you love so much.

**Hear our prayer.**

In the quiet,  
we bring the prayers of our hearts to you,  
knowing that you hear us:

*(time of quiet)*

We pray for ourselves, your community of love,  
give us the audacious belief  
that we can make a difference  
by being ready to love others as you love us,

And we pray together:

#### ***The Lord's Prayer***

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory  
are yours, now and forever. Amen.

#### ***Singing - Lord Jesus, we belong to you*** ***TiS 686***

OR: Make love happen TiS 697



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### ***Blessing***

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Loving Spirit,  
As you sent Philip to teach your love  
in word and deed,  
so send us.

Gracious God,  
give us what we need  
to do your work  
and keep us close to you,  
abiding in your love.

Siblings in Christ,  
Love one another, as you are loved.  
That's it.  
And all the people say: **Amen.**

### ***Singing - In the presence of your people*** ***TiS 727***

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