



## ***Pentecost 5 - Sunday June 23rd, 2024***

### ***UCA Anniversary - The Fig Tree Worship Resource***

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

Leader: Come! Let us worship God!  
On the road this day,  
we travel as companions again.

**All: Meeting you Creator God,  
in our midst.**

Leader: On the road this day,  
we renew the path set before us.

**All: Following you Saviour Jesus  
of our hearts.**

Leader: On the road this day,  
we step into new beginnings.

**All: Hearts aflame Spirit Guide  
with gentle courage.**

*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.

#### **Prayer of approach**

God of the path and of the pilgrims,  
of generations been and those to come,  
of story and song,  
look with favour on your people  
gathered this day.  
As we come again to your footstool,  
ready to hear your Word to us this day,  
break open our hearts,  
may it be for us a light in dark places.

Soothe our minds,  
Whispering life giving words  
where feelings of despair dwell.

Enliven us and make us ready to step out  
into your world once more.

To live your way, to speak of your glory  
and to participate in the renewal and recreation  
of your world. Amen.

#### **Singing - Sing of the Lord's Goodness TiS 183**

OR: Here in this place, new light is streaming. TiS 474

OR: Joyful, joyful, we adore you. TiS 152

#### **President's Message -**

**[Link to 2024 Anniversary message](#)**



#### **Prayer**

God of the years,  
God of the pain, and of the divisions  
we come in the stillness of this moment,  
acknowledging that the road  
you have been calling us to walk upon  
since before the moment of Union,  
has been neither simple, nor steady.

The costly path you call us in to  
at times leaves us weary and resentful  
as we feel the tensions rising between us,  
as siblings united in you,  
we are at odds with one another.

For a moment or two we forget  
The gifts and grace you have given to us  
with outstretched arms and without condition.  
We are moved and swayed  
by the world around us,  
caught up in the moment  
and give in to our feelings and fears.

God of the path and the pilgrims,  
Help us to remember  
that we have never journeyed alone.  
That you were there in the beginning,  
You are here now with us  
and you will continue to be with us  
to the eternal.

Help us to look beyond.  
Beyond the pains we feel.  
Beyond the things that divide us.

*The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Friends of the Fig Tree, Uniting Church in Australia  
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Beyond the words weaponised to hurt us.

Help us to look into the face of one another  
and to see reflecting back to us  
the very heart of you.

God who brought us into union,  
Open our eyes to see the work  
that you still have for us to do in this world.  
May we know the power of our unity in you,  
May it bring us deeper  
into the heart of your love,  
and strengthen the bonds  
of communion with one another. Amen

Even in our differences,  
In our pain and our divisions, we are one.  
For all are created by the same God,  
and the table is long, and the table is wide,  
a place of welcome and refuge for all.  
**Thanks be to God. Amen**

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

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May the Peace of God dwell with you:  
**and also with you.**

#### ***Listening***

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Read Revised Common Lectionary:  
2 Corinthians 6:1-13 & Mark 4:35-41  
OR UCA Anniversary readings:  
Ephesians 2:19-22 & John 17:1-11

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

#### ***Reflecting - Rev. Arnie Wierenga***

Some thirty years ago I was chatting with a fellow stallholder at Salamanca Market in Hobart. He was a maker of fine leather goods and I was a woodturner (still am!). I remember this day because he said something that stunned me. "You know we shouldn't be talking to each other." While we shared a Dutch background, he was Catholic, and I Protestant, although how he even knew that puzzled me.

I've since learnt that my mother's family were Huguenot refugees from France. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and

17<sup>th</sup> centuries, a protestant movement inspired by the teachings of John Calvin threatened the powerful Roman Catholic church. Many fled for their lives across the globe. Holland was a safe haven for my ancestors.

Understanding history can inform choices for a better today. Earlier this year Poowong celebrated 150 years since the town was founded. As churches gathered for an ecumenical celebration, Father Peter Slater recalled the vital importance of Vatican II in 1962. It was a key moment in history that enabled Catholic cooperation with Protestants.

I was drawn to the Uniting Church as a teenager. A key reason was that she promised to be a church embedded in the local landscape. My migrant family longed for their homeland, but that homeland was foreign to me. I wanted to know First Nations people. And I was drawn to the dynamic nature of the Uniting Church. The promise of being a pilgrim people; the promise of *uniting* as a word of action; the promise of building relationships across the churches beyond the three that formed us.

But it's not easy. It's not easy to build bridges or cross divides. Some ideas challenge so deeply they seem a bridge too far. It's not easy to uphold the vision of *uniting* when change takes so much energy, and our resources seem so depleted. In the gospel passage, we listen to the final prayer of Jesus and we are drawn into a desire for unity – that disciples may be one, as Jesus and the Father are one.

Reflecting on this passage, Rev. Bill Loader says salvation isn't something earned (say by following Jesus or confessing him as Lord), but rather lived in relationship. Jesus seeks unity with God. Jesus longs for communion with the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and that longing extends to us. Communion means uniting with all who seek the pilgrim path of Jesus. In other words, the good news of Jesus Christ is shown in community, where the love of God is lived out in its fullest sense. That challenges how we view other denominations, other



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congregations, and even other members of our own faith communities. I'm aware that taking time to understand those who seem alien is vital to finding that which unites us. Being a student of history helps illuminate otherwise unconscious attitudes that hinder us.

If salvation is lived in community as an expression of God's love, then that calls us to find ways to love those we don't wish to talk to – those who have wronged us; those whose faith practices we do not understand; those who we mistrust historically; those whose company we do not enjoy...

At her best, this is the Uniting Church, a pilgrim people on the way towards the promised end. Our foundations commit us to constantly correct what is erroneous in our life, and that which will bring us into deeper unity with other churches.

It is timely that Act 2 is moving us, as it reminds us of the visionary work that birthed our church. Act 2 calls us to be enlivened and encouraged in the Spirit, to be renewed in our work. As hard as that may seem, I long for deep communion as Jesus describes. And that longing sets us on a uniting path as pilgrims in his name.

#### **Affirming Our Faith**

**We are a pilgrim people** from *Uniting in Worship*

We believe in God,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  
We proclaim Jesus Christ,  
the crucified and risen One,  
confessing him as Lord  
to the glory of God the Father.

In the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
we acclaim Jesus as the Lord of the church, the  
Head over all things,  
the beginning of a new creation.

We acknowledge that we live  
and work between the time  
of Christ's death and resurrection  
and the final consummation  
of all things which he will bring.

We are a pilgrim people,  
always on the way towards a promised goal;  
on the way Christ feeds us  
with words and sacraments,  
and we have the gift of the spirit  
in order that we may not lose the way.

We will live and work  
within the faith and unity  
of the one holy catholic and apostolic church,  
bearing witness to that unity  
which is both Christ's gift and his will.

We affirm that every member of the church  
is engaged to confess  
the faith of Christ crucified.

Together with all the people of God,  
we will serve the world for which Christ died. and  
we await with hope  
the day of the Lord Jesus.

#### ***Singing - I am the church! You are the church! TIS 467***

OR: O Christ the healer TIS 638

OR: *The Pilgrims' Song* – Paul Chalson ([vimeo link](#))

#### **Offering**

God who draws us together in love,  
Bless these gifts we bring, and bless us.  
Use them and use us, to reflect your unity  
and bring your hope and healing. Amen.

#### **Notices**

Do you remember the birth of the Uniting Church in Australia in 1977? Or were you born after that? Or have you come to the UCA since then? Share your stories.

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

God who unites us,  
We come before you  
with hearts filled with hope and gratitude,  
giving thanks for the years already given in union  
and your faithful people  
who upon seeing your vision strove to bring this,  
our Uniting Church into being.  
As the continuing faithful,



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may we seek to live in unity and love,  
and we pray for your guidance and wisdom.

God, we lift up our world to You,  
a world filled with diversity and beauty,  
yet also marked by pain and division.

Help us to see Your image each person we meet,  
recognising our shared humanity  
and the call to live in peace and harmony.  
May we embrace the vision for your church,  
striving for justice and compassion  
in all our actions.

We pray for those who are suffering,  
for the oppressed and marginalised,  
for the lonely and broken-hearted.  
Grant them comfort and strength,  
may your Spirit stir deeply within us  
to reach out with love and support.  
May we work so that our communities  
be places of refuge and healing,  
reflecting your boundless grace.

Inspire us to be faithful stewards  
of your creation,  
caring for the earth and all its inhabitants.  
Help us to make choices  
that honour and protect the environment,  
ensuring a sustainable future  
for generations to come.

God, we seek unity  
within our church and beyond,  
embracing the richness  
of our different traditions and perspectives.  
Let us be a living testimony of your love,  
working together  
in mutual respect and understanding.  
May our faith communities be beacons of hope,  
where your Word is proclaimed  
with joy and conviction.

As we journey together, guided by your Spirit,  
empower us to live out the Gospel  
in practical ways.

Hear our prayers this day in the spirit of unity.  
As we pray together as Jesus taught us:

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

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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 - God gives us a future TiS 687***

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OR: Thuma Mina Solmandla (Send Us, Jesus) TiS 749

#### ***Blessing***

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The God who calls us onto the pathways,  
never leaves or forsakes us,  
but takes each and every step with us.

The God who calls us in to continuing unity,  
Sees our divisions, knows our struggles  
and continues to call us to the table together.

The Christ who blesses us with the gift of life  
makes the Way for us.

May the Spirit enable within each one of us  
the courage to sit alongside one another,  
and the love to see each as Beloved of you,  
as we faithfully journey  
into the season that is to come.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord  
**in the name of Christ. Amen**

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