



Sunday August 18th, 2024
The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

(From Psalm 111: 1-3)

Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. Full of honour and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.

Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging



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 - God of grace and God of glory TiS 611 (try tune AHB 543 (ii) RHUDDLAN)

OR: Here in this place TiS 474



Prayer

From Uniting in Worship 2, p261

God of wisdom,
we come to you as ordinary people.
We come seeking wisdom.
We come offering ourselves
knowing our need of you.

We know we have not always been wise
in our care for other people
We have shut our eyes
to those who need shelter, clothing, food.

In our care for the world
we have taken the gifts of creation for granted.

In our faithfulness to you
we have thought more of ourselves.

We come asking forgiveness,
offering our regrets,
our impulsiveness
our forgetfulness

and our failure to live up to our desire to follow
the ways of your Son, our example, Jesus Christ.

In Christ, through Christ and because of Christ,
our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God

You refill the cup of life, O God

In Christ we find refuge and strength

Amen

Singing - Jesus put this song into our hearts TiS 670

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Ephesians 5:15-20
John 6:51-58

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

Reflecting - Rev. Jennie Gordon

On first hearing, there's a gaping chasm between these two readings, so big that it's hard to jump from one side to the other without falling, falling, falling ... The reading from Ephesians comes as part of a larger section of



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the letter, telling the people how they should be conducting themselves as they live as followers of Jesus. It has echoes of Wisdom literature, giving us direct and clear instruction; Be careful then, how you live.

Jumping over to the gospel of John, we're also offered a smaller slice of a larger loaf, all about the bread of life. We're eating flesh and drinking blood and living forever; in metaphor and meaning that we're told the Jews struggled to understand and so do we.

But if we start pulling threads, we might see some connections. Here's one – we are invited to be filled, not with wine, but with the Spirit, and not with food that doesn't last, but with the bread that came down from heaven. In each of these two verses God is reaching towards us, from outside us, from beyond us, reaching to connect with us and fill us with life.

When there's a gap, a space, a lacuna, an emptiness within us, we find it disturbing and our tendency is to fill up with things that give us quick comfort, a feeling of fullness. This is how addiction begins, because in the beginning a little bit fills us, and then we keep needing more to get that feeling, more of whatever we are using; drugs, alcohol, food, sex, power, violence towards ourselves or others..., we become consumed by what we are consuming, it takes over and does not bring life but a deeper sense of emptiness and often isolation.

It's probably safe to say that we all have known some spiritual emptiness, a dark night of the soul, to a greater or lesser extent. We have all experienced times in our lives when we have nothing left to give, to say, or even sometimes to believe. That may be where you are right now. The truth that we have clung to abandons us and we are spent. In these moments, we often think that our deeds and our duty, our fervent prayerful practices impel and assist us to reach for God. If we work hard enough, we will reach high enough, high enough to touch heaven and be satisfied. We can see it as a life-long expedition towards the

holy, holy, holy, when really, the holy, holy, holy is moving towards us.

As John's gospel begins... *and the Word became flesh and made their home among us.* This was not because we did anything to deserve it, or make it happen, but because God reached out to us in the reality we understand, the reality of flesh and blood, in love.

Every Monday night during the school term around 70 people gather for a meal at St. John's Uniting Church in Cowes. What began as an outreach to feed the hungry has become a village of care and connection. Everyone is welcome, the door is open and there is always a place at a table. The food is delicious, but the companionship is life-giving, literally.

Both of today's readings have this sense of God longing to fill us with the very essence of God: love that leads to life. Don't get drunk with wine, says the writer of Ephesians, don't use a substitute to fill your longing, but be filled with the Spirit as you sing uplifting songs to each other. Life that is full is to be found in community with one another, in communion with the Spirit.

May you be still long enough
for the Spirit to reach out and fill you.
May you find yourself in the company of others
and lift your voices in song.
May you feast on the bread of life together
and live. Amen.

Singing - Jesus the Christ said... TiS 239

OR: Brother, Sister, let me serve you TiS 650

Offering

As people of God
We bring ourselves,
all that we have and who we are.
We ask your blessing on these offerings to be used
in your kingdom.
Amen



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Notices

Aug 19 is the World Humanitarian Day

Aug 22 is the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence based on Religion or Belief.

Aug 23 is the International day for the Remembrance of the slave trade and its Abolition.

Prayers for World & Community

Loving God, we come to you with our prayers, knowing that you listen and answer.

We pray for the world

For all places where there is conflict
between nations,
within communities,
within families,
in individual's hearts

Help us to work for peace wherever we can,
May your peace be spread.

For all of creation, help all people to be wise in using your and sharing your gifts.

We pray for our country

For wise and compassionate leaders
For all decision makers that those less fortunate are considered

We pray for our church

That our Councils make wise decisions
That people come before regulations and buildings
May we be a people of praise on a journey where you lead.

We pray for our communities

Those inside and outside our buildings
Those sick, bereaved, in care, frightened, in need of care.

We pray for those we love and ourselves.

In silence we offer the prayers, so deep that we do not have the words.

(time of quiet)

We pray together then as Jesus taught us:

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 - Forth in your name TiS 571

OR: Filled with the Spirit's power TiS 411

Blessing

May we all be wise with the wisdom of God,
thinking before we speak or act.
May God the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer
be with you every step of the journey.

Amen

Reflection & Editor: Rev Jennie Gordon
Shearwater Ministry Team - Coves
revjenniegordon@gmail.com



Liturgy: Rev. Moira Dodworth
Wattlebird Ministry Team
Trafalgar Parish - Yallourn Nth - Drouin