



Pentecost 18 - Sunday September 22nd, 2024

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

If you come knowing that you are flawed and in need, then you are in the right place.
We all have a place in God's grace.

If you come feeling small in the presence of God, then you are in the right place.

In God, the small find welcome and a true home.

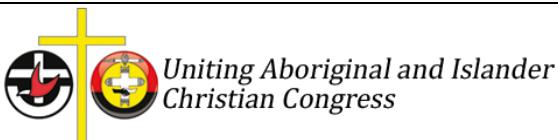
If you have come full of gratitude for all that God has done, then you are in the right place.

We come to give our wholehearted thanks and praise.

(adapted from UiW)

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 - Sing praise and thanksgiving

TiS 107

OR: Father welcomes all his children TiS 491
OR: God himself is present TiS 121

Responsive reading - Psalm 1

Alternatively you may wish to screen Ian Brown's Reflection on Psalm 1.

Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, **or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers;**

but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night. **They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.** The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. **Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;** for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.



Prayer

Creator God, you are the beginning and home of everything, you weave creation into being and craft this tapestry of humanity; you make us one people and are worthy of all our praise.

Lord Jesus, teacher and healer, Word of God and one-with-us, your love for us all took you into the darkest of places and beyond; you are our light and our hope.

Spirit of God, within and among us, mystery and energy, disturber and bringer of new life; you inspire us to live beyond our small horizons.

God of grace:

your love never ends,
your mercy blows our minds,
your faithfulness continues to surprise;
we praise you and worship you.

Here, in your presence we are known, we are secure and loved. So in confidence we come with our prayers of confession:

God of mercy, we confess that we too often let anger, apathy, and our routines come between us and those we love.

We draw near to you now, O God.

Draw near to us.



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We know that we make mistakes in our life together as your church. We have not extended ourselves in welcome to all who need your love and mercy.

We draw near to you now, O God.

Draw near to us.

We recognise our need, seek your forgiveness and long for your words of grace.

We draw near to you now, O God.

Draw near to us.

Hear the Good News; the grace of God, is our healing, our wholeness and our hope.

Thanks be to God. Amen

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a &
Mark 9:30-37

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

Reflecting - Rev. Moira Dodsworth

Wisdom from above and wisdom from below, which do we choose? God gives all humans the freedom of choice, we are shown this right through our Christian scriptures and, in James' letter, it is more explicit. Do we choose God's wisdom from above, or the wisdom from our hearts as we see played out in most of our societies?

James writes in practical terms about the wisdom of moral behaviour, thinking before speaking, as we heard last week, understanding our passions, what is driving us in our actions. Is it what Christ teaches or is it the arrogance and envy that drives much of society?

If we start by looking at young children. I remember the playgroup we were part of before

my children attended school, each child brought their own ride-on vehicle and stroller as these were the centre of most quarrels and disasters. Envy. If you have it, I want it. At school we see kids teased or even assaulted because they have more fashionable clothes, are better at sports or even get better marks. "Envy and selfish ambition lead to disorder and wickedness" writes James.

Taking it further, we see it in business, politics and wars. We live in a world of values where "to be" means "to have". Our position in society, even, for some, to be content or happy depends on how much we have. For some this means doing anything they can think of, violence and even war to acquire what the other has. What a sad view of humanity, that the desire of the human heart is to be the greatest.

So, James tells us:

3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.

The encouragement in this is that this is the wisdom from above and right through James' letter we learn, as humans, we cannot be like this from birth or at conversion, we are a work in progress. *4:8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.*

We are encouraged to seek out the motivation for our thoughts and actions, if they are not in the wisdom from above, then we need to seek God's help to change. Conversion is a continual process, it is a journey of spiritual transformation. We are followers of Christ as individuals and community and our work is to follow Christ. As we gather, we need to consider our behaviours and to change. We need to talk about these things. We need to have conversations about who God is calling us to be, and who we want to be, and what does this mean. We are called to imitate Christ, the best example of all.

We know there are disputes and conflicts, envy in our communities but we do not always do



anything about it, because it is too hard, we might get hurt. It's not the picture we want to show to the world but all too often it is and as we do nothing they remain and fester.

Submit yourselves to God, examine your heart, ask forgiveness, seek God's help and change. *Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.* Being followers of Christ means growing, having the courage to be different, it's hard work but possible and living in peace, close to the one who loves us best is an amazing reward.

Let it be so.

Singing - Make me a channel of your peace

TiS 607

OR: God be in my head and in my understanding TiS 549

OR: Kneels at the feet of his friends TiS 640

Offering

God of all wisdom, as we offer these things in your name join us with your wisdom until we embody your way.

Notices

September 26 is the *International Day for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.*

Prayers for World & Community

We have so much to be thankful for, loving God, but we know all is not well for many and for our wider world. As our lives seem more unstable, things we rely on are broken in the wind and our systems seem so fragile. Let our trust be in you loving God, who never changes.

As we find it hard to know just what we should do, what tomorrow will bring. When the world seems less reliable and for many, less safe. Help us to know who and what to trust.

As we are horrified by what we see in Ukraine and Palestine, we know that you surround us, and care deeply for us all. We pray that your love will surround all people. We pray that our leaders

and those of other countries will deal with people with compassion, working towards peace, enabled to see solutions and dignity for all.

As we see the Spring in our gardens and all around us, let the signs of new life fill us with joy too. As creation bursts with life again, as it does each year, inspire us again to care for our planet as we should. Help us trust that as the Spring comes each year, we can trust in you.

We pray for your church; may the people you gather to be your church, come together as a body to help others in your name. Unsettle those in comfortable power with truth and confront self-interest with your cry for justice. Let wisdom flourish in seemingly barren ground and transform selfishness into common good. Reach out with healing to all, shield us from our greed and denial. Let your abundance take root and grow.

We pray for our world, our community, our friends, our families, and ourselves; we name those on our hearts and minds to you now in the quiet:

We pray for your healing, compassionate presence, as we say together the prayer you taught:

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 - Breathe on me breath of God

TiS 407

OR: Your words to me are life and health TiS 430

OR: Lord of all hopefulness TiS 613



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Blessing

The peace of God, ever living and always active
be your guide and your comfort.

The peace of God, that makes the impossible
happen, be your strength and your enabler.

The peace of God, generously available to all,
be your inspiration.

And the Blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now;
that you may be always nourished,
like trees planted by living waters.
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
in the name of Christ. Amen

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