



Sunday February 2nd, 2025

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Gather us in love,
God who reaches for us,
who puts words in our mouths
and joy in our hearts.

Draw us into your unending circle of love.

May all we do and hear and think and say
be bathed in your loving-kindness,
through this time of worship and always,
Amen.

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 lands and waters. We pay respect to Elders past and present. 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 - Come as you are TiS 693

OR: Here in this place TiS 474

Listening

Read: **Jeremiah 1:4-10**



Prayer

God of grace, you knew us before we were born
and have journeyed with us through all times.

Thank you for the constancy
of your loving presence,
whether or not we can feel, sense or know it.
You are holy. You are with us. **Thank you.**

For the gift of each new morning,
sun rising early in the summer sky
bathing oceans and cities,
farms and forests
without preference or exclusion.
You are light. You are with us. **Thank you.**

For the blessing of breath,
misty in the mouths of cows,
erupting from the blowholes of whales,
moving in and out of our bodies,
unearned and full of life,
You are breath. You are with us. **Thank you.**

For the courage of youth
and the wisdom of years.
For the ancestors we carry
and the ones yet to come.
For the encompassing of trees, horizons, water
and words in the mouths of prophets.
You are life. You are with us. **Thank you.**

(time of quiet)

And so in gratitude we pray:
Word of life, teach us what to say:

All of us have felt unworthy,
unable to come up with the right words
at the right time.
Making silly surface comments
when deep heart sounds were needed.
Spouting glib phrases and platitudes
when love longed for a voice.
Spitting hateful retorts at our accusers
when compassion was gasping for air.
Saying nothing, nothing at all,
because we were too afraid.

Teach us what to say and how to live.
Help us to love as you do.
Forgive our foolishness and fear,
replace it with unending love.

Siblings in Christ, be assured,
you are known,
loved, blessed and forgiven.
Let your life speak love,



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and let your love run wild.
Amen and amen and amen.

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: 1 Cor 13:1-13 (NRSV) with many voices or alternating.

Voice 1: *If I speak in the tongues of humans and of angels but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*

Voice 2: And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but do not have love, I am nothing.

Voice 3: *If I give away all my possessions and if I hand over my body so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

Voice 4: Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.

Voice 5: *It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable; it keeps no record of wrongs; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth.*

ALL: It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Voice 6: *Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.*

Voice 7: For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part,¹⁰ but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.

Voice 8: *When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.*

Voice 9: For now we see only a reflection, as in a mirror, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

ALL: *And now faith, hope, and love remain, these three, and the greatest of these is love.*

Read: Luke 4:21-30

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

Reflecting - Rev. Heather den Houting

Crowds of people are fascinating things. Sometimes they are joyful and exuberant based on a common purpose, sometimes they are strident and demanding, sometimes threatening and scary. What has always interested me is the way in which crowds of people can turn in an instant based on the dynamic of their situation. Football fans can turn ugly, theatre audiences can be swept up in rapture, political rallies can become overwhelming in their fervour.

Being part of a crowd is actually a normal part of our human identity. It is very rare that we are not part of a community, and our sense of right and wrong, or common sense, can be strongly swayed by those around us. You may remember being part of a crowd when you did not want to rock the boat, or we may find ourselves regretting a movement or action that harmed others, but we were so caught up in the moment there seemed nothing else to do.

So, what do you think of today's readings in relation to "being one of the crowd"?

Firstly, we have Jeremiah, who is reluctant to speak against a crowd. Being a prophet is a risky thing, so the motivation and encouragement to



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step away and speak out has to be pretty powerful. God's call on Jeremiah's life is so overwhelming, he is pulled out of the crowd and given confidence that he had authority to pluck up and pull down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant. Have you ever felt this risky call to be a prophetic voice? Did you understand that even a small voice might be enough to sway a crowd?

And then there is the encouraging voice of Paul, who was not afraid of speaking out, but his challenge was to guide and shepherd a crowd that had formed as a new community and were trying to figure out who they were and how they were to be in the world. This community had formed into different factions. Earlier, Paul strongly encouraged all members to be respectful of each other and to acknowledge each other's gifts in community. And here we have a passage that is intended to be the kernel of common sense. He is cajoling, entreating and inviting the crowd to understand that the basis of this new world in Christ, is love. Do you think the crowd in Corinth was swayed by this argument? Do you think the Christian community of today is swayed by it?

Finally, we have this fascinating story of Jesus and his home town crowd. We are dropped into the middle of the story at the Synagogue, a place of power and influence. When he arrives, he is welcomed and lauded. He is playing by the rules and people are amazed by the graciousness of his words. But then he risks the way of the prophet and challenges the crowd. To fulfill the scripture Jesus must do this, he must overturn the complacent, he must make the message of liberation bigger than that of the crowd gathered around.

And the crowd turns, that are not convinced or persuaded, rather they become a chorus of anger and rejection. Are you surprised? Each of these people in this temple had studied and knew the scripture from Isaiah. Why was it that they did not kindly welcome and embrace this new voice?

This message of love, of inclusiveness, of reversal of fortunes is sometimes hard to hear. When we gather in our crowd, in our community and in our congregation, what is our kernel of common sense? Is it love? Do we react with kindness, humility, compassion and inclusiveness? What do we reject because it is too hard to bear? Today, this day – let your crowd, the body of Jesus Christ, hold courageous hope. Let the one who liberates you, redeems you and sustains you pass through your midst with honour and thanksgiving.

Singing - God of Jeremiah grieving

TiS 679

OR: The great love of God TiS 164

OR: Love divine, all loves excelling TiS 217

Offering

Bless these gifts we bring, love-offerings, in the name of the Source of Love. Bless the gifts we give each other in community; time, care, prayer, conversations and company. Bless the gifts we offer the world; a voice for justice, a life of communal connection, a refuge for the lost, a sanctuary for the oppressed. Bless us as we strive to live in love, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Notices

February 1-9 is World Interfaith Harmony Week.

Prayers for World & Community

*You can choose to sing or speak this song through the prayer: **Seek ye first the kingdom of God***
TiS 745

sing/speak : Seek ye first the kingdom of God
TiS 745 - verse 1

We look for you, God of all,
We seek you in the familiar hang outs
closest to our hearts and homes,



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and in the distant places of the world.
We find you sheltering with the homeless,
eating with the hungry,
weeping with the grieving
celebrating with the joyous,
and walking alongside the lost and lonely.

sing/speak: Seek ye first the kingdom of God
TiS 745 - verse 2

We ask for peace.
Peace for the victims of violence,
in places of war and turmoil,
in hearts that are heavy with power and greed.

We seek refuge for the persecuted,
food in the famine
healing in the hopelessness,
shelter in the manifold storms.

We knock on the door of hope,
pleading for justice,
for reconciliation,
for an answer on behalf of the warming earth
and her creatures who are vanishing.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God
TiS 745 - verse 3

Nourish us with your unending love,
speak words into our mouths.
Animate our bodies to belong
and our lives to bend,
to lean in to each other,
for the sake of the world you love,
and the ongoing ministry of Jesus
who moves among us,
and taught us to pray saying:

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 - Loving Spirit, loving Spirit TiS 417

OR: O thou who camest from above TiS 572

OR: God of grace and God of glory TiS 611

Blessing

Send us in love,
God who reaches for us,
who puts words in our mouths
and joy in our hearts.

Keep us in your unending circle of love.

May all we do and hear and think and say
be bathed in your loving-kindness,
this day and always.

'Today, this day – let your crowd,
the body of Jesus Christ,
hold courageous hope.

Let the one who liberates you,
redeems you and sustains you
pass through your midst
with honour and thanksgiving¹.

Go in peace,
Amen.

Reflection: Rev. Heather den Houting
Traralgon

Liturgy & Editor: Rev. Jennie Gordon
St John's. Cowes.



¹ From the reflection by Rev. Heather den Houting.