



## ***Pentecost 7 - Sunday July 27th, 2025***

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

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

In this time of worship, we can come with our fears, our doubts and all our questions.

**We come to hear words  
of peace, of possibility;  
of the God who speaks to us**

In this place of searching, listening, discovery

**We come to encounter  
the One who looks for us.**

In this place of openness we come knocking.

**We come to open ourselves,  
to pray and praise  
the One whose heart  
is never closed.**

*Light the candle - Christ is with us.*

#### ***Acknowledging***



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander  
Christian Congress*

The Ancient of Days breathed life into this land and her peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the *(please name the people on whose land you gather)* People, the Traditional Custodians, have blessed this place through their law and customs, their care and life. We pay respects to their Elders and leaders past and present, and pray for the future of their communities. May we walk gently and respectfully on this Land.

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

OR: Morning has broken TiS 156

OR: Great is your faithfulness TiS 154



#### ***Prayer***

God of love, we gather together as your children.  
God of creation, we see marks of your nature all around us:

We feel your love for us in so many ways:  
in the special people who touch our lives;  
and in old friends who share the journey with us;

We see your character in the bold colours that push into bloom even in the cold grey of midwinter, in the song of the Currawong and Spinebill and in the warmth of our cosy interiors.

We pray that our worship  
may be filled with your renewing Spirit.

Gracious God, you surround us with your grace. In this space our faith is strengthened, and we know that we are not yet complete so, we pray; help us to find wholeness.

You speak gentle words of welcome,  
promise and blessing to us.  
You come gently with offers of healing and forgiveness, but often we want to manage alone. We refuse to recognise when we have become closed to you or to others.  
You never demand perfection or force us to go your way, yet you call us on to what we still might become.

When we take your love for granted,  
forget to pray, stifle our generosity,  
at these times forgive us  
and draw us to yourself once more.

So, we pray, help us to find wholeness.  
Come to us in a fresh new way, loving God.  
Reach out to each of us with the grace we need. Keep us from concentrating only on our problems instead of looking to our growth in your grace.

May our lives be drawn to your presence,  
empowered by your Spirit and transformed by your love.

**Thanks be to God! Amen.**

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

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

*The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Friends of the Fig Tree, Uniting Church in Australia with blessings and permission to use the content in worship services with acknowledgement.*



## ***Pentecost 7 - Sunday July 27th, 2025***

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

#### ***Listening***

Read from: Hosea 1:2-10, Psalm 85, Colossians 2:6-15, (16-19) & Luke 11:1-13

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

#### ***Reflecting - Rev. Heather den Houting***

##### *Prayer is powerful*

The readings for today appear to have multiple layers of meaning that are dependent on sociological and historical context. How else do you approach the offensive language and prophetic hyperbole of the Hosea reading? And what about the Psalm, in what appears to be a plea to a coercive and angry God? As we continue to read through the letter to the Colossians the theme is followed that your relationship with God is more important than any performative rituals you have created. Then finally we have a teaching from Jesus that is grounded in the social notions of hospitality at the time.

Without understanding the social and historical backgrounds to any of these readings we might struggle to understand its message to us today.

However, I think the theme that gathers these readings together is that prayer is powerful. So powerful that it is futile to try to constrain that power by ritualising it to the extent that it becomes a repeated habit or pattern. Let's see whether this assertion stacks up in the readings.

Prophets are always using outrageous images to get their points across. Hosea is trying to shock his community around the consequences of the broken covenant between the community and God. So, the use of the language around sexual infidelity is used to castigate this community. The prophet is yelling at people, "nothing you can or will do will make this better." But then, at the end of the passage, relationships are restored. Why?

Because of the action of God, not because of the behaviour of the people.

The Psalm starts as a lament and moves to self-exhortation. But it too ends with a reaffirmation of God's providence and care. Faithfulness, righteousness and peace are symbols of this restored relationship. Again, the writer emphasises that these things come from God, rather than from our own flawed understanding of God.

In Colossians we read a treatise against practice over behaviour. The teaching is that because Christ shares fully in the human condition, we share Christ's destiny. This destiny is the liberation that comes through a right relationship with God. The Cosmic Christ offers liberation to the whole of creation. Practices and behaviours that are not based on this covenantal understanding are empty, and are therefore futile. Instead, it's God's salvific action through Christ which has given us life.

Hopefully we can see that there is a theme here. God is always the actor in our relationship, and we have the choice to quieten ourselves down and become part of that activity. We are mistaken when we think we are the instigators or the successful advocates. Instead, there is an expectation that we will always get stuff wrong, but there are some clues about how we might lean toward the restored relationships offered by God.

And so, we come to the beautiful teaching in Luke, that contains the kernel of our approach to prayer, and for good measure, some teaching about why prayer is powerful. Jesus teaches that prayer is significant. It is not a spiritualised thing, nor is it a lucky dip, nor is it a shopping list. God is already active in your life and you do not need to explain things to God.

Rather the practice of prayer is an opportunity to quiet yourself down and move into a space where you might experience the continuing presence of



## ***Pentecost 7 - Sunday July 27th, 2025***

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

a God who continually offers you providence, care, faithfulness, righteousness and peace.

Here's the rhythm of prayer. Settle yourself down. Recognise where you are in the order of things and in the sweep of history. Know that you are part of a community, so pray corporately when you can. Ask for that which you need to get you through each day. Acknowledge your brokenness and how you are connected to all others around you who are also broken. Pray that your eyes might be open for God's wisdom and guidance.

Do these things, says Jesus, and you will be changed. Prayer is powerful because it changes you! You will continue to be fruitful, hopeful, diligent and humble. Ask, search, knock. Give it a try says Jesus and do not be surprised when things are opened for you, even when all seems lost, or stale, or corrupted or futile. It's not. Because we are children of the living God our prayer will help us find our way again. This is the promise. Amen

#### ***Singing - Lord Jesus Christ TiS 526***

OR: O breath of life, come sweeping through us TiS 409  
OR: Lord hear my praying TiS 689

#### ***Offering***

God of Jesus and the disciples, as they were instructed in prayer, so we offer our thanks for all you have given us, including our daily bread. Most of us will know we have been given far more than we need. For the sake of all you love, help us be generous with your abundance. Bless these gifts and bless us as we continue to walk the way of Jesus. In the name of Christ we pray, amen.

#### ***Notices***

Next week is the *Jubilee of Young Peoples*. **July 30** is also the *World Day Against Trafficking in Persons*.

#### ***Prayers for World & Community*** ***- including the Lord's Prayer***

---

*Our Father in heaven;*

We recognise our indebtedness to you, your love has drawn us here, your grace welcomes us into your fellowship, your Spirit inspires us to share and be generous with what we've received, so we pray for a world in need of your grace and love. As we struggle with the many and diverse needs both global and local, remind us again how we might pray.

*Hallowed be your name;*

We pray for a world groaning amidst violence and destruction - of sovereign states, of communities and relationships, of environment. We struggle to understand why many things happen - violence against civilians in Ukraine and Gaza under the cloak of war; or trafficking of people to become slaves or to serve people in power. We thank you for the work of our church in advocacy for justice and international mission. For support of guest workers from Pacific countries, for help with rebuilding work after disasters and aid for the hungry and homeless.

*Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven;*

We see a world of displaced people and many who are taken advantage of in their vulnerability and desperation. We hear of the rise of boats leaving shores risking all for the hope of a better shore and we wonder again how and what we might pray for all who struggle.

*Give us today our daily bread;*

We pray for all who feel the bite of global economic pressures and rising costs and who struggle to make ends meet. We pray for wisdom and compassion from our Federal and State leaders as budgets can't be balanced, as many are finding themselves homeless in a system that advantages the wealthy and penalizes the poor.

*Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil;*

*The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Friends of the Fig Tree, Uniting Church in Australia with blessings and permission to use the content in worship services with acknowledgement.*



## ***Pentecost 7 - Sunday July 27th, 2025***

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

We pray for our church, for our leaders. Bless our congregations, and their leaders, as we journey through these times as communities of faith. In a time of many trials for the church, bless us where we are humble and in need, stir us where we are complacent, give us an awakening where we have lulled ourselves into a self-satisfied spiritual sleepiness. Remind us again how we are to live and be as people who follow Jesus the Christ.

*For the kingdom, the power, and the glory  
are yours, now and forever. Amen.*

#### ***Singing - Seek ye first TiS 745***

OR: Father in heaven TiS 465

OR: Make me a channel of your peace TiS 607

#### ***Blessing***

May God be the light on your path,  
the warmth on your back,  
the tune in your ears,  
the song on your lips,  
and the peace in your spirit.

And the blessing of God:

give us today our daily needs

The blessing of Christ:

inspire us in the school of prayer

And the Spirit:

energize us to do God's will  
on earth, as it is in heaven

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

Reflection: Rev. Heather den Houting  
Traralgon Uniting Church

Liturgy: Rev. Ian Brown  
Warragul Uniting Church

Editor: Rev. Arnie Wierenga  
Retired minister, Wonthaggi

