



Sunday August 31st, 2025 The Fig Tree Worship Resource



Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Sing aloud to God our strength,
shout for joy to our God.

You have a gilt-edged invitation
to the table of fellowship.
Come and share.

Come in joy and delight.
Come to be present to God and to one another.
Come to worship and to share in confidence
God's love and in mutual affection
with each other.

Come to participate in God's grace and mercy
together.
Right here is a place of belonging for all of us,
for sinners and for saints,
for all God's people.

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 - Here in this place TiS 474

OR: We are your people TiS 468

Prayer

**For all that we have been able to receive
we are truly thankful,**
You have offered us the hospitality of your love,
we are wrapped up,
embraced and surrounded by grace.
You have promised to never leave us
nor forsake us
and we are grateful.

**For all that we have been able to receive
we are truly thankful,**
You are faithful to us
and have given us confidence and assurance
about the consistency of your care of us.
The same gracious care which was, is, and will be,
shown to us
in the past, the present and the future.
We can rely on you to send people into our lives
to lead us forward in our faith,
people who sustain us and teach us in our turn,
to nurture others.

**For all that we have been able to receive
we are truly thankful,**
You have invited us to your table
and shared with us from your bountiful blessing.
From our poverty of spirit, you have enriched us
and enabled us to grow in your grace.

May we also be generous
and kind with one another in sharing your table
and your bounty.

May we be humble and hospitable to others,
for you have included even us in your love.

**For all that we have been able to receive we are
truly thankful,
AMEN**

Psalm 81:1,10-16 (NRSVUE)
read responsively:

Sing aloud to God our strength;
shout for joy to the God of Jacob



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I am the LORD your God,
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.
Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

“But my people did not listen to my voice;
Israel would not submit to me.
**So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,
to follow their own counsels.**

O that my people would listen to me,
that Israel would walk in my ways!
Then I would quickly subdue their enemies
and turn my hand against their foes.

Those who hate the LORD would cringe before
him,
and their doom would last forever.
I would feed you with the finest of the wheat,
**and with honey from the rock I would satisfy
you.”**

So we pray:
You are the God of Accompaniment
and you walk beside us,
feeding and sustaining us always.
We have not always listened to your voice
or walked your paths,
we have rejected your fountains of living water
and exchanged your truths for easy platitudes.

We have been excited by broken cisterns
which deplete us.
In our stubbornness
we have followed our own way
and missed some of the richness
of the blessing you have offered us.
In your mercy, forgive us
and help us to hear you
and walk in true companionship with you.

You long for us just as we long for you.
Sustain us we pray loving God,
feed us and satisfy our souls.
May we listen to your call on our lives
and share the love you have given us so freely
with one another.

God’s heart is for you
and God longs to feed you
with the finest wheat and the sweetest honey.
Your sins are forgiven, and you are restored.
Walk forward in joy
with God as your strength and your delight.
And all the people say: **AMEN**

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Hebrews 13:1-8,15-16
Luke 14:1,7-14

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

Reflecting - Rev. Salesi Faupula,
Moderator, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

Pilgrims of the Spirit:
Embracing Inclusivity, Diversity, and Unity
Opening worship Reflection – Synod 2025

Grace and peace to you in the name of
Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday and today
and forever.

As we gather for Synod 2025, I stand
before you with humility, hope, and deep
gratitude. Gratitude for those who have
journeyed with me in faith, for those who have
gone before, and for the God who calls us always
forward.

I take this moment to honour our
outgoing Moderator. In his humble and gracious
manner, he has guided us through challenging
times with strength and presence. He has
encouraged us when we were weary and offered
calm, Christ-centred leadership in moments of
uncertainty. He leaves us with big shoes to fill, yet



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with an example of faithfulness that strengthens us for the road ahead.

I acknowledge also the First Peoples of this land — the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, and the Palawa peoples of lutruwita/Tasmania. We honour your custodianship of land, waters, story, and Spirit. We acknowledge your ongoing sovereignty and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recommit ourselves as a church to walking together in covenant — not only through symbolic gestures, but through truth-telling, shared leadership, and genuine partnership.

As I begin this role, I know that for some my presence may feel heartening, a sign of the richness of diversity in the life of our church. For others, it may feel unusual, even unsettling. I am a Tongan, a Pacific Islander who grew up in Australia. My story, my culture, and my faith have been shaped both by the ocean that carried my ancestors and the land that has nurtured me. My prayer is that the Spirit — the same God we all worship — will hold us in this tension, so that it becomes not a fracture, but a place of grace, honesty, and growth.

Our theme for these next three years is *Pilgrims of the Spirit*. Pilgrims are people on the move — not aimless wanderers, but those drawn forward by God. Hebrews 13 reminds us: *“Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”*

Hospitality, for us as pilgrims, is not just politeness. It is the risk of opening ourselves to the stranger, trusting that the Spirit works through such encounters. It is choosing to go “outside the camp” with Jesus, where faith becomes vulnerable, where love is tested, and where God promises never to leave us or forsake us.

Psalms 81 gives us God’s longing: *“O that my people would listen to me... I would satisfy them with honey from the rock.”* To listen is to be open to God’s blessing. As pilgrims, we are called to listen to voices that have not always been fully

heard. In our church, this means listening more deeply to First Peoples. Reconciliation is not somebody else’s work; it is the work of all disciples.

Jesus himself listened to those the world ignored — women at wells, lepers crying from a distance, a criminal on a cross. To follow him is to do likewise, not out of guilt, but because listening is the way of the kingdom.

In Luke 14, Jesus turns a banquet upside down: *“When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind.”* We set a new kind of banquet because Christ first set a table for us. He welcomed us when we had nothing to give in return, and he fed us with his very life. Every table we set in his name — whether in our homes, our congregations, or our Synod — is invited to look like his: wide open, grace-filled, and marked by self-giving love.

We have already taken courageous steps toward justice, inclusion, and diversity, but the journey continues. The banquet is not yet full. The honey from the rock still lies ahead of us. We walk as pilgrims because Christ goes before us — the pioneer and perfecter of our faith — leading us to the kingdom where every voice is heard, every table is filled, and every tear is wiped away.

And so my invitation is this: let us be pilgrims, not gatekeepers. Let us welcome strangers, trusting the Spirit’s work through them. Let us notice where voices are missing and make space for them. Let us walk together with patience, courage, and faith.

The road is open. Christ leads. The Spirit gathers us. The table is being set.

Come, pilgrims.

Amen.

Singing - Kneels at the feet Tis 640

OR: God of Jeremiah Tis 679

OR: When I needed a neighbour Tis 629



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Offering

We offer our prayers, our time, our talents and our gifts. We offer our donations and our tithes. We ask a blessing on all we bring, that it may bring your kingdom closer and that it may be an invitation to others to share in your fellowship table. AMEN

Notices

Please hold in your prayers, the meeting of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, over this weekend, Monday and Tuesday. May the Spirit guide and bless the gathering in the quiet spaces, and the eating places, in the conversations and in the discernment.

Prayers for World & Community

Prayers of the People, let us weave our prayers into a colourful cloth of warmth and care:

As we place the warp of our fabric, we bring the poor, the lame, the crippled and the blind. These are with us now as they always have been. Help us to take seriously your call for us to visit the prisoners, house the homeless, feed the hungry and care for those on the fringes.

Lifting the weft, we pray for the little ones, for the least and the lost, the sad and the lonely. May we listen to your Spirit and seek the places in our lives where we can share and encourage.

Threading the warp, the homeless are very present to us in our communities and we know that this is a growing reality for many. We feel frustrated and wish we knew what to do. Show us the places where our actions count, show us how to be involved in making a difference and creating change. We long for all people to feel the warmth of hospitality and shelter rather than the cold of loneliness and despair. Give us a vision of how our churches can help and stop us from losing hope and saying it is all too hard.

Looping over the weft, we pray for our hospitals, our medical staff, our doctors and nurses and orderlies and cleaners and first responders. We know that they are overly stretched and exhausted. We give thanks for their dedication and faithful service and pray strength and sustenance for them as they serve our communities.

Underneath with the warp, we pray for our children, their parents and caregivers. We pray for those in the system created to provide for them and those whose experience of family is troubled. We pray for our schools as they care for our kids and educate them for the future. We pray for those who struggle in the education system, that we will find ways to adequately nurture and care for them.

As the weft threads come through, we pray for those with whom we have disagreement. There are so many fractured voices and so much antagonism toward one another. Help us to be able to see things differently without having to protect our own stance or be angry towards someone else's views. Bring peace. Help us to reject the nastiness of the times, to be kind and patient with others. Help us live out the fruits of the Spirit.

The warp edges of our fabric are knitted as we pray for prisoners whatever their story. For those who are incarcerated in prisons across our country, for the families and those who have been impacted by their behaviour. We pray for those who have been detained for other reasons. We pray for those for whom prison takes on other meanings and for those who have issues of addiction, or issues around mental or physical health. We pray for authorities and those who care for people who are imprisoned in all of these ways. We pray for change in our systems and for new ways to bring about restoration and healing.

We pray for the terrible situations of pain across our world. May we find ways to 'patch' our fabric, to decorate it with creative patches of love and weave a new thing, and we pray for the commitment of leaders in the world to offer mercy and hope, and to foster justice and love.



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We pray for good moral leadership at all levels of our society to help us weave each other into the fabric of true communion.

'Angels' look like regular people and they inhabit our world through those who are suffering and sad and those who care for them. May we look in the eyes of those who are hurting, and see the face of Christ, present among us. May we wrap our communities in the fabric of our prayers and in our love.

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 - I, the Lord of sea and sky TiS 658

OR: By gracious powers TiS 617 (can be sung to LONDONDERRY AIR - and other tunes)
OR: Lord, let me see TiS 681

Blessing

As you go,
be mindful always of Christ
present in one another.
Honour one another and be hospitable to all.
Be blessed, and share the blessing of God's love
and faithfulness with each other.
The grace of God is all around you.
Remember whose you are.

Singing - The Aaronic blessing TiS 679

Sing it while looking at one another.

Reflection: Rev Salesi Faupula
Incoming Moderator -Synod of Vic/Tas

Liturgy: Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson
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