



Pentecost 14 - Sunday September 14th, 2025

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Today's gospel proclamation tells us, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them"!

Each and every one of us is welcome, not one of us is excluded. Come and share together, gather around the table of God, for you are loved and warmly welcomed. All are welcome here.

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 - Immortal invisible God only wise ***TiS 143***

OR: Praise with Joy the World's Creator TiS 179



Prayer

In today's readings, the New Testament and Gospel readings offer us much hope, but the Old Testament passage appears bleak. Today's prayer of confession is based on the reading from Jeremiah, but then realising the hope offered us in Christ - who welcomes sinners and eats with them.

Sometimes in our foolishness, we act like there is no God or put other things in the place of God. We move out of the wisdom God offers and forget to call upon God. We hold things to ourselves and hoard them and forget that caring and sharing is the calling of love in our lives. We take resources from the poor, neglect to stand in solidarity with them and disregard Christ who stands as their refuge. We have acted as though we don't know God at all.

King of the ages, immortal and invisible one, you are patient and offer us mercy. You seek us when we are lost and each one of us matters to you. We are precious in your sight, and you love us, redeem us and welcome us. You pursue us and love us relentlessly.

And in God's mercy, we are forgiven and offered liberation and renewal. Grace overflows for us, God rejoices over us and celebrates when we return.

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance. Our sins are forgiven, **Thanks be to God.**

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: 1 Timothy 1: 12-17 &
Luke 15 v 1-7

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



Pentecost 14 - Sunday September 14th, 2025 ***The Fig Tree Worship Resource***

Reflecting - Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

I am making a paper origami house. On September 14 at 3 pm I hope others with me will also be making origami houses as part of our thanksgiving for the *Bass Coast Winter Shelter*.

"This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15: 2). This verse has come to mean more to me over recent years since I read a book called "Take this Bread" by Sara Miles. Sara, who had no real experience of church, wandered into St. Gregory's Episcopal Church in San Francisco and surrounded by a painted mural of unlikely looking saints (including some in wheelchairs), Sara took communion. She says this,

"The first time I came to the Table at St. Gregory's, I was a hungry stranger. Each week since then, I've shown up—undeserving and needy—and each week, someone's hands have broken bread and brought me into communion." She began to think about the words inscribed on the very expensive new communion table, "This guy welcomes sinners and eats with them". Inspired by this new table, Sara began a foodbank, the people from the streets gathering in this space to be fed. When faced with the hungry crowd Jesus had turned to disciples to feed them. And so Sara did exactly that, "not as an act of 'outreach' but one of gratitude". (p137)

Just like Sara, the Phillip Island Interchurch council (ICC) takes these words seriously. When the Bible tells us that Jesus asks us to feed his lambs, that is our calling, spiritually and materially. And so armed with this vision, the ICC on Millow/Phillip Island set up a committee, got a permit for the Uniting Church (and hopefully next year the Anglicans), and proceeded to train volunteers from all around the area, and offer hope to our community. The social fabric woven through this project is amazing, scouts, school kids, community and craft groups, all have stepped up to help in whatever way they can. You may have heard of Stable One which assists church groups to use their buildings to provide

shelter for guests, for those experiencing homelessness. There are more and more church groups offering this as this program expands. The thing is we all deserve to meet around this table of hospitality. All of us are sinners and Jesus eats with us, communes with us as we commune together. The amazing thought that stays in my head from the 1 Timothy reading is this: "Even me". Even I am included, when I am tempted to think about who is 'in' and who is 'out', like Paul I remember "Even me".

The words in the gospel passage reveal that the pious observers intended to insult Jesus, what sort of religious observer is he that he is consorting with the sinners, the least and the lost, rather than spending his time in piety and religious righteousness. But Jesus simply tells a story about where he is called to be, and what our mission and ministry is likewise to be. Seeking *the lost*.

Who are *the lost*? All of us at times are lost, we are the broken and the vulnerable, the ones society shuns and overlooks.

1 Timothy reminds us that we have all been *the lost* at times and have been offered God's mercy and grace. If God's grace extends to even me then it reaches to every corner. This God who is the honoured one, the glorious one, has reached out to me in the deepest most amazing love. How am I to respond? Perhaps there is a way that I can also welcome sinners and eat with them. When we have found our own belonging in the church, our place in the 'fold' that is often where we spend our time. How many 'non-faithed' people do you know, people who are outside the church and her activities? Is there a way that you can connect more fully with your community and demonstrate the love that Jesus calls us to? What does this passage ask of you?

When we had our commencement service, we decorated little wooden 'people' figures and wove a fabric shelter for them. At our thanksgiving we are going to make origami



Pentecost 14 - Sunday September 14th, 2025

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

houses together to hang as a mobile and bring each of our little figures up to place with them. In our thanksgiving we will express the longing, the human right, for every person to have a home. And then as we 'put our program to bed' 😊 for the summer, we will hold each person who struggles with this issue in the months to come in our prayers around the communion table. And as we hold this space together, we will remember that "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them". EVEN ME!!! In your mercy, Lord, hear our prayer and receive our thanks.

Singing - Come as you are TiS 693

OR: This is the truth we hold TiS 469

OR: The king of love TiS 145

Offering

God has freely and generously given to us. We offer back a token of this in our offering today, remembering that our gifts are more than just money. We give of ourselves, our time and our skills as we offer ourselves in God's service. In the Lord's prayer we ask that God's kingdom will come, and we pray again it may be so. AMEN

Notices

September 16 is the *International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer*.

Prayers for World & Community

Such a picture of divine hospitality "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them". This is such real inspiration, and we try to reach out to offer this same hospitality to others. Part of this is our prayers for them.

This is a big, big table you invite us to share in loving God:

We know people for whom we are concerned just now, they are on our hearts, and we include them in the circle of our prayers.

We are concerned about those in our communities who are struggling, those who are hungry and struggle to pay bills, those struggling with housing, with bills to pay and not enough income to cover it all. Those on government payments which are pitifully inadequate for a fair go. Those who seek the dignity of employment but are, for whatever reason, unable to find it. None of us are deserving, yet you seek us out. We are held and loved by you, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them",

For those who are sick, those whose daily life is a struggle. For those who are on the margins of society, those who are lonely, or who struggle to communicate. Those subject to violence or exploitation and those who have problems with addiction. Those who are just not given dignity and treated well. We pray for those living in care. We pray for prisoners in our jails and those facing the justice system. "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them".

We pray for our leaders, for those who make the rules and sometimes forget what it is to struggle. We pray for our governments, our church leaders and our community leaders. May they remember that the common-wealth, our social fabric, is served when all of us, especially the least of us, is able to thrive. "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them".

And we pray for ourselves, we are all sinners, all of us undeserving, yet also deserving through the great love and mercy that this man who eats with sinners has for us. We are humbled and given worth and dignity at the same time. God searches out each and every one of us and we are loved.

We pray together then as Jesus taught us:



Pentecost 14 - Sunday September 14th, 2025

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

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.

Reflection and Liturgy: Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson,
Minister in Association, St. John's, Cowes

Editor: Rev. Arnie Wierenga
Retired Minister, Wonthaggi



Singing - Amazing grace TiS 129

OR: I, the Lord of sea and sky TiS 658
OR: Christ be my leader TiS 624

Blessing

The King of the ages, immortal and invisible calls
to you and blesses you. Go to seek and search for
the lost. Every single one counts.

And know you are loved and precious beyond
measure and you do not go alone.

As we go, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the
love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit
goes with us.