



First Sunday in Lent, February 22nd, 2026 **The Fig Tree Worship Resource**

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance
(Psalm 32)

Let us worship together
and bless the God who cares for us
and is present in this place.

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 will be our Lenten calling **TiS 684**

OR: Come as you are TiS 693



Prayer

We are your people, placed on the earth as were those very first people, in a garden with abundance, enough for all and more, we praise you Lord for all these gifts and this beautiful place where we live.

We thank you for the soil that produces abundantly, the trees and plants that provide

shade on hot days and the beauty of the environment.

We praise you for the knowledge and gifts that you have given to us so we can live comfortably.

We praise you for all the people, for their difference and what this means in having skills and knowledge, let us rejoice in our difference.

We acknowledge and confess that we do not always appreciate what we have, we are greedy for what others have and we do not.

We confess that sometimes we walk blindly, not seeing the beauty in the environment, in other people and in ourselves.

As Paul (Romans 5:12-13) tells us, all have sinned but through Christ all are forgiven.

Amen

We are loved and forgiven in the name of Christ.
Thanks be to God

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

Responsive reading of Psalm 32:

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

*Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no
iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

While I kept silent, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

*For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of
summer. Selah*

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Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah*

Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.

You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. *Selah*

I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.

Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD.

ALL: Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Read: Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11 (*You could read this with 3 voices: Narrator, Devil & Jesus*).

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

Reflecting - Rev. Heather den Houting

Is this too good to be true?

This Sunday is the first Sunday in Lent, and the lectionary readings, predictably, pack a punch. We are in the most holy season of the Christian calendar and the church asks us to take our Lenten journey seriously. So, we start with the ancient story of the "human condition" and conclude with our utter dependence on the grace of God.

The Genesis story of the fall takes us through the competing voices that live in our heads. Over thousands of years, humans have recognised in this story their own shortcomings. We know what is right. We know what is true and just and fulfilling and redemptive, and yet we also know the story of the compulsion to rebel. It seems this is a universal condition. And we all have our own ways of explaining this away. "It was the tempter", "it wasn't me", "it was irresistible". There is a recognition that temptation is inevitable.

And asking God for forgiveness is also embedded in our religious worldview. Psalm 32 is a testament to the recognition and indebtedness we have to God. This is not a purely Christian characteristic, after all this Psalm was written long before the birth of Christ. But we find this consistent theme across most world religions. The dialogue between the recognition of our brokenness as humanity (both individually and corporately) and the thankfulness that we continue to be in relationship with the creator/creation, to us known as YHWH or God.

However, the teaching of Paul in the letter to the Romans and the story of the temptation of Christ in Matthew, demonstrate the scandal of the claims of Christianity. For both these readings make theological claims about the nature of Jesus. It's here that we have to start asking whether this is too good to be true.

Paul's approach is to name Jesus as the Adam of the new creation. The incarnation of God through the one we know as Christ, reflects God's ongoing investment in the goodness and value of the world. We are redeemed totally and thoroughly by the loving grace of God in this action of the birth. Life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This is the promise.

And the nature of Jesus as described in Matthew tells us that this is indeed a gift from God. For the story goes that Jesus was faced with those things we all face. The temptation to move away from the graciousness of God and to take power for ourselves. Consider those temptations:



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me first above all others; wealth and spectacle and power at all cost. But the nature of Jesus is the recognition that all these things are a gift from a gracious God. That such things are to be accepted in humility and with thanks to the Creator.

So today as we move into this time of penitence and faith that is the habit and practice of our Lenten journey, we meet Jesus. The one who epitomises the graciousness and spaciousness of God. The one who asks us to follow without guilt and shame, but with the depth and honesty required to name our brokenness. The one on whom we are totally dependent for the entirety of our being. The one who loves us. In this, we can be reassured that it is not too good to be true, but it is what God longs for, for us.

Singing - Loving Spirit, loving spirit

TiS 417

OR: Written for the First Sunday in Lent to a familiar tune:
http://www.carolynshymns.com/our_lord_you_were_sent.html
OR: Jesus, lover of my soul TiS 211

Offering

As people of God
we bring ourselves,
our talents, abilities and gifts,
in the offerings of our resources.
Bless them,
use us and them as you will.
In Jesus' name
Amen

Notices

A simple weekly Lenten study with art, poetry, prayer and discussion questions is available free to download.
It's on the *Fig Tree Worship Resource* webpage:
<https://figtreeworshipresource.blog/2026/02/03/lenten-study/>

March 1st is Zero Discrimination Day and Clean Up Australia Day.

Prayers for World & Community

Loving Lord, we come to you with our prayers,
we come as your people,
trusting that you hear our prayers
and understand our needs.

We pray for our world:
as we watch and read the media;
We wonder how such power-hungry
and violent people gain control.
We wonder how children get possession of
weapons and learn how to use them.
We wonder how the guardians of our
peace and safety cannot help.
We wonder what the real stories are.

We give these concerns to you
and ask for guidance for our behaviour
and peace in our hearts.
Help us to always respond with love.

As we see droughts and floods
We pray for those who are frightened.
for essential workers and those who care
for their families who may lose their homes, their
livelihood and even their lives or loved ones.
For those who wonder how anything
they do can make a difference.
We ask you to help us
in our care for your creation

We pray for our church and communities:
May we and our leaders respond appropriately
in crises,
and give whatever and wherever we can.

We pray for those sick and in care,
grieving, sad and lacking hope
and all those who care for them.

We pray for ourselves, the needs deep in our
hearts that we dare not say aloud.
We join in the prayer Jesus taught us:

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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 - Touch the earth lightly TiS 668

(can also be sung to the tune BUNEESAN TiS 156)

OR: Be thou my vision TiS 547

OR: Amazing Grace TiS 129

Blessing

In this season of Lent
As the human Christ fasted and was tempted,
alone but not alone
Let us seek to be closer to God.

We are God's people
Created
Redeemed
Sustained
Today, yesterday and tomorrow
Amen

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