



## Sunday April 26th, 2026 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

### Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Holy One in Three, Three in One,  
as we say these ancient words,  
spoken many times before  
in sorrow and in joy,  
today may they open us to your presence,  
awaken us to your abundant life,  
and inspire us to live together in love.

#### **Psalm 23 (responsive)**

The LORD is my shepherd, **I shall not want.**

He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
**he leads me beside still waters;**

he restores my soul.  
**He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.**

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil;  
**for you are with me;**  
**your rod and your staff-- they comfort me.**

You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
**you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.**

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
**and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD**  
**my whole life long.**

*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 - Jesus calls us here... TiS 477

OR: *The Lord's my Shepherd TiS 10*

OR: *Come, O Holy Spirit / Wa Wa Wa Emimimo TiS 711*



### Prayer

*From Uniting in Worship*

God our Creator,  
our thoughts cannot contain you;  
our words fall short of your vastness;  
yet you are our God,  
God of all ages.

Your breath gives us life.  
Your hands shape our being.  
Your artistry in creation  
leaves us gasping in wonder;  
longing to experience that which is of you.

In each person, there you are,  
if we could but discern you.  
Accept our praise, O ancient yet youthful God,  
as we gather to worship and adore you  
in the name of Jesus. Amen.

...

In the quiet of this time  
we come to you, O God,  
with the things that we need to lay down.  
From the deep places of our being  
to the deep mystery of yours,  
hear our prayers:

*Leave a time of silence*

Siblings in Christ, we are heard,  
healed, renewed and forgiven,  
held in the abundance of God's love.

**Thank you 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  
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## **Sunday April 26th, 2026**

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

#### ***Listening***

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Read: Acts 2:42-47

John 10:1-10

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

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

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*Learning how to live in a time of transition.*

How do you cope with change? Changing circumstances can change who we are and how we react. They can be good or bad things happening to us, and we all generally have a pattern of response to that. These readings take us on a journey of change in the early days of the Christian church.

The stories in Acts are about the early Christian communities. The people in these communities were totally and utterly changed by the events of Christ's ministry, death and resurrection. In this reading, Luke is making sure we understand how this new community embraced and embedded the change that they lived through. They had a vision: captured in the reading from John – life in its fullness through Jesus the Christ. They had characteristics: they shared things in common and were a community filled with signs and wonders. And they had practices: teaching, fellowship, breaking bread and prayer.

This community understood the opportunities of walking with God's new covenant and did what they could to adapt to their new reality. They did not do this unnoticed, isolated or without context, rather they took upon themselves a hope-filled practice that appeared to be attractive to the community in which they operated. They practiced what they preached – living with integrity.

In the John reading, we hear the theological claims that emerged from the early church, this new community. They were teaching that Jesus was the way, the shepherd, the gate. But an outstanding verse is the one that the early church appeared to want to live out in its changing practice – abundant life. Through me, Jesus claims, you will find access to the fullness of life that God so longs for you.

Have you ever been part of an early movement of anything? The strategy, the excitement, the planning and implementation? Do you get caught up in the thrill of it all, seeing that there is something far greater than we could ever imagine on our own? The vision is there and the practices are embedded in this early space. Or maybe you are cautious and sit back and wait to see what all the fuss is about. If asked to help, you will, but it's not until later down the track you start to become invested. Or maybe you resist all attempts or invitations to participate. You want to see real change occur before you are even interested in the conversation.

We know that the conditions for a new exciting movement can last for some time, but not all time. The enthusiasm starts to wane, people get tired and cranky, maybe impatient and cross, maybe we even see a little infighting. Does it surprise you to hear this? I hope not, for the letters of the New Testament reveal sometimes impatient leaders, as the humans of the story revert to type: burn out, cynicism, differences of opinions and rejection. Rest assured, the narrative of the early church is the narrative of ourselves.

Even these people filled with the new enthusiasm of something that has changed their world, start to move away from that early enthusiasm. I wonder whether this reality depresses you or heartens you? You could be depressed by the constant struggle of humanity to find our way, or you could be heartened by the fact that we have the clues to a world changing discipleship embedded in the church already.



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We have the vision – Jesus said “I have come so that you may have fullness of life” and we long to share that promise with others.

We also have the practices– teaching, fellowship, breaking bread together and prayers. These practices are for the whole of a community, not just those who gather for a Sunday morning. Everyone is welcome to participate.

These things are simple, but they are not easy. For we want to rush to the answers and solutions quickly. However, we are still in Easter time and one of the things that Easter teaches us is that you cannot rush to solutions too quickly. Instead, Jesus asks us to hold in a time of transition so that we can reimagine the characteristics of our community anew. We can do our best to strip back the accumulated junk and remind ourselves of the characteristics of a healthy Christian community.

What are the characteristics that you see are important for the church to hold at this time in human history? We recently did a little workshop in the Gippsland Presbytery about some of the things that might assist ourselves and those around us to experience life in all its fullness.

Some of these characteristics were:

- We are seen, understood and accepted.
- We can see that we are part of something bigger.
- We are encouraged, with words and with resources.
- We are invited to participate and are given enough time so that hidden skills are revealed.
- We can see that we are making a difference in the community.
- It makes our lives, as individuals and as community, better.
- There is a sense of abundance, beauty, joy and reverence in what we do.

Some of the practices were:

- There is silence and stillness when necessary.

- The infrastructure is seamless and well-resourced and there are enough people able to make it happen.
- Problems are acknowledged and corrected.

What do you think your community could do to find its vision, its practices and its characteristics at this time? Take some time to invite God into your prayer life when you sit still and listen. Not for solutions, but so that you too might be infused with the joy and anticipation of God’s opportunities for transformation. Who knows what signs and wonders you might be amazed by.

### **Singing - Filled with the Spirit’s power** **TIS 411**

OR: *Christ be my leader TIS 624*

### **Offering**

Hear these verses from Acts 2: 44 & 45 - *All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.*

God who offers abundant life, life in all of its fullness. Bless this practice that we do weekly from our desire to share your goodness with others. Bless the gifts. Bless also the givers and receivers that we might be community together, making a difference, multiplying the love.

### **Notices**

May 1st (May Day) is International Workers’ Day.  
May 3rd is World Press Freedom Day.

**SacredEdge is on again next weekend from May 1 - 3 at Queenscliff Uniting Church.** It ...*“is a lived experience of how we can treasure each other in all our glorious diversity and find our hearts and minds expanded and enriched.”*

For info and tickets:

<https://unitingqueenscliff.org.au/sacrededge-festival/>



## Sunday April 26th, 2026

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#### Prayers for World & Community

*From Uniting in Worship*

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We pray for peace, saying:

Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**

We pray for peace in the Church:

Wherever differences in doctrine and custom  
create hatred and fear,

Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**

Wherever denominational divides  
create social enemies,

Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**

Wherever differences in gender, sexuality, race  
and ability divide the Church,

Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**

We pray for peace in our world:

Wherever neighbour fights neighbour  
over politics, religion and resources,

Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**

Wherever the needs of many are dominated  
by the wants of the few,

Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**

Wherever words of peace are mouthed,  
but no action is taken,

Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**

We pray for peace in our homes:

Wherever violence and abuse  
imprison vulnerable people,

Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**

Wherever brothers and sisters compete  
for the love and attention of parents,

Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**

Wherever parents and children provoke  
each other to insult and injury,

Christ speaks: **Peace, be still!**

**In the name of Christ, we commit ourselves  
to work for the peace of God.**

**Amen.**

We pray together then as Jesus taught us:

#### The Lord's Prayer

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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 - Brother, sister let me serve you.

**TiS 560**

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OR: *Community of Christ TiS 473*

#### Blessing

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Jesus said "I have come

so that you may have fullness of life"

Go knowing that this promise is for you  
and live as if you believe it.

Go and share this promise with others,  
and keep open to what might amaze you.

And may the blessing of God,  
Source, Son and Spirit,  
be upon you, and remain with you  
always

And all the people say: **Amen!**

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