



Pentecost 6 - Sunday July 5th, 2026 **The Fig Tree Worship Resource**

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

In Matthew 11:28, Jesus says:

'Come to me, all you who are weary
And are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest.'

As we come to worship,
Let us lay down our burdens,
Let us rejoice in God's love and care.
And WORSHIP.

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 - Come as you are that's how I want you TiS 693

OR: What a Friend we have in Jesus TiS 590

OR: Praise the Lord TiS 93

Prayer



Loving Lord, we come to you in prayer:

We set our minds to worship,
praising you for all we have.
We thank you that we live in
a mostly peaceful country.

We thank you for the joy of waking each morning to the sound of birds, and serenity.

We praise you for all we have, and sit quietly, amazed in your gifts and love.

(time of quiet)

As we think of your greatness and goodness, we acknowledge our failings... our lack of appreciation for all we have; our focus on ourselves rather than others; our lack of awareness of others who need our attention, such as those who are hungry, homeless, sufferers from family violence, or people who are invisible to us.

Forgive us and help us to care with our minds, resources and gifts.

In Jesus' name we pray. 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 24:34-38,42-49,58-67 &
Matthew 11:25-30

For these words of faith and for Jesus the Word

Thanks be to God.

Reflecting - Rev. Sandra Houghton

In the middle east arranged marriages are a very long-established custom. Marriage is and was, considered to be a matter of great importance not only to the couple involved, but also to the whole extended family clan.

Parents would seek to ensure that their children married partners who were of good character, and who shared the family's beliefs and expectations. They wanted to safeguard the



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harmony and well-being of the whole clan who often lived together in an extended family arrangement. Young people were often not considered mature enough to choose for themselves.

Consequently, it's hardly surprising that when Abraham decided that his precious son Isaac should be married, that he undertook to find him a wife. Abraham also decided that Isaac's wife should come from among his family clan back in Haran.

But this decision had logistical problems as Abraham was too old and frail to travel and he didn't want Isaac to leave him.

So, Abraham chose his most senior servant to undertake this mission. He bound him with an oath in which the servant promised to do as Abraham has asked. Abraham in turn, promised his servant that God's angel would guide him in this undertaking.

Abraham's trust in God at this moment is quite breathtaking. Who among us would be willing to believe that God would send an angel to guide us as we undertake a mission?

The unnamed servant was clearly a wise, faithful, trustworthy and diligent man. He trusted in Abraham's promise of God's guidance and showed great prayerfulness in all that he did.

Before he set out for Haran, he first equipped his expedition with lots of provisions to pay a bride price, and to show the wealth and importance of his master. Perhaps he hoped that this would help persuade a young woman to be willing to leave home and family and travel into the unknown.

But he very wisely did not rely on this wealth to find a wife for Isaac. Instead, when he reached Abraham's homeland he stopped at a well outside the city and prayed to God for guidance, asking that God show steadfast love to Abraham by granting him success in his search for a bride for Isaac. And because he saw that it was very

important that he approach the right young woman, the servant asked God for a sign to show him when the right one appeared. This sign he asked for is one that would test the mettle of any young woman, because what the servant asked is that when he asks a young woman for water to drink that she would not only willingly give him and drink but would also offer to water all of his camels.

Now as he had ten camels this was no small task. A thirsty camel will drink a great deal of water, and drawing all this water out of the well and pouring it into the animal troughs would be a big job.

The servant's faithfulness is rewarded because the first young woman to come along is Rebekah, Abraham's brother's granddaughter, and she willingly gives him water to drink and offers also to water his camels. When he finds out that Rebekah is a relative of Abraham and when she willingly offers him lodging for the night with her family, the servant rejoices and praises God for leading him to this place and to this young woman.

And when he later on talks to Rebekah's brother and father about his mission to find a bride for Isaac, he testifies to them of how God has guided him in his undertaking. This testimony persuades Laban and Bethuel that Rebekah should marry Isaac. No doubt all the rich presents that the servant produces will have helped sweeten this decision, but none the less, I believe we are clearly meant to see Abraham's servant as an exemplar in faith.

But his faithfulness alone would not have ensured a happy ending to this story. Each of the participants had a role to play. Each needed to have faith and be open to God's guidance, and as we have read, each did indeed play their part.

Abraham, his servant, Laban and Bethuel, and Rebekah all acted with faith and integrity.



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But behind them all is God, who shows great interest in the lives of God's people, and who guides the participants.

We might sometimes wonder whether God is interested in the nitty gritty of our lives- things like our families, our relationships, our work, our homes, and our decision making. But this is a story that demonstrates that God seeks to guide God's people in all of their lives, and if they are willing to listen, God will show them the way.

Maybe it won't always be with the kind of clear-cut signs that were given to Abraham's servant. Nor will it always be with the immediacy that his prayers were answered, but none the less, as we put our lives and our needs before God we can be assured that God does hear our prayers, and in time we will be helped to come to a decision. And as God is steadfast, we will have the assurance of God's presence and strength as we move forward in our lives.

Jesus in Matthew's gospel calls us to come to him with our struggles, our hurts, and our worries. Whatever the burdens that might be dragging us down and stressing us out he calls us to bring them to him, and he promises to give us rest for our souls.

There is no need for us to struggle on only in our own strength when we can get his help and support and guidance for our lives, so let us rely on him and seek his help and guidance in every part of our lives. Amen.

Singing - God sends us his Spirit TiS 412

OR: Master, speak, thy servant heareth TiS 597

OR: When love is found and hope comes home TiS 654

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

Today is the start of NAIDOC week, the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander week of celebration. For resources and information see

www.naidoc.org.au

July 10 is the anniversary of the Uniting Church Covenant between First and Second Peoples. See uniting.church/covenanting/ for details.

Prayers for World & Community

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

We pray for peace, for all those affected by war and violence, fighters, peace workers, "collateral damage".

We pray for our country when we feel helpless, guide us to what we can do, give us courage and the right words when people see things differently. Guide our leaders in wisdom. May we see the world beyond ourselves, may we seek the common good rather than what those like us see as important.

We pray for our church and communities: May we and our leaders respond appropriately in crises, give what and where 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 and those we love, the needs deep in our hearts that we dare not say aloud.

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,



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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 - Jesus Christ is waiting TiS 665

OR: Make me a channel of your peace TiS 607

OR: Comfort, comfort all my people TiS 647

Blessing

Take the yoke God sets upon you,
For we are assured that it is easy and the burden
light.

We are God's people

Created

Redeemed

Sustained

Today, yesterday and tomorrow

Amen.

Reflection: Rev. Sandra Houghton

Liturgy: Rev. Moira Dodsworth
Drouin, Trafalgar Parish, Yallourn

Editor: Rev. Arnie Wierenga

