



Pentecost 17 - Sunday September 20th, 2026

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

You may choose to have pieces of paper / card and pencils for people to write their own psalm of praise.

The song 'The Quail Came', written by Micahel Blanchard, is based on the Exodus reading. You might want to play this Noel Paul Stookey version at the beginning or the ending of worship (or in the middle!)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGmSkQcNtwY&list=RDnGmSkQcNtwY&start_radio=1

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Take a moment to draw near.
Sit in this space; aware of your thoughts,
your body, the ground beneath your feet.
Aware of the sounds around you,
noting the smells, the images, the people.
Sit in this space.
(time of quiet)

From the book of Exodus chapter 16, verse 9:
The people that Moses has led out of slavery in Egypt are hungry, tired and afraid.

Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites: 'Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.'"

So here we are drawing near, however we are;
hungry or satisfied,
tired or buoyant,
afraid or untroubled,
or all of the above, all at once.

Here we are drawing near,
confident that God hears us and calls us together.
And may Jesus teach us the way of justice,
and the Spirit of light and life
bless us in this gathering.

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 - Morning has broken TiS 156

OR: The God of Abraham praise TiS 125

OR: Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty TiS 132



Prayer

Psalm 105

O give thanks to the LORD; call on his name;
make known his deeds among the peoples.

Sing to him, sing praises to him;
tell of all his wonderful works.

Glory in his holy name;
**let the hearts of those
who seek the LORD rejoice.**

Seek the LORD and his strength;
seek his presence continually.

Remember the wonderful works he has done,
**his miracles
and the judgments he has uttered,**

O offspring of his servant Abraham,
children of Jacob, his chosen ones.



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You're invited to spend a few moments
composing your own psalm of praise and
thankfulness. Write it down if it helps you.

(allow a good amount of time)

God of many names,
we bring you our psalms of praise.
It's hard to find the right words for our gratitude,
but here we offer them to you.
You who know the joys of our inner life
and delight in our thankfulness.

Our inner life also has shadows,
as does our common life together,
It's harder to hold these before you,
because we often don't admit them to ourselves,
or to each other.
Forgive us our failings;

when we get stingy with love
and only measure it out
to those we think are deserving

when we judge others
who are not 'like us', or don't like us,
needing to feel that we're on the side of truth,
so they must be wrong

when we fail to take responsibility
for our actions, for our words,
for our thoughts, for our inaction
and resist the need to change and grow

As you accept our praise,
also accept our confession.
(pause)

Forgive us.
Open our eyes, minds and hearts
to the outpouring of your grace,
flowing like a river, full and free.
(pause)

Siblings in Christ,
know this in your souls;
we are forgiven.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Exodus 16: 9-15 &
Matthew 20:1-16

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

Reflecting - Rev. Anneke Oppewal

People have short memories.....

Only one chapter on from a spectacular God
supported escape and rescue mission, in Exodus
16 we find the newly liberated people of Israel
complaining and longing to retrace their steps
back to the flesh pots of Egypt.

They seem to have forgotten that those flesh
pots, never that generously filled anyway, had
come at a cost.

People are hardwired that way, to forget the bad
and see the past with rose coloured glasses. It
keeps us hopeful, positive, and optimistic. And it
is wonderful, because it helps us move forward,
without the past holding us back in negativity. A
healthy and helpful response to trauma, unless,
of course, it gets in the way of protecting
ourselves from history repeating itself.

Abusive relationships thrive on this amazing
ability, the ability for letting the pain of past hurt
subside in favour of more positive memories and
go back into something we kid ourselves into
believing could not be as bad as we remembered
it to be.

In that sense the Israelites are behaving like the
victims of oppression and abuse they are: Fear
and insecurity get the better of them, and in no
time they are harking back for the devil they



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know instead of trusting the God they don't know all that well yet.

It's human nature. Freedom is scary, an open future is scary, standing on our own two feet with no one else to blame is scary, a bit of discomfort and a set back when you are all you have to put things right, is scary. At least in Egypt they knew what they were up for. Slavery, oppression, murder, their whole lives in the hands of others, but in general it was, at least, predictable in its awfulness.

God does not blame them for their lack of faith and trust. God comes and feeds them. Quail, bread, enough for everyone, every day, day in day out, for the next 40 years God will show that God can be trusted.

With a bit of an edifying twist: the bread that covers the ground every morning disappears as soon as the sun is up, what they gather is enough for one day, and then becomes inedible the day after. No matter how hard they work, no matter how much they gather, no matter how they try to store it, there are no left overs from today that can be held on to for tomorrow. Every day requires a new trust, a renewed faith in God's providing.

And for 40 years that is what they get to practice in the wilderness, every day: to trust that tomorrow there will be enough, like there was yesterday, and the day before.

If we read the story of the labourers in the vineyard against the background of that story we may see a similar pattern emerging where the economy of the vineyard of God's grace is concerned. An economy not driven by merit, hours worked or effort put in.

Both the story from Exodus and the Parable tell us God looks after us the same, loves us the same, however hard we work, however successful we are at tilling God's vineyard, however well we do mission, ministry or other work, or not. God loves us the same and offers us the same. Grace, mercy, love, compassion,

support, and care as much as we need. Every single day.

Singing - For the fruits of all creation

TiS 168

OR: Great is your faithfulness TiS 154

OR: What does the Lord require TiS 618

Offering

Bless these offerings, God of freedom and grace. Bless all that is offered in your name that it may become hope, freedom and release. Amen.

Notices

This week (until **Sep 25**) is *World Week of Peace in Palestine and Israel*.

Sep 21 is the *International Day of Peace*.

Prayers for World & Community

Living God,
We pray today for those who are hungry, tired and afraid.

Bless the hungry and the homeless; the victims of the terrible events in Nepal and Tibet, and those who walk the same streets that we do.

Bless the tired and the downcast; those whose troubles weigh heavy in mind, body and soul.

Bless those who are afraid and fearful; who suffer violence - domestic, social, spiritual and political.

Bless the earth beneath our feet, the air around and within us, the sky over us, the waters that surround us and all that lives and moves within them.

Bless us, as we seek to be your people, grateful for the provisions we receive from your abundant goodness and grace and willing to share for the sake of all.



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In the quiet we bring to you the particular prayers
of our hearts, confident that you hear us.
(time of quiet)

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.

Reflection: Rev. Anneke Oppewal
Presbytery of Port Philip East, VIC

Liturgy: Rev. Jennie Gordon

Editor: Rev. Arnie Wierenga
revarniewie@gmail.com



Singing - We are your people TiS 468

OR: Guide me O thou great Redeemer TiS 569
OR: You shall go out with joy TiS 755

Blessing

Here we are at the close of our gathering;
hungry or satisfied,
tired or buoyant,
afraid or untroubled,
or all of the above, all at once.

We go from here
confident that God surrounds us
and sends us on our way.
In our waking and our dreaming,
may Jesus continue to teach us the way of justice,
and the Spirit of light and life
guide and bless us,
and all the people say: **Amen**