



Sunday October 4th, 2026 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Psalm 119:89-96, (NRSVUE)

Your word, LORD, is eternal;
it stands firm in the heavens.

Your faithfulness continues through all generations;

you established the earth, and it endures.

Your laws endure to this day,
for all things serve you.

If your law had not been my delight,

I would have perished in my affliction.

I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have preserved my life.

Save me, for I am yours;

I have sought out your precepts.

The wicked are waiting to destroy me,
but I will ponder your statutes.

To all perfection I see a limit,

but your commands are boundless.

Let us worship God

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 - Let all creation dance - TiS 187

OR: Morning has broken TiS 156

OR: God who stretched the spangled heavens TiS 163

Prayer



Divine Wisdom,
For countless generations
you have guided communities
toward living in harmony with one another.

You have blessed us with rules
geared toward loving you,
and rules geared toward loving our neighbour.

You sent us Jesus, the Word,
as interpreter of your law,
who showed us how to love you
and love our neighbour.

Praise to you,
Source and Impetus of healing and wholeness.

Holy Mystery,
You sent us Jesus, Prince of Peace,
as prophet and teacher.
You dismantle our prejudices,
offer correction to our misunderstandings,
and forgive our mistakes.
Praise to you, Fountain of Life.

Creator God,
You sent us Jesus to show us who you are,
Your invitation to participate in the kingdom
is open and real.
You equip us to follow
and send us to proclaim your love.
Praise to you, Mobiliser of Goodness.

We come now in confidence of your compassion
as we offer our confession.

Forgive us our murderous impulses.
Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

Forgive us when we judge our neighbours
Christ have mercy
Christ have mercy



Sunday October 4th, 2026

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Forgive us when our words or actions inflict pain
on your beloved family
Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

Gracious Three-in-One,
we trust in your great mercy.
Help us to learn and grow
as your faithful disciples.
Help us to love with abundant generosity
as you have loved us.
In Jesus' name we pray, **Amen.**

Declaration of Forgiveness (UiW2)

This is best of all:
when we are empty, **God fills us**
when we are disheartened,
God is compassionate
when we are wounded, **God brings healing**
when we confess our sin, **God forgives.**

In Christ, through Christ and because of Christ
we are reconciled to God.

Thanks be to God.
You refill the cup of life.

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Philippians 3:4b-13;
Matthew 21:33-46;

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

Reflecting - Rev Sandra Houghton

Who can forget seeing Cathy Freeman
blitz the field in the 400 metres foot race at the
Sydney Olympics in 2000? Just about all of
Australia was holding their breath that day, hoping

that this talented and committed Indigenous
runner would have her dreams of Olympic gold
come true. And they did. As Cathy ran her race,
through the marvels of modern television cameras
that captured every moment, we could see her
determination, her athleticism, and her absolute
focus on her goal- the finish line.

Likewise, if we look at any of the current
crop of top Australian runners like Lachlan
Kennedy, Gout Gout, and Jessica Hull, we see this
incredible determination and focus when they
race. Every ounce of their being is focused on
running the race, with no deviation and no
distractions; rather every effort is given in pursuit
of their goal.

This is the sort of focus and determination
that St Paul is pressing the church at Philippi (and
all Christians since) to have.

Paul, who started his life as Saul, had a life
that was tumultuous and full of ups and downs
and challenges. He was born to prestige, privilege
and power. He sought to be righteous, and was a
guardian of the Jewish faith and Law. He used his
position and power to persecute the church,
seeking out Christians and martyring them.

But then, on his way to persecute more
Christians, he had an incredible experience of
encountering Jesus Christ on the road to
Damascus. He was converted to the Christian faith
and called to a ministry of evangelism. After his
conversion, Saul left behind his privileged
background, and all that came with it. Saul, who
became Paul, regarded himself as utterly blessed
because he realised that the most precious prize
of all is faith in Jesus Christ, and his promises of
resurrection from the dead and eternal life.
Everything else, he said, was loss.

Paul wanted everyone to come to faith in
Jesus Christ so he undertook incredible and
challenging missionary and teaching journeys
across Asia Minor and Europe. He had preached



Sunday October 4th, 2026

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

the Gospel to crowds large and small, converted many people to the Christian faith, founded churches, and taught these new followers how to live out their faith. He had also been persecuted, hounded out of towns, beaten up, thrown into prison, and suffered much. Now he was imprisoned in Rome, facing the inevitability of his death which came on the orders of the Emperor Nero. This gave a sense of urgency to his teaching ministry, as he knew he wouldn't be able to help them for much longer.

So, Paul wanted the church at Philippi to know and focus on what is most important, and to not get caught up in issues that distract them. Issues like whether or not males should be circumcised. Clearly, there were differences within the church at Philippi about whether or not Christians needed to obey the Jewish law. Some were saying that circumcision was an essential part of faithfulness.

Paul wanted to emphasise to the Philippians, most strongly, that salvation cannot be earned, but is the free gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. That doesn't mean that our behaviour doesn't matter, as Paul certainly believed that Christians are called to imitate Christ in all of our lives.

But rather their (and our) call is to focus on Jesus. For Jesus is the one who has saved us. He has overcome our inability to be the sort of people that God has called us to be. And he is the one who shows us how to love God and love our neighbour.

Jesus is our guide and our goal. Our prize is his heavenly calling. So, let us confidently trust in his love, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, seek his guidance and strength as we endeavour to share his love with our neighbour. May we, too, like Paul faithfully run our race through life focused on Jesus until we reach our heavenly goal. Amen.

Singing - God sends us his Spirit - TIS 412

OR: Now the green blade rises TIS 382

OR: What a friend we have in Jesus - TIS 590

Offering

God of all goodness,
in love and gratitude we offer these gifts.
Bless and use them to work for good.

Bless us also as we share your gift of love,
holding and healing in all the hard places,
resisting and restoring where there is need.
Amen.

Notices

October 5th is World Habitat Day.

October 20th is World Homelessness Day
And also - World Mental Health Day.

Prayers for World & Community

Giver of Life,
We pray for legislators and interpreters of the law
for judges and legal counsel
for clerks and court chaplains
for all people caught up in legal systems
and for people in prison.

May human dignity be the key driver
for how the law is enacted.

Wellspring of Love,
We pray for leaders to lead with wisdom
and compassion.
for workers to work with diligence and respect,
for your people
to learn to get along with one another.
Wake the world up to your love and compassion

Gardener of Creation,
We pray for bird and mammal species
at risk of bird flu,
for conservationists and scientists.



Sunday October 4th, 2026

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

We pray for pollinators
and underground microbes
doing the hidden work to feed a planet,
for ecosystems and for all of your creation
impacted by human excesses.
Wake your people up to your abundant provision.

While we wait on you,
help us to remember that you wait on us
to live fully into our heritage as your beloved.
Your kingdom come in small and big ways,
and help us to be participants
in your glorious work.
Amen.

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.

Singing - Great God Your Spirit Like the Wind **TiS 416**

OR: Forth in your name, O Lord I go - TiS 571
OR: God gives us a future - TiS 687

Blessing

Go from here in confidence
that we have been called as disciples of Christ,
and sent to participate in furthering the kingdom.
Be confident in God's creative work
still unfolding.

Be bold in Jesus' love
and desire for justice.

Be led by the Spirit
to continue the ministry of healing
and restoration of relationships.

Be blessed in all you do and say,
Amen.

Reflection: Rev. Sandra Houghton
Retired minister: Sale.

Liturgy: Rev. Karen Eller
Bellarine Linked Congregations

Editor: Rev. Jennie Gordon
revjenniegordon@gmail.com

