**MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE**

**6th – 8th November 2020**

You may like to follow our service on our video. You can find it on our Worship Services page on our website at <https://www.macedonrangesunitingchurch.org.au/worship-services> or on YouTube at [https://youtu.be/4lqn5VYOuds](https://youtu.be/4lqn5VYOuds%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

Our service invites you to read the scriptures, pause, meditate and pray. Allow the stories told to lead you. We suggest reading the passages when suggested below. We are touching on several of the scripture readings in one way or another this week.

If you would like to look at previous videos on our YouTube channel, go to <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCb4hzdO-YgzmrIRVC-oby_w>.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

We acknowledge all the Aboriginal Groups who have cared for and nurtured the land on which we meet: the Wurundjeri; Woi Wurruung; Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung.

We acknowledge their leaders: past, present and emerging for it is in them that Australia’s future lies.

You are welcome here, as we reflect in different rooms and districts, States and Countries around the world, our spiritual connectedness through Christ Jesus, is remembered.

**WORDS OF WELCOME**

Welcome to our worship this week. It’s a week in which the news around us has been dominated by two things: the continuing news around Coronavirus and the easing of restrictions, and the news about the election in the United States. Both have been sources of disagreement and difficulty, each has the potential to bear light and hope. Each of them brings a threshold moment, a time when things may change significantly, and we may live differently in the days beyond.

Our readings today have us considering similar threshold moments: Where have we come from? Where are we right now? Where do we go from here? Are we ready? Do we have enough? How will we tell the story of this time?

As we gather, together apart, each of us will bring with us our own stories, our own hopes and dreams, our own disagreements and difficulties, our own light and hope. Some will have had joys to share and moments of delight in the last week, others will have had sad news and faced obstacles. For many of us, life will have been, as it often is, a mixture of both.

Let’s pause for a moment, take a deep breath, and consider what we bring with us today as we come to worship God.

Some experiences we need to lay aside for a time, because they hinder us from hearing the Spirit’s calling

Others, we bring to offer, in thanksgiving or in confession

Whatever you bring, whatever you lay aside, wherever you are, whenever you are joining us for worship, God sees you, God loves you, God welcomes you with open arms.

**You might like to light a candle as a sign of God’s presence**

**Psalm 78:1-7**

We are keen to learn of you, LORD;
........your people are eager to hear what you have to say.
We listen to those who pass on the old stories;
........the dark mysteries of ancient wisdom.
These are things we must hear and know,
........for the wisdom of our ancestors must not be lost.
We will not deprive our children of these things.
........We will pass on the stories to the next generation, LORD,
................stories of the wonderful things you have done,
........so that they know how great and amazing you are.
You laid down the law for your people, LORD,
........and set out what you expected of your chosen ones.
You spelt it out to our ancestors,
........and told them to teach it to their children,
................so that the next generation would know your ways;
so that those who had not yet even been born
........would be able to grow up and pass it on to their children;
so that they will trust their future to you, God,
........living their lives by your instructions
................and never forgetting what you have done. ©2002 Nathan Nettleton [LaughingBird.net](http://laughingbird.net/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_parent)

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Come and share the stories

of God’s people long ago

Pilgrims, travellers,

foolish, wise,

Trusting, forgetting

Finding grace and healing

and a place to call home

Come and share the stories

of God’s people here and now

Pilgrims, travellers,

foolish, wise,

Trusting, forgetting

Finding grace and healing

and a place to call home

Come and share in the Holy Three-in-One

Who lives within in our stories

Who sets the path for pilgrims

Whose is wisdom, trust, grace and healing,

Who calls us home.

**SONG: God keeps calling us on**

**A PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

As for you?

You love your Creation passionately,

from the brightest star to the tiniest plankton

and you delight in its goodness

As for you?

You dreamed a world of hope and justice,

a world of abundance and beauty

to be shared and celebrated

As for you?

You created us to work beside you

so that your world might reflect your glory

and be a place of peace

As for us?

We have abused your Creation

hidden the stars with pollution and the plankton with plastic

and we struggle to see the goodness

As for us?

We forget your dreams, lose our hope and live unjustly

fretting that we have too little, missing the beauty

and grasping and criticising instead

As for us?

We go our own way

losing sight of your presence in our midst

and ignoring your call to Shalom

As for me….?

We give you thanks, that when we know we are lost, you are there on the path beside us to turn us around and point us towards home. Even in the darkest night, you bring resurrection life through your power, grace and mercy.

Amen.

**OUR READINGS FOR TODAY –**

Take a moment to read our readings for today: Psalm 78:1 – 7; 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 18; Matthew 25:1 – 13

**Joshua 24:1 – 3a, 14 – 25** read by Rev. Deac. Meg Evans

**REFLECTION** *by Rev Peter Cannon*

The months whereby we have journeyed with the Israelites as their founding story unfolds comes this week to its culmination. In our reading today, at this pivotal point, Joshua retells their story and journey. He speaks of his ancestors’ story as being their living, contemporary story. It is a story that points to a possible future and challenges them to decide their way forward.

The presence of God, guiding, leading, supporting, empowering, loving, challenging, judging and forgiving is central. Through all and in all, the fidelity of God is omnipresent, even when the people fall. God’s story in intimately entwined with theirs.

Joshua’s reflection invites us to reflect on our story and journey to now. How does it inform our future and decisions? Is our direction affirmed or have we lost our way?

With the writers of Joshua’s story, we know that failures do come. Some don’t stay the course. But even so, God is faithful and seeks to restore.

Our NT readings are an appropriate follow on to last week’s All Saints Day. In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul is being very pastoral, comforting grieving and fearful people. The journey has seemed long and hard already and some had not reached the goal of Jesus’ return. Are they left out? The answer is an emphatic no!

The hope remains. The encouragement of both NT passages is don’t give up. Don’t lose sight of the goal. Stay the course. There is again a reminder that God is faithful.

It is easy to see parallels with our own experiences. The journey through Covid restrictions see us in Victoria at a pivotal point. We can stay the course, social distance, wear masks, follow good hygiene, support each other, continue the new ways of community and continue to practice our learnings from this experience. God is faithful and has been present throughout the journey.

The journey of the Partnership is now at a pivotal point. We began 7 years ago to strike out on a new path. There have been many ups and down, encouragements and discouragements. We have learnt a lot. We now need to decide our way forward. Do we stay the course? We remember that God is faithful and has been present throughout the journey.

And there is our own life journey. We each have different stories and experiences but still are challenged to decide our way forward. Our journey invites us to remember anew, God is faithful, hope remains and stay the course.

**SOME QUESTIONS:**

What are the stories of God you most like to hear, tell or reflect on:

from the bible?

 from your own life?

What are the stories that most challenge and stretch you

 from the bible?

 from your own life?

**PRAYER FOR OTHERS:** — *written by Rev. Marjory MacAskill, and posted on the Starters for Sunday on the Church of Scotland website. Used with permission*

As for me

As for me, Lord

You know me better than I know myself

As for me I would serve the Lord

Put off waiting

Find my voice

Enter life in its fullness

Offer hope where there is none

Take the hand of friend and stranger

So for the courage to do all this

*Hear my prayer*

As for me and my household, my church, my community

As for us together though often apart

You know our strengths and weaknesses

Our gifts and shortcomings

As for us we would serve the Lord

In the small things

Of friendship

Kind words

Visiting the sick

Caring for the grieving

So for the love to do all this

*Hear our prayer*

As for us we would serve the Lord

In the big issues

Of poverty

War

Violence

Greed

Giving where there is need

Speaking for those who cannot be heard

Challenging the system that divides your world

So for the patience to do all this

*Hear our prayer*

As for you Lord God

Come again to cold hearts

Weary bodies

Confused minds

To fill with spirit

And renew with life

That service will be true

Love be real

And glory be to Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Now and always

Amen

**SONG: God gives us a future (TiS 687)**

**SENDING FORTH –**

So go and share the stories of God’s people long ago

of God’s people here and now,

of the Holy Three-in-One

active and alive in the world.

Create a new story in the life you live,

a life blessed with wonder in the Creator

a life blessed with hope in the Resurrected One

a life blessed with joy in the Spirit’s embrace . Amen.

**OFFERING**

You may like to consider giving an offering to your congregation via direct deposit. Details for each are:

* Gisborne: Gisborne branch, Bendigo bank, B.S.B. 633 108, A/C: 1512 83736
* Romsey: Bendigo Bank, B.S.B. 633 000, A/C: 161501200, Account name: UCA Romsey Uniting Church
* Lancefield: Account Name: Lancefield Uniting Church, BSB: 633 108, A/C No: 112926639
* Mia Mia – Kyneton: Commonwealth bank, B.S.B. 063 517, Account no.: 1002 1775

 *I will publish other congregation’s details as they come to hand. Contact you congregation’s treasurer for details if they are not here.*