**MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE**

**18 - 20 September 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/dpRqRP9dBQ8>. 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 for this week

Here in the Macedon Ranges we have a renewed sense of hope

As we begin to take steps out lockdown with others around regional Victoria.

If you’re part of the Macedon Ranges Partnership you’ll be feeling that hope

If you’re from beyond, and not in a similar situation to us, we hope that our joy would filter through,

And that you, too, would be encouraged to continue on in the time ahead.

We know that the God who loves us and calls us journeys with us, wherever and whenever you are.

So you are welcome to join us. Come, let’s worship God together

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

God is calling us to open up!

Open the doors of our lives, open the doors of our hearts.

Be ready to step into the light.

Be ready to join with others again

Let the gates that hold us be flung open!

Let’s walk down familiar paths,

With new eyes to see and new ears to hear.

Listen for the call of the Spirit’s song

New life beckons us.

God extends the invitation into life… come, let’s worship.

**HYMN: SHE SITS LIKE A BIRD TIS 418**

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION:** Realigned Again *(The Work of the People)*

I rejected my worth, denied the Truth from whom I’m birthed

Became a brick and played my part, unstable from the start, hardened to the heart.

I can’t hold up this world on my own, even the mortar’s crumbled undone.

And the home I existed in in the past, the place that I thought was built to last,

Turns out to be a gaping wound, from the way I’ve gained and assumed.

So – water, fall, let tears be my call. Lord, don’t hold back, take it all, take it all.

In all relations now and past, breathe life that’s meant to last.

May the consequences of the then and now heal beneath the salve of your know-how

And love become the remedy, the power of God that sets us free,

Because God’s grace is not wisdom’s fool, a dying art, a jester’s tool –

It comes as tender to the flame, spirited passion of the holy name.

I have to still and just rest in it, agree to the places of your benefit,

And remember the cause to which I claim, levelled the bricks and aligned them again,

To befriend the rich, and the poor, so comfort is a luxury no more,

But the constant of kingdom living, and the inspiration of all giving.

We can’t hold up this world on our own. Take it all! Take it all!

**OUR READINGS FOR TODAY**

Take a moment to read our readings for today: Exodus 16:2-15, Psalm 105:61-6, 37-45, Philippians 1:21-30, Matthew 20:1-16. We explore in our video discussion the Exodus story, the Matthew story and the Romans reading.

**REFLECTION** *by Rev Peter Cannon*

Our readings, especially from Matthew and Exodus, explore some “big” themes in our stories of faith. Questions of trusting God in the midst of struggle, grace, God’s provision, God’s values in contrast to common human values to name a few. The stories can also be engaged from a variety of angles, politically, spiritually, metaphorically, from the perspective of the refugee or even the long term unemployed. Each perspective can open our understanding and deepen our faith.

For the Israelites, the journey to the fulfilment of their dream, safety, security, a homeland and justice was initially exciting. It got them moving and taking a risk. But bit by bit, the longer the journey took, the harder things seemed to be. The journey became a trudge and a struggle. The dream seemed no closer and their life was insecure. Food and water in the wilderness seemed to always be uncertain. It is no wonder that they grumbled.

Not too much of a stretch to identify with them for those of us in lockdown – the easing of restrictions too little and too slow.

The perspectives of the workers slaving in the hot sun compared to those waiting to be given a go differ widely in the parable. The parable seems to turn a just wage on its head. Not much in common with the Exodus story surely?

Yet one things links both stories, God provides according to need and not according to what is deserved. The grumbles of the Israelites were heard. Their needs met. The Israelites are instructed to collect what is needed for their household. There is more than sufficient.

The workers are given what they need to get by each day and not what they earned. The concern of the vineyard owner is for the wellbeing of the workers, making sure they have enough to put food on their table too.

The reign of God is not about fairness, equality or what we consider to be justice. There is no meritocracy. It is about wellbeing.

God’s reign is a challenge to socialism as much as capitalism. They are both about earning an outcome. Yet God is concerned about us first, showing grace. Values and practices turned on their heads.

So “give us this day our daily bread” is much more than about a meal on the table. It is a lifestyle of trust and openness to a new pathway.

**SOME QUESTIONS:**

1. It has been said that capitalism thrives on the “myth of scarcity”. A perception which leads to greed and hoarding. We joke about the strange sight of panic buying of toilet paper yet could this be a revealing of the selfish heart of our economic system? What have you seen that challenges this hoarding, fearful mindset during the pandemic?
2. Our unions have negotiated for workers to be paid according to the work they do. More difficult hours and conditions are seen to deserve better pay. Risk and effort should be rewarded. Yet in a pandemic such values are of limited value to those who try but cannot work due to isolation requirements. How does grace build a life giving community during the pandemic?

**IF YOU ARE ABLE, YOU ARE INVITED TO LISTEN TO THE PAUL KELLY SONG “SPECIAL TREATMENT”,** *or watch the video of it online*

**PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

Loving God,

We pray for those with empty bowls and empty bellies, and for those with too much on their plates

Ae pray for those whose lives are full of possessions, and things, and stuff,

And for those who have learned to travel lightly and live simply and work hard

We pray for those with too much access to land, and those who are pleading for more access to land

We pray for those with not enough time on their hands, and for those for whom the days drag slowly by

We pray for those whose early start in life gives them an advantage, and those who need more help with their education

We pray for those who have plenty, and for those who do not have enough

We pray for those who need more work, and those whose work is a burden to them

We pray for those we love who we can’t be with, who we can’t see and touch at this time

And we pray that we will continue to hear your call to be people praying for and working for justice in your world

In Jesus’ name we pray.

Amen.

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**

Say the Lord’s Prayer.

**WE SING: GOD OF THE MOVEMENTS AND MARTYRS** by David LaMotte, performed by The Many

**A FRANCISCAN BENEDICTION** *(The Work of the People)*

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships

- so that you may live deep within your heart

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people

- so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war

- so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and turn their pain to joy

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in the world...

- so that you can do what others claim cannot be done...

To bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor...Amen.

**BLESSING**

So go into your week this day

In the name of the Holy Three in One

Who loves you, who supports you,

Who guides you and calls you ever forward

Into new life. 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.*