**PENTECOST 16a – Proper 11a MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE**

**17 – 19 JULY 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/eTvu-CZTvx0>. 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.

The ministry team would appreciate you feedback on our services during this time of Covid restrictions. Please let them know your thoughts by completing the survey that is available on our web site Worship Services page. You can also request a survey by contacting them via [repeterc@gmail.com](mailto:repeterc@gmail.com) or Rev Peter on 0434 310 862.

**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 not forgotten.

**PRAYER TO COMMENCE WORSHIP**

Jacob met God at Bethel, a thin place, where heaven and earth touch.

God is here, in front of us, behind us, beside us.

There is nowhere God isn’t present.

We come to worship God, now, wherever we are, in our own thin place.

**CONFESSION – PSALM 139**

Let us pray

1 O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;

you discern my thoughts from far away.

3 You search out my path and my lying down,

and are acquainted with all my ways.

4 Even before a word is on my tongue,

O Lord, you know it completely.

5 You hem me in, behind and before,

and lay your hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;

it is so high that I cannot attain it.

***You know me inside out,***

***Thank you Lord for understanding me***

7 Where can I go from your spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence?

8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there;

if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

9 If I take the wings of the morning

and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

10 even there your hand shall lead me,

and your right hand shall hold me fast.

11 If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,

and the light around me become night,”

12 even the darkness is not dark to you;

the night is as bright as the day,

for darkness is as light to you.

***Wherever I go you are there,***

***Thank you Lord for watching over me***

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;

test me and know my thoughts.

24 See if there is any wicked way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting.

***Whatever I think, do, or say, you know,***

***Thank you Lord for your forgiveness. Amen***

**OUR READINGS FOR TODAY:** Take a moment to read our other readings for today: Genesis 28:10 – 19a; Romans 8:12-25; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

**REFLECTION** *by Rev Peter Cannon*

We are a people who like to distinguish between that which is special and that which is ordinary, the everyday. Growing up, my siblings and I would tease our mother when guests would arrive and she would bring out the “good” crockery and cutlery. “Haven’t seen that before!” we would tease. “When did you get that?” we would continue!

The recent debate about climbing and no longer being allowed to climb Uluru, the closing of ANZAC cove due to Covid to ANZAC Day commemorations, what happens when churches are closed and sold are all expressions of this.

Our reading from Genesis demonstrates our human desire to mark special, even holy times and places. Jacob was surprised by the presence of God. He felt the need to memorialize it. Generations later, the place was known as holy.

Yet, the place was no different to any other. Jacob’s dream even pointed to the reality that God was constantly engaged with all of God’s creation; the angels were constantly going between heaven and earth. All creation has God present.

Paul in Romans takes it further, declaring that all of creation will share in the salvation of God’s children! Even when the right words fail us and we feel inadequate for the moment, God’s Spirit hears and shares in our groans.

There is a tension between the human need to mark places and times yet know that God is beyond all of these boundaries. God encounters us, seeks us, walks with us and holds us even when we do not know it.

And the Psalm declares with awe and joy, God’s intimate knowledge of us borne out of love. God is ahead of us, God is behind us, God is over us, God is below us, God is beside us, God is within us and God surrounds us with grace and love.

May your journey in the coming days be marked with an awareness of God’s constancy and presence.

**THEMES – FROM THE PSALM AND GENESIS READINGS** *– thanks to Jay Brooks for these questions and thoughts.*

**A key theme –** God is everywhere, in front of us, behind us, next to us, in our minds, and in places and times we don’t expect. God knows our every thought and action before we think it or do it. There is nowhere we can go to get away from God’s presence.

**How does that make you feel?**

**Are you comforted that God is so close that every thought is a prayer?**

**Or is it confronting knowing that God is like ‘big brother’ watching for every slip-up?**

**Another theme** - Jacob is definitely not a perfect person yet God accepted him and they muddled along.

**Are we perfect people?** It is reassuring to know that we don’t have to be perfect when we come to God (from the Psalm God already knows our thoughts and actions before we do) we can continue to muddle along with God

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS**

*Jacob used oil at Bethel to anoint the rock which he had used as a pillow. In the New Testament in the book of James we read about anointing a sick person with oil for healing. There are many people requiring healing in our world today. Let us symbolically pour oil as we pray at this time.*

Loving God, you see the world in all its beauty and you know all of its needs. We come before you in this time of prayer bringing the people and places of your creation that are on our hearts.

We pray for those who are in hard places, especially those we know and care for. We name them before you now.

There are many who are unknown to us and we pray for them. Those who need healing

* from Coronavirus or other diseases
* from fear and worry about lockdown again,
  + finances, work, holidays cancelled, schooling.
* from tension as some of us are in lockdown and others are semi free
* from loneliness and lack of community contact
* from racial discrimination, the victims and the perpetrators and the daily reminders that people are given that they are perceived as inferior

We pray for those who are buffeted by the winds of life time. May they know your healing poured into their lives. We pray in Jesus name.

Amen

**BLESSING**

So go into your week.

Be sowers of the good seeds of God’s love wherever you go.

Live in the hope of God’s new Kingdom.

Bring freedom for all of creation as children of God.

Expect to find God in unexpected places,

Or don’t…

And God will find you anyway.

Live as a blessing.

Be blessed by the Holy Three in One,

The One who knows you better than you know yourself,

Who holds you by the hand,

Whose Spirit is with you always.

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.*