**MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE – Easter 7B**

**14th – 16th May 2021**

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/f0X-f1OedpY](https://youtu.be/mltrsnlGaRY%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)](https://youtu.be/f0X-f1OedpY)

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. 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 that we, in the Macedon Ranges Partnership, gather on land of which the Wurundjeri; Woi Wurruung; Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung have been custodians since time immemorial. We acknowledge them, and pay our respects to their leaders: past, present and emerging.

We commit ourselves to the work of reconciliation with all people, and with our God.

We invite you to take a moment to acknowledge the people of the land from where you join us today.

**WELCOME & CALL TO WORSHIP**

Welcome to our time of worship this week, the last week of the Easter season. The alleluias of Easter Day have been ringing through our lives in these weeks, as we’ve focussed on what it is to be the people of the Resurrection. As with each of the seasons of the church year, we don’t move on and forget about those messages, but hopefully each year we integrate them more fully into our lives and our faith. Let’s keep looking for signs of God’s gracious kin-dom breaking into our lives in ever new and renewing ways. It’s this resurrection life that calls us each and every day, and especially today, in this moment, as we gather to worship the God who renews us, surprises us, delights us and leads us on. Wherever you might be, whenever you might be joining us, you are welcome. You are loved. You are called.

**OPENING PRAYER**

Holy and loving God,

You have shown us how to be happy.

You have given us guidance and direction

for a life filled with goodness, truth and beauty

You have prepared a place for us

in the life that is to come

and given us the way to live that life

in the here and now

You sent your Son Jesus

to show us what it is like

to live in perfect harmony with you;

to give us a flesh and blood example

of what it means

to live in the very heart of your love,

protected, challenged, joyful, free.

We pray that we will hear your Spirit

living in us and through us and calling

into the world you love

so that we might find her at work there as well.

Help us listen for your word to us today,

and help us respond in faith, hope and love,

we pray.

And if we listen with only our sense of our own smallness

or reminders of our failures

Help us to hear your words of forgiveness, mercy and compassionate love.

And strengthen us to live into the abundant life to which we are called.

In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

**SONG: LIKE A TREE (PSALM 1)** by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan

***alternative suggestion:* TiS 569: Guide me, o thou great Redeemer**

**BIBLE READINGS:** **Acts 1:15-26**, 1 John 5:9-13, **Psalm 1**, **John 17:6-19**

**REFLECTION** by Ps Annette Buckley

The Federal government’s Budget was delivered this week, along with the Opposition’s response. Much of the commentary suggested that the Budget had been framed with an eye to an early election, and that the Opposition’s response was laying the groundwork for the challenge that they will mount during the coming campaign. A question, for us, of choosing leadership…quite different to the choices made by the apostles in the Acts reading today! I would sincerely hope that all of us preparing to go along and put the numbers in the boxes on those sometimes dizzying voting papers will do so prayerfully, as the apostles did for their choice. I imagine there are those who would suggest that casting lots would provide us with leadership equal to, or better than, the governments we usually have, but I’m not going there.

Of course, the following day, we had the analysis from the media, which always includes a headline or lead-in such as: “The Budget: What’s in it for you?” This question each and every year really gets under my skin, as if the only lens we have for looking at how we spend our nation’s resources is self-interest. What a poverty-stricken approach to national life that is. It has lead to situations such as the dire state of Aged Care and the looming crisis in the NDIS and its management.

Last year I heard a podcast of Krista Tippet’s *On Being*  podcast with Scottish philosopher and chess player Jonathan Rowson. A line from that struck deeply with me: “I think … that economic questions are too important to be left to economists, because they’re not, at their heart, technical questions for a kind of scientific expertise. They deal with questions of how you make value judgments in the world.” He went on to talk about some work being done at the University of Surrey: “And what’s great about the way that work’s being done is that they’re calling upon artists and philosophers and psychologists and people from various walks of life to actually help imagine what an economic system would look like that spoke to human value more broadly conceived.” The idea is that, as a community, we first decide what are the priorities for our communities, and then work out how to pay for them. It struck me as a noble (perhaps impractical) aspiration, certainly one that is, for me, starting with the right kind of questions.

What would the world look like if, instead of asking “What’s in it for me?” when we chose our leaders, we asked “What are the values that underpin the community I’d like to live in?” and then voted accordingly. Many polls show that we are deeply concerned about issues such as aged care, indigenous reconciliation, health and education and justice for refugees, but time and again governments and oppositions give us few real opportunities to support those issues with our votes or their Budgets, telling us that it’s just too hard.

The community of love that Jesus inaugurates and invites us to share is in this world, but not of it. What can we do this week, what small steps can we take, to transform the world in which we live so that it looks more like the kin-dom that is yet to come?

**TEAM REFLECTION**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

God of this world and the world yet to come

We pray for the places and people

who are furthest away from your vision

for the Cosmos

We pray for a peaceful and just solution

to the conflict in the Middle East

and all other places where people

live with war

We pray for healing and wholeness

in communities and countries

ravaged by COVID 19

and other disease

We pray for compassion and generosity

towards people in need

from people who have much more

than they will ever use

We pray for dignity and hope

for people who are living in situations

that exclude them from their rightful place

within their communities.

We pray for the people and situations

that are on our hearts today

*a time of Silence*

We pray for joy and courage

for all those who are working

to make this world a place of

peace and justice,

healing and wholeness,

compassion and generosity,

dignity and hope,

joy and courage.

May we be counted among them.

Amen.

**SONG: We will love** by Graeme Gardiner

*Alternative suggestion: TiS 420 Holy Spirit go before us*

**SENDING OUT AND BLESSING:**

So go into this week,

Sure of the values of the world that God is creating in our midst

and seeking to live into them and out of them

in your daily life.

Be assured that you are welcomed into the abundant life of God’s kin-dom

and seek to welcome others in the name of the One

who prays for you in love.

And as you go, may you know

the strength and tender care of the Creator

the compassion and fearless passion of the Redeemer

and the power and gentle promptings of the Spirit of God.

**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
* Mia Mia – Kyneton: Commonwealth bank, B.S.B. 063 517, Account no.: 1002 1775