



Order of service

Date: Sunday June 21st, 2020

Pentecost 3A- UCA anniversary

We acknowledge that we are worshipping on the traditional lands of the Boon Wurrung people, of the Kulin nation, and pay our respects to elders past and present.

DON'T FORGET YOU CAN LOG INTO THE CHURCH WEBSITE AND SEE MUCH OF THIS BY VIDEO ON THE FRONT PAGE!!!!

INTROIT – TIS 511 vss. 3,4.

3

Let us sing songs together with the Lord
Let us sing songs together with the Lord
*As we travel through this land,
all God's children hand in hand,
Lord, fill all our living with your life.*

4

Let us all work together for the Lord
Let us all work together for the Lord
*As we travel through this land,
all God's children hand in hand,
Lord, fill all our living with your life.*

CALL TO WORSHIP

We are the people of God,
called and trusted to walk the world in love and faith.
We are the ones who are anointed for the task,
sent out to live a dream for Jesus Christ,
held firmly in the hand of our Maker
and led out in the power of the Holy Spirit.
Let us worship God!

Sing – TIS 100 vss. 1,2,5,7.

1

All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing
 alleluia, alleluia;
O burning sun with golden beam,
and silver moon with softer gleam,
 O praise him, O praise him,
 alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

2

Swift-rushing winds that are so strong,
and clouds that sail in heaven along,

O praise him, alleluia;

fresh-rising morn, in praise rejoice,
and lights of evening, find a voice:

O praise him, O praise him

alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

5

And everyone of tender heart,
forgiving others, take your part,

O praise him, alleluia!

All who long pain and sorrow bear
praise God and on him cast your care;

O praise him, O praise him

alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

7

Let all things their Creator bless,
and worship him in humbleness;

O praise him, alleluia!

Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three in One:

O praise him, O praise him,

alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

WELCOME

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God

and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you all!

And also with you!

Opening prayer

Into this place, we gather seeking truth, listening beyond words
for the rhythm of the Divine.

We gather seeking solace, for losses that are too heavy to bear.

We gather seeking mercy, for we find within our hearts, the presence of a shadow.

We gather seeking justice, too many walls shutting out the Light.

Yet, too, we gather to share the things our lives have found to be true.

We gather to heal and shoulder burdens not our own.

We gather to forgive and be forgiven,

by grace, freeing each other into hope and new life.

We gather to stand shoulder to shoulder with those who must not stand alone.

And into this place we come with thanksgiving -

for the joy of being together as one in community;

for the blessing of knowing that we are loved by God,
and called into fellowship with one another in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Prayer of confession

One: Sometimes, the hard words of Jesus confuse us and frighten us.
Sometimes, we wonder how to be faithful when our faith makes other people dislike us or distrust us or fear us.

All: How can we not be afraid?

One: Sometimes, speaking up to defend someone who has been accused wrongly,
or finding resources to share with others, or telling the truth when a lie is easier, or facing up to bullying without backing down, seems too frightening to bear.

All: How can we not be afraid?

One: Sometimes, we want to run away, to ignore the problems, to be silent when someone needs our help, to save our money or our time or our talent for ourselves. Sometimes our fear controls us.

All: How can we not be afraid?

One: Forgive us when we allow fear to overtake us, and we doubt your presence. Fill our spirits with the strength you offer, comfort our hearts with the courage you offer, open us to the grace you offer, and grant us the trust to believe in your love supporting us.

All: Comfort and sustain us, we pray. Amen.

Words of affirmation

One: Hear the grace-filled words of Jesus the Christ, who said: “I am with you always, ‘til the end of time.”
Your sins are forgiven.

ALL: Thanks be to God! Amen.

EARLY WORD – Family Trees and sorting hats

If there are any kids present, ask how they are going.
Ask who has parents here. (or who is a parent). Wave your hand.
Ask who has grandparents here. (or is a grandparent.) Wave your hand.
Ask who has great grandparents. (or if you are a great grandparent or know one) Wave your hand.



Show my family tree.

Comment that I am here, as in existing, because my great grandparents somewhere around 80-100 years ago decided to marry and then have children, who had children, who had children, one of **them** being me.

I am here because of decisions made by people a long time ago.
You are here because of the same decisions by your family in the past.
The Uniting Church is much the same.
Decisions made by people over 43 years ago has led to us being able to be here today. (Although none of them would have expected it to be like this...none of them could even have imagined anything like this)
Let me say, that idea of coming together has not ended. Congregations around Australia are banding together in different ways now, recognising the value in doing this. My last two placements consisted of such congregations.
We are still, although with somewhat less energy, doing things with our sister churches of other denominations.
There is the idea that seeking out each other is an ongoing important task to do.
Why might this be? Why is it still important to seeking out other churches to partner with? Ask kids/adults for responses.

Let me share with you an idea I had about this.
Show slide of sorting hat (close up) then wider view.



Ask who knows what this is about?
Explain how I have read the Harry Potter series, and seen all the movies several times and found an interesting part in the book *The Order of the Phoenix*.
This is an image of the Sorting Hat on a stool in the great hall at Hogwarts, the school of witchcraft and wizardry in the Harry Potter books and films.

The sorting hat is a magical hat that sorts first year students into their houses that they remain in throughout their time at Hogwarts. The hat figures out which house would best suit each student and places them in that house. In the books, but not the movies, the hat has this rather long song that it recites at sorting in the book *The Order of the Phoenix*.

I want to read a couple of the sections from that song now.
(The Sorting Hat speech from *Harry Potter and the order of the phoenix* pp185-187).

In times of old, when I was new,
And Hogwarts barely started,
The founders of our noble school
Thought never to be parted.

United by a common goal,
They had the self-same yearning
To make the world's best magic school
And pass along their learning.

And never since the founders four
were whittled down to three
have the Houses been united
as they once were meant to be.

And now the Sorting Hat is here
and you all know the score:
I sort you into Houses
because that is what I'm for.

But this year I'll go further,
listen closely to my song:
though condemned I am to split you
still I worry that it's wrong,

Though I must fulfill my duty
and must quarter every year
still I wonder whether sorting
may not bring the end I fear.

Oh, know the perils, read the signs,
the warning history shows,
for our Hogwarts is in danger
from external, deadly foes

And we must unite inside her
or we'll crumble from within
I have told you, I have warned you...
let the Sorting now begin.

Explain that I reckon it is this desire to strive against the bad things in the world, and to help those in need that is a big part of what motivates us to want to continue being united together. That and seeking to follow the great truths that Jesus gave us to live by that we want to share.

Well, that's all for now. Maybe ask your parents what they remember about the beginning of the Uniting Church.
Bye for now.

SHARING OUR STORIES – Sacrifice.

READINGS:

Ezekiel 37:15-28

¹⁵The word of the Lord came to me: ¹⁶Mortal, take a stick and write on it, "For Judah, and the Israelites associated with it"; then take another stick and write on it, "For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with it"; ¹⁷and join them together into one stick, so that they may become one in your hand. ¹⁸And when your people say to you, "Will you not show us what you mean by these?" ¹⁹say

to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am about to take the stick of Joseph (which is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with it; and I will put the stick of Judah upon it, and make them one stick, in order that they may be one in my hand. ²⁰When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, ²¹then say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land. ²²I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms. ²³They shall never again defile themselves with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. I will save them from all the apostasies into which they have fallen, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God. ²⁴My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. ²⁵They shall live in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, in which your ancestors lived; they and their children and their children's children shall live there forever; and my servant David shall be their prince forever. ²⁶I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore. ²⁷My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ²⁸Then the nations shall know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forevermore.

Hebrews 13:1-8

Let mutual love continue. ²Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. ³Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. ⁴Let marriage be held in honour by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. ⁵Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." ⁶So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" ⁷Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Matthew 10:24-39

²⁴"A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; ²⁵it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! ²⁶"So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many

sparrows. ³²“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; ³³but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. ³⁴“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household. ³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

PREACHING - Solidarity

Today we are marking the 43rd anniversary of The Uniting Church in Australia. I am mindful that I really didn’t do anything for the anniversary last year and was told it wasn’t a big thing at BUCA.

I guess I had become used to it at my previous two placements that were operating in clusters, and it was always a good occasion to come together for combined worship. Which then had the extra benefit of reminding us we were not alone in this whole church life.

I thought I would make a thing of it this year, to remind us, more so this year than any other time, that we are not alone, even though it does feel a bit like that.

I want to tell you that today, all across Australia, congregations will be worshipping just like us, at home across home, or maybe in small numbers in their church buildings, though that is less likely just yet.

And in all those places of worship spread across a multitude of households today, people will be remembering this Uniting Church, giving thanks for who we have been, and looking to the future for what we may yet become.

Now that I have done that spiel, let’s get into it.

When I was a young lad, I did the whole cubs and scouts bit. Anyone else here go through scouts? I am remembering that Malcolm Cumming was a scout leader for a time.

Initially I was reluctant to go, but my parents persevered, and I eventually became a member of our local troop.

I have many good memories of those times, friends made, adventures had, embarrassing toileting situations on camps.

By far the two things I am left with most are, I came to like tomatoes on a scout camp. A story my mum still like to tell well into my adult years, about when her little boy finally ate tomatoes.

The second thing is that I learned to tie knots.

A very handy skill.

In those days, however, it was also necessary.

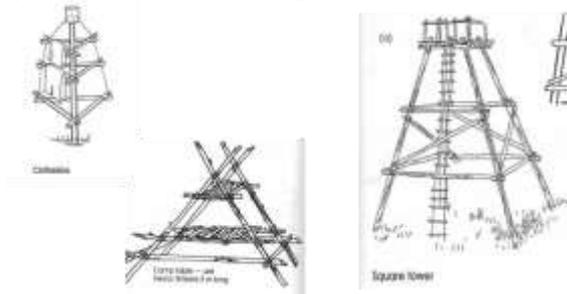
Those of you who have been scouts last century, will remember that we did not have the whizz bang and totally awesome pop up rip corded tents that can go anywhere. We had to lash wooden spars together to make a tent frame to hang the enormously heavy canvas tents on.

Their weather proofness left a lot to be desired, but there was a sense of satisfaction in assembling the whole thing from scratch.

It was important therefore to learn how to lash together two or three poles for a variety of purposes, our main one being for tents.

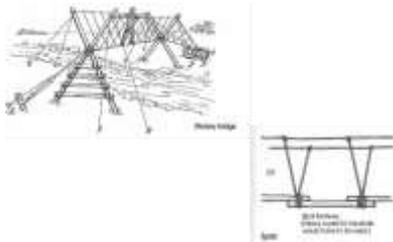
But let me amaze you with some images of things that can be made through lashing poles with ropes. You will however find it less amazing, that I did not make most of these items...well any of them actually.

(Show first slide)



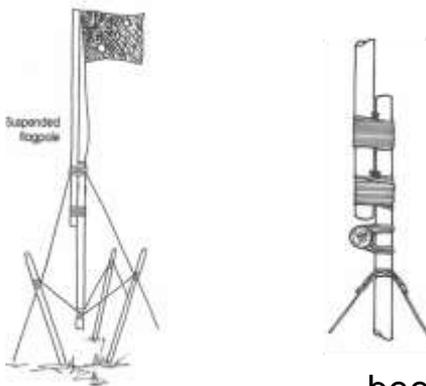
The first slide shows a lovely selection of clothesline, camp table, and a, heaven forbid why you would ever need one, square tower.

(Show second slide)



The second slide demonstrates a number of techniques required to make a rope bridge, one such being the lashing of two spars together to strengthen the base.

(Show third slide)



The third slide demonstrates this much better for use in making a stronger flag pole for instance.

Then two lashed together allows for a longer, and more important, stronger, pole.

By now I expect you can see where I am going with this. The text from Ezekiel talks of the joining together of two sticks, each stick representing the divided parts of the peoples being joined together in a way they have not

been able to achieve. But through a word from God through

the prophet, the people are being called into unity.

I guess it is kind of obvious why this reading has been chosen for this day.

Provoking us to keep considering what kind or kinds of unity we might keep pursuing.

But what isn't so obvious, to me anyway, who looks for details, is what did this joining of two sticks by Ezekiel look like?

(Show fourth slide of images of sticks being joined)



The first two images on the left suggest a kind of magical joining of the sticks. The one top left a kind of merging of two broken sticks into a new stick.

The bottom left suggesting a kind of merging of the sticks through twisting together to form a new unblemished stick.

The middle image suggests, well just hold the two sticks in your hand together, and that should make the point.

I am inclined to think that the image on the right best represents the intention of the joining.

The prophet takes rope and binds the two sticks together, much like the images I showed before of the scout lashings.

It is about strength though unity. But it is also more than that.

The reason I prefer the representation of the sticks being tied, is that I feel that the ropes, the cords, represent that which is required to hold the two together.

Our mind will flip quickly to the notion of unity of course.

But I want to bring in another word.

Solidarity.

When I was thinking about the theme today, solidarity, on a Sunday when we celebrate our churches history of uniting, I decided I needed to know the specific difference between unity and solidarity.

So I went to the online dictionary and found this.

Unity - the state of being united or joined as a whole.

Solidarity - unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group.

Then interestingly the entry straight under this was this one:

an independent trade union movement in Poland which developed into a mass campaign for political change and inspired popular opposition to Communist regimes across eastern Europe.

Formed in 1980 under the leadership of Lech Wałęsa, it was banned in 1981 following the imposition of martial law. Legalized again in 1989, it won a majority in the elections of that year.

I remember this movement in the 80's. Not well, but as soon as I decided on today's theme of solidarity, I immediately remembered the movement under Lech Walesa's leadership.

I also remembered another movement in the 80's, the international move against apartheid in South Africa. The Uniting Church in Australia, especially here in Victoria, had a keen involvement in that movement up to and beyond the dismantling of apartheid, and names like Mandela and Tutu ring in our ears from that time.

And now in 2020 people around the world are being asked to stand in solidarity with one another in the midst of this pandemic.

And on top of that, maybe even more crucial, is the black lives matter movement, where people around the world are standing in solidarity with black people in the USA as they grieve their treatment under a system that still allows racism to flourish. Harking back to my comment a little earlier about what was the nature of thing that held the two sticks together, or rather the two nations the sticks represent, or people under communist rule, or separatist government's, or systemic racism?

I know I said unity or solidarity, but there is an underlying part of this that characterises them both.

Let mutual love continue, writes the author of Hebrews.

Mutual love is the thing that allows unity to actually work.

Mutual love is what gives solidarity its substance, what makes it solid.

Solidarity is asking something important of us on this anniversary of our union.

For us to continue uniting, whether with neighbouring congregations, or exploring it with other denominations, it is vital that mutual love be the prevailing force in play.

And I am not really talking about what we feel towards each other, but rather how we choose to act towards each other.

Setting up a way of being with others that nurtures them and me at the same time.

Allowing intimacy to grow between us through hearing and sharing our stories.

This is mutual love – solidarity in action

Benedictine nun Mary Lou Kownacki is purported to have said: "Engrave this upon your heart: there isn't anyone you couldn't love once you heard their story."

As I was thinking about all this, I was wondering.

This unity, this solidarity, we are called to, even when we find it hard amongst those of our own denomination, and a little harder with those of other denominations, I wonder how far are we called to go with it?

I wonder is it this far?

(Show clip – Christian/Muslim)

(For those who have the text only version the clip is of an Anglican Parish in Sydney offering their worship space for a local Muslim congregation to gather for their Friday prayers. This led to further cooperation including sharing weekly meals together and Ramadan.)

I wonder, I wonder.

In the aftermath of the Christchurch mosque massacre, white and Maori New Zealand women wore head scarfs in a show of solidarity.

Women from the remote Aboriginal Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara in South Australia were heartbroken when they heard of it.

They created two huge pieces of art depicting the sorrow of a people separated by sea and culture but united in humanity and sent one to the Islamic community in Adelaide and the other to Christchurch's Muslim Community.

I wonder...I wonder.

But one more thing about solidarity.

It can get you into trouble.

Trouble with authorities, with law enforcement.

Trouble with community attitudes.

Trouble with family, the people you love.

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶and one's foes will be members of one's own household. ³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

These are such hard words to hear, but I think when we hear them as an intentional call to arms so to speak, we have it wrong.

What it simply means is when you stand in solidarity with Jesus, with his actions and words and with God's kingdom values, you are going to come up against it and sometimes that will be with those you love and who love you.

This week's readings ask us to consider what it means to stand in solidarity with others. Solidarity may mean providing means of survival and support. But as Jesus shows, solidarity may also require us to enter uncomfortable, disruptive spaces in our pursuit of justice.

God models for us how to stand in solidarity with those who are suffering. Solidarity requires that we not only listen for those suffering injustices but that we act. As followers of Christ, we enter uncomfortable spaces that disrupt our relationships to power and disrupt relationships, even with those closest to us.

In doing so, we make God's love and justice more fully present in the world.

Well, enough wondering for now, I have gone on far too long. Let me say 43 years, good on us, but more to do. And to conclude:

God is not a... well one of us.

God is the energy of fire, the movement of wind,
the flow of breathing, the unfolding of creating,
the loving of Love, the being of Being.

Love is God: the Lover, the Beloved,
and the Love that flows between.

This is the Holy Trinity.

God is the Source of all energy, and the energy itself;
and that energy made matter among us,

Word made flesh;
and God is that love in us, burning, singing, loving.
God is One, yet not a single thing,
nor a loving couple—with no way in for us—
but community.
God is the many, the All.

When you love you join them;
you are part of the Eternal.
Look how tenderly they love each other.
Look how there is room for us.
You are the fourth person of the Holy Trinity.
Find yourself there.

On this 43rd anniversary, of God's Uniting Church in Australia, keep standing in solidarity with each other and may

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.*

Sing – In my Father's house.

(verse 1)

Rainbow of colours, a complex of creeds
Age-old perspectives meet fresh ways to see
Everyone welcome, fling open the doors
You'll learn of my path and I'll learn from yours

(chorus)

In my father's house there are many rooms
But no walls to divide
In my father's house there are many rooms
The gates are open wide

(verse 2)

The strong and the scared come from left and right
We're not so different seen in this light
There at the table, a banquet is served
For every person a place is reserved

(chorus)

In my father's house there are many rooms
But no walls to divide
In my father's house there are many rooms
The gates are open wide

(verse 3)

Some greet a stranger, some serve the poor
 Some shake the system right to its core
 Some have found true faith, others still search
 'Cause it takes all kinds to make up a church

(chorus)

In my father's house there are many rooms
 But no walls to divide
 In my father's house there are many rooms
 The gates are open wide

(verse 4)

A voice for the voiceless, justice for all
 And for the listless, a clarion call
 A church of inclusion we're bringing to birth
 Just like in heaven, it can be on earth

(chorus)

In my father's house there are many rooms
 But no walls to divide
 In my father's house there are many rooms
 The gates are open wide

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE – read by Jenny Small.

Loving God, in your mercy, hear our prayers. And all these prayers we bring in the name of the Risen Christ who taught us to pray saying:

***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.
 and 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***

Sing – The Summons

1. Will you come and follow me
 If I but call your name?
 Will you go where you don't know
 And never be the same?
 Will you let my love be shown,

Will you let my name be known,
 Will you let my life be grown
 In you and you in me?

2. Will you leave yourself behind
 If I but call your name?
 Will you care for cruel and kind
 And never be the same?
 Will you risk the hostile stare
 Should your life attract or scare?
 Will you let me answer prayer
 In you and you in me?

3. Will you let the blinded see
 If I but call your name?
 Will you set the pris'ners free
 And never be the same?
 Will you kiss the leper clean,
 And do such as this unseen,
 And admit to what I mean
 In you and you in me?

4. Will you love the 'you' you hide
 If I but call your name?
 Will you quell the fear inside
 And never be the same?
 Will you use the faith you've found
 To reshape the world around,
 Through my sight and touch and sound
 In you and you in me?

5. Lord, your summons echoes true
 When you but call my name.
 Let me turn and follow you
 And never be the same.
 In your company I'll go
 Where your love and footsteps show.
 Thus I'll move and live and grow
 In you and you in me.

BLESSING –

Go in peace, confident in the knowledge that you are members of the household of God with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. Be strong and of good courage, do not be afraid; for it is the Lord who goes with you.

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half- truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.

May Jesus Christ bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May the Holy Spirit bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.

May the Triune God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.

Amen.

Recessional – TIS 778

Shalom to you now,
shalom, my friends.
May God's full mercies
bless you, my friends.
In all your living
and through your loving,
Christ be your shalom,
Christ be your shalom.