

Uniting Church in Australia
Wesley Uniting Church, Forrest
Sunday 2 May 2021



Easter 5



Gathering God's People

Call to Faith

You are the vine

We are the branches who live in you.

We share your strength

We share your energy

We share your love

We are called to live like Jesus, to be friends and to make friends.

Acknowledgement of Country

Welcome and News

Greeting

May the peace of Holy One, Holy Three be with you all

And also with you

Lighting the community candle

Hymn 370

Christ the Lord is risen today:

Hallelujah!

Let the whole creation say:

Hallelujah!

Raise your joys and triumphs high:

Hallelujah!

Sing now, heaven, and earth reply:

Hallelujah!

Love's redeeming work is done;
fought the fight, the battle won;
vain the stone, the watch, the seal:
Christ has burst the gates of hell.

Lives again our glorious king;
where O death is now your sting?
once he died our souls to save;
where your victory, O grave?

Soar we now where Christ has led,
following our exalted Head;
mad like him, like him we rise:
ours the cross, the grave, the skies.

Charles Wesley 1707-88; Words out of copyright

Source: Together in Song, Harper Collins Religious (2006)

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Opening Prayers: Thanking and Confessing

O God

Thank you for our lives in community,

for deep friendships,

for those conversations that extend into the night,

for the sharing of who we are:

vulnerability

lubricated by laughter...and
sometimes tears.

For the freedom to serve others and to affirm ourselves

We confess our difficulties and brokenness
as individuals and congregations

A time for silence

And we ask for those signs of Christian identity:
life and hope,
generosity of spirit,
depth and creativity of thought,
as we become your body in the world.

We pray these things as a forgiven people, freed to embrace others.
Amen

The Peace

The Lord is risen

He is risen indeed!

Entering the Story

Some thoughts with the children

A Hymn from Spain

You have come down to the lakeshore
seeking neither the wise nor the wealthy,
but only asking for me to follow.

*O Jesus, you have looked into my eyes,
Kindly smiling, you've called out my name.
On the sand I've abandoned my small boat;
Now with you, I will seek other seas.*

You know full well what I have, Lord
neither treasure nor weapons for conquest,
just these my fishnets and will for working.

Refrain

You need my hands, my exhaustion,
working love for the rest of the weary,
a love that's willing to go on loving.

Refrain

You who have fished other waters;
you, the longing of souls that are yearning;
oh loving Friend, you have come to call me.

Refrain in Spanish

*Señor, me has mirado a las ojos
Sonriendo, has dicho mi nombre
En la arena, he dejado mi barca
Junto a ti, buscaré otro mar.*

*Tu has venido a la orilla (You have come down to the lakeshore), Cesáreo Gabaraín, by permission, The
New Century Hymnal, Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, Ohio*

Acts 8:26-40

Some people saw eunuchs as not fully human. They were faulty forms of humanity. They were impotent males, unable to procreate. Some were like that because they had been castrated or had castrated themselves. Such men were often forced to the margins of society. They often appear in other roles, especially as government officials, such as this eunuch from Ethiopia. There they were safe to have in court. They could be trusted not to cause chaos through sexual misbehaviour. For the early Christian community, Jesus and his death were seen as creating a surplus of goodness which made up for and covered the sins of others. "Christ died for our sins" was incomprehensible good news for this rejected man, moved to conversion. This excess of grace facilitated a community of mutual unconditional acceptance.

²⁶Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her

entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.” ³⁰So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³²Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. ³³In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” ³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” ³⁸He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

1 John 4:7-21

1 John is a book that spirals: throughout it the same themes are explored but at ever deeper levels. In a sense, the epistles of John complement the Gospel of John – they come from the same school of thought – pointing out to the members of John’s community that right belief, orthodox faith, is not enough. Its ultimate test is in what is done, not just in what is believed. The claims that church communities make for themselves is ultimately measured in relationships and actions.

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. ¹³By

this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

¹⁷Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. ¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

John 15:1-8

This part of John's Gospel is one of the most sublime parts of the New Testament. It is a call to the Christian community to live out its spirituality. Using the image of the vine and branches, John calls his people to be aware of their spiritual state: they are grounded in Jesus and the Father. This deep relationship of mutuality ("abiding") leads to ethics, to love and graciousness beyond what the ancient world taught.

¹I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. ²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

Reflection

Eucharist

Surrexit Christus

The Lord is ri-sen al-le-lu-ia. Sing out and praise the Lord, al-le-lu-ia. / **Jau kê-lès Kris-tus** a-le-liu-ja! Gie-do-kim 'Vies-pa-clui a-le-liu-ja!

Music: J. Berthier
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1. All you heavens bless the Lord, ***Surrexit Christus, Alleluia!***
stars of the heavens bless the Lord. ***Cantate Domino, Alleluia!***

2. Sun and moon bless the Lord, ***Surrexit Christus, Alleluia!***
and you night and day bless the Lord. ***Cantate Domino, Alleluia!***

3. Frost and cold bless the Lord, ***Surrexit Christus, Alleluia!***
ice and snow bless the Lord. ***Cantate Domino, Alleluia!***

4. Fire and heat bless the Lord, ***Surrexit Christus, Alleluia!***
and you light and darkness bless the Lord. ***Cantate Domino, Alleluia!***

5. Give thanks to the Lord for God is good, ***Surrexit Christus, Alleluia!***
For God's love has no end. ***Cantate Domino, Alleluia!***

6. I shall not die, I shall live, ***Surrexit Christus, Alleluia!***
I shall live and recount his deeds! ***Cantate Domino, Alleluia!***

J Berthier, copyright Ateliers et Presses de Taizé

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

May the God of resounding joy be with you!

And also with you.

Easter people may your hearts be filled with joy!

May God fill our emptiness with the carols of angels!

Children of the resurrection, lift your praises to God!

**We join with all creation in shouting our praise
to the One who loves us**

From the rubble of chaos,
you shaped a sanctuary for creation.

But we chose to hide ourselves behind
the locked doors of brokenness and death.

Prophets came to witness about your
willingness to forgive and
take our fears from us.

When we would not respond
to your gracious invitations,
Jesus came, to free us from our brokenness.

With our ancestors in the faith,
with our children and grandchildren,
with everyone who sees you coming,
we state our glad praise to you:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of sublime greatness.
Everything that breathes praises you.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who you exalt.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Holy are you, God of our ancestors,
and blessed is Jesus Christ, the first and last.
Co-creator of all that is around us,
he came to bear witness to your promises.
Our Lord as well as our God,
he blesses all who believe in him
whether or not they have seen him.
Serving you in life as well as death,
he became the first-born of the dead,
so we might be your children through eternity.

As we remember all he did and taught,
as we celebrate the wonder of his resurrection,
we state that mystery we call faith:

**Christ died for us;
Christ rose for us;
Christ will come for us.**

Institution

Breaking of the Bread

Christ is the bread of joy
Who shares food with us

Christ is the cup of life,
Who revives us

Let us receive what we are;
Let us become what we receive

Lamb of God (Agnus Dei)

Jesus, Wisdom of God,
have mercy on us

Jesus, Word made flesh,
have mercy on us

Jesus, Liberator of creation
grant us peace.

Communion

Distribution

Prayer after Communion

God of heaven and earth,
you make us one in Christ.
Inspire us with new vision
and the wisdom of ancient dreams.

Give us strength to walk together as an Easter people
seeing things differently, living our lives in genuine community.

In Christ's name

Amen

Prayers of the People

The liturgist prays after a series of petitions says, "Raise us Lord" and the people respond, "Make us a risen people".

We end with the Lord's Prayer

**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.

**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 for ever. Amen.**

Hymn 183

Sing of the Lord's goodness,
Father of all wisdom,
come to Him and bless His name.
Mercy He has shown us,
His love is for ever, faithful to the end of days.

*Come then, all you nations,
sing of your Lord's goodness,
Melodies of praise and thanks to God.
Ring out the Lord's glory,
praise Him with your music,
Worship Him and bless His name.*

Power He has wielded,
honour is His garment,
risen from the snares of death.
His word He has spoken,

one bread He has broken,
new life He now gives to all.

Refrain

Courage in our darkness,
comfort in our sorrow,
Spirit of our God most high;
solace for the weary,
pardon for the sinner,
splendour of the living God.

Refrain

Praise Him with your singing,
praise Him with the trumpet,
praise God with the lute and harp,
praise Him with the cymbals,
praise Him with your dancing,
praise God till the end of days.

Refrain

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Blessing and Sending Out

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

We see reality through resurrection.

We look to the signs of an Easter society: compassion, generosity, and justice.

We live out the signs of this Easter world.

The service has ended

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ

Musical Postlude

Liturgist: Rev Dr Geoff Dornan | Preacher: Rev Dr Sarah Agnew

Children's Ministry: Jules Wright | Pianist: Andrew Johnson

With thanks to our flower, A/V and steward teams

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