

# Morialta UC Worship June 21 2020

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**PRAYER OF INVOCATION** God of hospitality and refuge, we gather here in our places of security and safety. Remind us that you are the God Almighty; large enough for all people, all nations, all tongues. Help us, with the presence of your Holy Spirit, to be able to create space for those who seek asylum and refuge.

O God, as we listen to the words of Psalm 46 we are mindful of your focus for all human kind, for you are the God of our refuge and strength, a very help in times of trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change. God you are present, you are with us and for all. Help us to be still and know that you are God Amen!

## Acknowledgement of Land and refugees

We acknowledge the Kuarna people, the first inhabitants of this place.

We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today. We also recognise the many who have come to this land to find safety and protection. May we live together in harmony and peace as we share this land together.

(light Christ candle)

## Song: TIS 107 Sing praise and thanksgiving

**Sing praise and thanksgiving, let all creatures living  
now worship their maker with gladness and song;  
all glory and honour we come to him bringing:**

**O praise to the Almighty, sing praise to our God!**

**Our lives of his making he brings to their waking;  
in darkness he held us in his gracious care,  
now into the light we are called from our sleeping:**

**O praise to the Almighty, sing praise to our God!  
Lord, frame our desiring to do your requiring,  
that unto your glory be all that we do;  
and where we have faltered, give strength and give healing:**

**O praise to the Almighty, sing praise to our God!**

## Prayers or praise and thanks

Most wonderful God, our Parent and Friend,  
we praise you for the riches of love that enable us to come together  
in this house of prayer to celebrate your goodness.

Please lead our truant minds away from petty concerns to larger commitments,  
away from tiredness or apathy towards a sense of awe and wonder,

away from self obsession to the holy intoxication of your awesome beauty,  
humble power, and your unspeakable love.

We realise we never seem be able to thank, praise and enjoy you  
to the heights that we should,  
but we do pray to be able give you the best worship that at this  
time is possible.

Through Christ Jesus our Lord. *Amen!*

## **Focus**

We are not alone. We live in God's world.

We believe in God, who has freely given the Holy Spirit  
to bind us together as a community of grace.

We believe that the spirit can lead us in the discovery of truth,  
in the pursuit of justice, and in the practice of caring for one another.

In our homes, in the church and in the community  
the Spirit offers us inspiration and courage.

We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

(compiled by, Alan Shepherd,. Permission given)

These words are fitting for today as we recognise Refugee week.

We are not alone, this is a place of welcome, we are not first peoples of this land, nearly all of us have come from another place. British fleet in 1770's, German refugees into SA 1800's, post war European immigrants, Vietnam, Sudan, Middle East and from the regions of Asia

Reconciliation week, refugee week, BLM. Let's talk about people – not statistics, unknown names or faces.

Share stories, listen and look.

**Song: We are gathered** (Tune: Nettleton)

**We are gathered in the Spirit though our bodies are apart,  
Filled with joy and touched with wonder, separate hands but mingled hearts  
Giving thanks and singing praises for the love that calls us on.  
From our many different places we are gathered into one.**

**We are gathered in our sorrow. We are gathered in our fear,  
In our pain and in our worry, in our anger and our tears.  
As we tend to one another with our gifts and with our care,  
Our community is strengthened through the faith and hope we share.**

**We are gathered in commitment to a planet that is whole.  
Works of justice, acts of kindness bless the world and heal our souls.  
As our voices join together, may our song of peace resound.  
May we offer in abundance all the grace that we have found.**  
(Amanda Udis-Kessler, c. 2020)

**"we continue in prayer with our confessions, both private and communal  
crafted from Micah 6:8"**

*"He has told you, O mortal, what is good:  
and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice?"*

We confess that we have not obeyed you,

we have put our own desires above the needs of those seeking refuge.

We confess we have ignored the rights of asylum seekers,  
even in the law of our own land, because of our fear and ignorance.

*"He has told you, O mortal, what is good:  
and what does the Lord require of you  
but to love kindness?"*

We confess we have not loved you,  
we have put our own desires before reaching out our hands to help others.  
We confess we have pushed away those needing legitimate refuge,  
clinging to our own comforts and discriminating against those different to us.

*"He has told you, O mortal, what is good:  
and what does the Lord require of you but to walk humbly with your God?."*

We confess that we have misused your name,  
treating you like a registered trade mark, to be used to increase our power and influence.  
We confess we have ignored the truth, focusing on politics and power  
over the suffering and hardship of those seeking refuge,  
because we are comfortable in our own importance.

### **Song: Spirit of Peace**

When people despair, we would bring hope  
In the shadow of fear, we would show faith  
When hatred divides, we would renew  
To people alone, we would bring love  
Spirit of love: Spirit send love  
Spirit of love: Spirit send love

When people are bound, we would make free  
In the darkness of doubt, we would affirm  
Where others escape, may we endure  
When people make war, we would bring peace  
Spirit of peace: Spirit send peace  
Spirit of peace: Spirit send peace

**Readings**      [Genesis 21:8-21](#)  
[Psalm 86:1-10](#)  
[Matthew 10:24-39](#)

### **Witness to the scriptures**

Refugee Sunday is the day on which many Christian churches and organizations recognise the importance of speaking about the painful reality of refugees.

There are currently more people displaced by war, violence, and persecution than at any other time in recorded history. But that doesn't mean the trauma experienced by refugees is a new, modern crisis.

The second reason to talk about refugees in church today, is because this week's first reading, is in fact, the story of two refugees: Hagar and Ishmael

This is a hard story. It presents several kinds of dehumanizing exploitation, without much redeeming comment:

- Human slavery;
- doubts about whether Hagar had any choice in bearing Abraham's child;
- the injustice of Sarah essentially condemning Hagar and Ishmael to death, for the crime of their mere existence.
- And, to add insult to injury, the other players in this drama refuse to call Hagar by her name, calling her instead "the slave woman," essentially denying her individual humanity.

In this story, the father and mother of God's chosen people, who had previously forced their slave woman to mother a child, decide this didn't work for them, so they classify her as a non-person to whom they have no obligations, and drive her away, sending her and her son into the dessert with completely inadequate resources to survive.

Hagar and Ishmael are helpless refugees, forced to leave their home, livelihood, and every source of security, and treated with utter contempt. It is an ugly story.

But it is also a story that shows us God's heart for refugees: a heart both to save and to affirm.

The saving is very practical – and that is important to recognize. Hagar and Ishmael are dying of thirst and God shows them a replenishing source of water. They have a desperate, physical need, and God meets that need.

God also affirms Hagar. The woman who had been dehumanized as "the slave woman," God calls by name. (name important – not a statistic , a number, a description, non human, with no relationships)

The tiny family who had been cast out to die, God promises to grow into a great nation. Even the name Ishmael affirms the value of this rejected, exiled child; Ishmael means "God heard." God heard, protected, and affirmed those whom the "chosen people of God" had treated with disdain and callous cruelty. God cared for the refugees, even though they were outside the chosen people.

Remember the words from Micha 6 Do justice, love mercy and walk humble with your God

And Jesus would say, in the Gospel reading today:

*"Whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." (Matt. 10:38-39)*

God's ultimate realm of peace will not come without pain **or persecution or personal cost** without rejecting the voices that deny Christ's radical command to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to recognize that there are no limits on whom we must embrace as neighbor.

This talk about losing our life, and practicing love with no practical limits, is scary. I know. It scares me to think of losing any of the things I love about my life, much less the whole thing. This is not an easy teaching. But what about those who have lost everything to flee death and persecution?

But there is also gospel here: in Matthew when Jesus talks about *dying to yourself, and losing your life. it takes us beyond the anxieties of the moment to rest safely in God. What dies are the habits of individualism, greed, and self-interest....What is born is compassion and freedom.*

What would I like to see die in myself, to see die in our society? it is my silence and inaction in the face of social justice and compassion.

I am challenged by my silence and inaction when I don't join the BLM rally or don't sign petitions or emails, when I give lipservice to reconciliation issues, and when I am ignorant to the issues of people seeking asylum and refuge.

Yet I am encouraged when Jesus says that the small things matter, like sparrows, the one offs, the tiny efforts to make change. But how do we make change, contribute to the healing of hurts and rejections?

We look. We look and see faces of real people. Not numbers, not statistics.

We listen. We listen to peoples stories, we engage in their lives, we hear and begin to share something of their experience.

And when we look and when we listen – we learn! We learn something new, some experience, some knowledge, which leads us to act differently, the next step to action.

For each of us as individual Christ-followers, and for our communities, this week is one of great encouragement. It is easy to become disheartened in our attempts to love others when we so

often fall into destructive and hurtful patterns, and when our efforts to love so often feel inadequate.

It can be frustrating when we seek to make a contribution, both locally and globally, and we feel that our gifts or opportunities are insufficient or that the resources we bring are too meagre.

However, this week's Bible theme calls us to value the small, the insignificant, the hidden.

Every act of service, every gesture of love, every gift we give has value and makes a difference in the work of God's Reign in our communities and in our own hearts.

Every bit of learning, every bit of revelation, every face of a refugee we see on TV, on the news – stirs us to respond.

We may not be talented or well-known or wealthy or well-connected, but we all have fruit that we can produce that God can use – often in ways we that we won't even know.

With our focus today on Refugee Sunday we might take away one thought from today, or one face or name, and if we let God take that seed and plant it in God's love and care, God's passion for justice , then our small tree of insignificance might just blossom into something that grows and matures and effects something much bigger.

This is my commandment that you love one another, as I have loved you!

### Prayer

How do we do what's right, Jesus,  
when it costs us so much to follow you?  
when the good and the true and the beautiful  
cannot be purchased  
in a 'buy-now-pay-later' scheme  
as a quick-fix solution to our longing for life?  
How do we do what's right when it takes so much time,  
and when the life it brings comes  
according to the timetable of eternity,

not the stopwatch of our up-to-the-minute world?

How do our leaders do what's right, Jesus,  
for the weak and marginalised,  
for people beyond our borders,  
when the cost could be to forfeit their opportunity to lead?

How do our corporations do what's right, Jesus,  
for our suffering planet,  
for the rights and needs of the poor,  
when the cost could be to lose investors,  
and sacrifice the lives of their own workers?

How do our protectors do what's right, Jesus,  
for the broken and desperate,  
for our allies and enemies,  
when the cost could be to face the attacks  
of those they seek to defend?

We need to learn how to do what's right, Jesus,  
our world needs us to learn it;  
we need to count the cost of your call,  
and measure it against the abundant life you promise.  
Help us, in our own small way, to be those who do the right thing,  
and in so doing, demonstrate the goodness  
that following you brings to all.

Amen.

#### **Prayers for offering and others**

Gracious God, Bless the offerings and donations that have been given via Egive and Direct Debit or set aside to provide opportunities for ministry of care and love within our community and beyond. Send your

Spirit on all who work to bring the good news of peace, reconciliation and love In the name of our Lord Jesus.

Our prayers for others today have a focus on the Beatitudes of Jesus and the Uniting Church Prayer for Refugee sunday

Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
**for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**  
Blessed are those who mourn,  
**for they will be comforted.**  
Blessed are the gentle,  
**for they will inherit the earth.**  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for what is right,  
**for they will be filled.**  
Blessed are the merciful,  
**for they will receive mercy.**  
Blessed are the pure in heart,  
**for they will see God.**  
Blessed are the peacemakers,  
**for they will be called children of God.**  
Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of right,  
**for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**  
Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you,  
**and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.**

God of Abraham. Sarah and Hagar, of Ishmael. God of travellers, migrants and refugees. Thank you for the beauty and uniqueness of this southern land which we share. Grant your protection and grace to all who shelter here. Forgive the racism and destruction that have been part of our history, and our disregard for the pain and oppression within the Australian community today.

Help us shed our provincial expectations. Take away our cultural tunnel vision. Open our hearts to be caring neighbours to each other.  
Direct our lives to just and peaceful action.

God of a thousand faces, help us also to acknowledge you are worshipped in many languages, in different songs and rhythms of life from our own  
May we respect these religious insights in each other and assist each faithful expression of you.

We pray for our Government and all decision makers,  
Guide them and guide us all.

We pray for unity for our nation and for your continuing presence among us. Lead your people, enable us to accept each other's' differences.  
Reshape us and as we celebrate the new life you bring.

We rejoice in you, God, in whose image we are brothers and sisters.  
and by whose example in Jesus Christ we know the breadth and depth of your universal love.  
Hear our prayer God of all nations and peoples. Amen  
Mission Prayer Handbook 1991, *Uniting Church in Australia Assembly*, p. 7

**Song TiS 607 Make me a channel**

**Make me a channel of your peace.**

**Where there is hatred let me bring your love;  
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;  
and where there's doubt, true faith in you.**

**O Master, grant that I may never seek  
so much to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.**

**Make me a channel of your peace.**

**Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;  
where there is darkness, let me bring your light;  
and where there's sadness, ever joy.**

**Refrain**

**Make me a channel of your peace.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
in giving of ourselves that we receive,  
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.**

**Blessing: Numbers 6:24-26**

The LORD bless you  
and keep you;

<sup>25</sup>the LORD make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;

<sup>26</sup>the LORD turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.””