

# Morialta UC Worship June 28 2020

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## Call to worship

No matter who we are,  
regardless of where we have been,  
or what has happened to us along our way,  
At each and every moment  
God reaches out to us with arms wide open in welcome  
and says:  
'Ah, here you are, I have been waiting for you.  
I am overjoyed that you have come.'  
And so it is that today as we come to worship and pray  
we are held steadfastly in God's warm embrace.

## Acknowledge Land

We acknowledge the Kurna people as the traditional custodians of the country on which we gather in worship and fellowship. We commit to remembering culture, customs and ways of life. We pay our respects to them for their care of the land on which we meet. We are mindful of those gone before us and those present and those to come, that we share this land.

## Song of praise TIS 156 Morning has broken

Morning has broken  
like the first morning;  
blackbird has spoken  
like the first bird.  
Praise for the singing,  
praise for the morning,  
praise for them, springing  
fresh from the word.

Sweet the rain's new fall  
sunlit from heaven,  
like the first dewfall  
on the first grass.  
Praise for the sweetness  
of the wet garden,  
sprung from completeness  
where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight;  
mine is the morning  
born of the one light  
Eden saw play.  
Praise with elation,  
praise every morning,  
God's recreation  
of the new day.

## Lighting of the candle

In the candle we acknowledge the presence of the Christ –Light of the World, Light for our World, in whose presence we gather to worship, to be in the midst of others, to bring our whole selves to worship

## Centring prayer

Let us be still for a few moments and co-create a space for  
more gratitude,  
greater compassion,  
sensitive understanding,  
soft human emotions,  
and honesty.

Gratitude to be alive and to have choices...

With compassion to give and receive...

Understanding as to build bridges and seek creative solutions...

Emotions as to be approachable and real...

Honesty and integrity to thoroughly take into account all perspectives...

*(Silence)*

We gather... all people, distanced yet connected;

all people varied, yet one.

Together we seek a balance between individual needs and communal possibilities, now in these moments  
and beyond, amen

## Song God's incarnation (Lauda Anima (Praise my soul) TiS 179

We can be God's incarnation  
When we live in love and peace;  
God's own kingdom is reflected  
When all wars and conflicts cease;  
With the promise  
Of true justice  
We may see God's reign increase.

We can be God's incarnation  
When we care for all around;  
God's own kingdom is reflected  
When in kindness we are bound;  
In our living  
And our giving  
God's own action can be found.

We can be God's incarnation  
When we link with Galilee;  
God's own kingdom is reflected  
In our life and ministry,  
When with Jesus  
We find purpose  
Bringing love to victory.

## Prayers of confession and who we are

Gracious God,  
we confess that we have transgressed against you  
in thought, word and action.  
You have given us love,  
but we have returned apathy;  
you have provided us with neighbours,  
yet we have become self-centred;  
you have given us a world to enjoy,  
but we have spoiled our home.

Forgive us for the wrong things we have done,  
and for the good things we have failed to do.  
Give us time to change,  
with the desire and the will to do so. Amen.

### Words of Assurance

Here is the good news:  
when we are empty, God fill us;  
when we are disheartened, God is compassionate;  
when we are wounded, God brings healing;  
when we confess our failing, God forgives.  
In Christ, through Christ and because of Christ,  
we are forgiven.  
Thanks be to God.

### **Lord's prayer**

**O God of all and in all,  
Hallowed be your name,  
May your way of love come,  
Your will be done,  
On earth as it is 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 you reign in the glory and power that is love,  
Now and forever. Amen**

### **Scripture readings**

#### **Matthew 10: 40-42**

<sup>40</sup> "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup> Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; <sup>42</sup> and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."

#### **Psalm 40**

I waited patiently for the LORD;  
he inclined to me and heard my cry.  
<sup>2</sup> He drew me up from the desolate pit,<sup>[a]</sup>  
out of the miry bog,  
and set my feet upon a rock,  
making my steps secure.  
<sup>3</sup> He put a new song in my mouth,  
a song of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear,  
and put their trust in the LORD.  
<sup>4</sup> Happy are those who make  
the LORD their trust,  
who do not turn to the proud,  
to those who go astray after false gods.  
<sup>5</sup> You have multiplied, O LORD my God,  
your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;

none can compare with you.  
 Were I to proclaim and tell of them,  
 they would be more than can be counted.  
<sup>6</sup> Sacrifice and offering you do not desire,  
 but you have given me an open ear.<sup>[b]</sup>  
 Burnt offering and sin offering  
 you have not required.  
<sup>7</sup> Then I said, "Here I am;  
 in the scroll of the book it is written of me."<sup>[c]</sup>  
<sup>8</sup> I delight to do your will, O my God;  
 your law is within my heart."  
<sup>9</sup> I have told the glad news of deliverance  
 in the great congregation;  
 see, I have not restrained my lips,  
 as you know, O LORD.  
<sup>10</sup> I have not hidden your saving help within my heart,  
 I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;  
 I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness  
 from the great congregation.  
<sup>11</sup> Do not, O LORD, withhold  
 your mercy from me;  
 let your steadfast love and your faithfulness  
 keep me safe forever.  
<sup>12</sup> For evils have encompassed me  
 without number;  
 my iniquities have overtaken me,  
 until I cannot see;  
 they are more than the hairs of my head,  
 and my heart fails me.  
<sup>13</sup> Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me;  
 O LORD, make haste to help me.  
<sup>14</sup> Let all those be put to shame and confusion  
 who seek to snatch away my life;  
 let those be turned back and brought to dishonor  
 who desire my hurt.  
<sup>15</sup> Let those be appalled because of their shame  
 who say to me, "Aha, Aha!"  
<sup>16</sup> But may all who seek you  
 rejoice and be glad in you;  
 may those who love your salvation  
 say continually, "Great is the LORD!"  
<sup>17</sup> As for me, I am poor and needy,  
 but the Lord takes thought for me.  
 You are my help and my deliverer;  
 do not delay, O my God.

## Sermon

The **number 40** in the **Bible** is symbolic of a period of testing. Just as Noah's faith was put to the test of **40** days and nights of rain, the children of Israel being tested in the wilderness for **40** years, and Jesus' fasting of **40** days before he began his public ministry.

Lent lasts for 40 days where we 'give up' or 'take up' something in prayerful reflection.

Today's gospel reading from Matthew begins at v40

Rick Warren wrote a devotional book called 40 days of purpose.

Apparently the year 40AD was a leap year

There is the World Vision - 40hr famine

We say we'll catch 40 winks when we take a short nap in the afternoon and we listen to the top 40 countdown songs on the radio

Psalm 40 happens to be one of my favourite psalms (for reasons I'll explain later)

And then there is the can WD40 that when sprayed stops squeaks and lubricates

And of course 40 is the natural number to follow 39 and precede 41

And 3 years ago we celebrated 40 years of the UCA

I've turned 40, (and a bit more) as have most of you, and some have celebrated or are about to celebrate 2 40's

But...what is after 40?

Life begins at 40 we say and it was the 19th century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer who started this off by saying "The first forty years of life give us the text: the next thirty supply the commentary."

One writer reflects on her Big 4-0 birthday and getting older and feeling the aches and strains of sport injuries and thinking as 40 approaches "what else will happen?"

That is a good question for us as the church and as individual members of the Body of Christ. Life after 40?

The writer goes on saying "As the months whizzed by and I crept closer and closer to my birthday, I busied myself by organising a big party. I invited lots of guests – probably too many. As a result, I really didn't have time to chat properly with my guests and enjoy myself on the night. The party ended up being a bit of a blur for me. At the end of the night, I wearily slumped into bed. When I woke up the next morning, nothing was different and nothing had changed, apart from a huge sense of relief that I was finally 40. After all the build-up, all the expectations of change and growing old, it had finally happened – and I was left to wonder, "what happens now?"

She then reflects on the UCA

"Life after 40 has been good to me. It is still a journey, don't get me wrong, but it has delivered so many surprising new joys. There's a lot to be excited about. The Uniting Church now finds itself in a similar situation. The Church has journeyed for 40 years – we've made some mistakes, we've learnt valuable lessons, and we've certainly been tested.

What is life on the other side of 40 going to look like for us? Now is our chance to seize the opportunities that turning 40 provides. It's our time, as a Church, to reflect on our past experiences and venture towards that new place, the fertile land, the place that bears new fruit. Let us not be fearful about the lead up to this birthday, but wait in enthusiastic anticipation of what life might present us, once we have celebrated this significant milestone."

And so I turned to the Bible, inspired by this number 40 and flicked over to psalm 40, and because it's one of my favourite, because the best pop band in the world, U2 wrote a song called 40 which is based on this psalm.

The Edge, the name of U2's lead guitarist says about the origin of the song "40"

"So then we had this slightly unusual piece of music and we said, 'OK, what are we going to do with it?' Bono (the front man/lead singer) said, 'Let's do a psalm.' Opened up the bible and found Psalm 40. 'This is it. Let's do it.' And within forty minutes we had worked out the last few elements for the tune, Bono had sung it, and we mixed it. And literally, after finishing the mix, we walked out through the door and the next band walked in." - The Edge, U2 By U2 2006

So inspired by U2 and Psalm 40 I bring you a reflection today on life after 40.

I don't want to take this text out of context, but simply use it as an offering to reflect upon life after 40 as looking at the past, present and future.

Psalm 40 begins with; I waited patiently for the Lord. The first 3 verses are past tense, I waited, he inclined, heard, drew me up, set, put an new song in my mouth

We can look back and note where and how God has led, provided, sustained, motivated, challenged. Its easy to look back, into history and say 'yeh we did good!' or yeh we made mistakes or got it wrong.. this psalm is a song/prayer about a past trouble, the writer was in the pit, the miry bog, but was rescued and set upon firm footings

Vs 4-5 reflect a life in the present tense, life now, a song of thanks. A recognition that life goes on and we don't sit in the past. We learn from the past, we grow, but we don't stay there. That is perhaps one of the central understandings of the UCA and the Basis of Union, that as a church as a people we are a pilgrim people always on the way. Life after 40. Life in witness, praise and service to the God who calls forth into new beginnings, into resurrection life or in the words of Jesus of Nazareth 'life in all its fullness'

Then vs 6-8 asks a very important question. 'what is the future? What is after 40? Or, "what happens now" These verses in Psalm 40:6-8 echo I think very closely that other great Hebrew text from the Prophet Micah 6: 6-8

**Psalm 40: 6-8** Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. <sup>7</sup> Then I said, "Here I am; in the scroll of the book it is written of me<sup>8</sup> I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.

**Micah 6: 6-8** With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?<sup>7</sup> Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"<sup>8</sup> He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy/kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Here is the call, that we don't get caught up in arguments and battles about our religion or our styles of worship or even denominations but to have an open ear and a heart for the Gospel of God as the prophet Micah encourages and pleads (do justice/act/work//make happen) live kindness/ heart of love – God love- a heart for the other, the neighbour) walk humbly /worship/devotion/prayer/commune)

What that looks like in the future is unknown but its got to start/continue with that open ear and humble heart in response to the grace and love of the triune God.

Don't know what the next 4 minutes let alone the next 40 hours, days, months or years will bring

I don't think the future is so much about growing numbers or planting churches, for I think that will take care of itself, after all the church is not ours but that of Jesus Christ.

Our future response, our life after 40 is being faithful to the call of Christ to be witnesses to the Good news of Jesus Christ, the call to love practically and be agents of peace, love, reconciliation, forgiveness and welcoming community.

Maintain faith, grow in understanding and kindness, and continue to worship, witness, and work for justice and kindness here and beyond, wherever we are.

So 'what happens now?' what happens now is that we continue to walk in the Spirit of God's leading as the gathered and dispersed community, fed and sustained in worship, sacraments, and hospitality and are called and sent out to be the people of God where God calls and sends.

The church buildings may still be closed, but the church is alive and well away from the buildings.

And so the final word comes from the writer of psalm 40 who sings and declares

<sup>16</sup> But may all who seek you  
rejoice and be glad in you;  
may those who love your salvation  
say continually, "**Great is the LORD!**"

<sup>17</sup> As for me, I am poor and needy,  
but the Lord takes thought for me.  
You are my help and my deliverer;  
do not delay, O my God.

**Song: Kindness**

**When you have a choice to make,  
When there are two paths to take,  
What will you choose to guide your way,  
Decisions you make ev'ry day?**

**Choose kindness, choose tenderness,  
Choose patience, choose love  
Choose mercy, choose empathy,  
Walk humbly with your God.**

**Choose justice, choose faithfulness,  
Choose wisdom, choose grace.  
Choose goodness, choose gentleness,  
God's light will guide your way**

**Prayers offering and for others**

God of love and grace,  
you have led and sustained us  
in our journey over the years and in the past forty three years.  
For this we humbly give thanks.

We give thanks also for the women and men  
who have been the servant hearted leaders on the journey.

For all those who have nurtured and encouraged your Church  
as we have faithfully sought to live as Christ's ones.

Please, O God forgive our failures to act justly, to love with mercy and to walk humbly with you.  
When as Church we have caused others to stumble or caused others hurt, forgive us, and lift them  
up in your love.

God of abundant life we pray that as a fellowship of reconciliation  
we might more truly reflect the beauty of your creation.

May we Loving God be a passionate people  
who share in Christ's unfinished mission  
the reconciliation and renewal of the whole creation

Loving God you put in the hearts of men and women  
your passion for unity and called a pilgrim people to embrace this vision. Now, oh God, your Spirit is  
calling us to the new things you are doing with us, First and Second Peoples, one in Christ.

We pray that we might in our love for one another  
reflect your love for all humanity, and your care and concern for the whole creation. In this, may  
your grace, love and peace renew your creation. In the name of the Christ. Amen

### **Blessing**

The LORD bless you- and keep you;

<sup>25</sup> may the Lord's face shine on you- and be gracious to you;

<sup>26</sup> the LORD'S FACE BE TURNED toward you- and give you peace."