**MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE – Lent 3B**

**5th – 7th March 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/vy72PK6KBE0](https://youtu.be/vy72PK6KBE0%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

 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. We are touching on several of the scripture readings in one way or another this week.

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 all the Aboriginal Groups who have cared for and nurtured the land on which we meet: the Wurundjeri; Woi Wurruung; Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung.

We acknowledge their leaders: past, present and emerging for it is in them that Australia’s future lies.

You are welcome here, as we reflect in different rooms and districts, States and Countries around the world, our spiritual connectedness through Christ Jesus, is remembered.

**WELCOME and CALL TO WORSHIP**

Welcome to our worship for this week, the third Sunday in Lent. It’s been a week, where the stories of how we treat vulnerable people in our communities has been at the forefront of our minds. The refugee family from Biloela, victims of sexual harassment and assault, and people in aged care are just some who have been at the centre of news stories. In the week before this one, a long overdue but minimal increase in the amount paid to unemployed workers. And overwhelmingly, the most vulnerable people in communities around the world are the ones who are most likely to suffer the worst effects of COVID 19.

If Jesus walked among us today, what, do you think, would be the tables he would seek to overturn in our communities? This messiah, come to turn the world right-side-up does so with rolled up sleeves, passionate care for the outsider and a robust desire to place the truth of God at the centre of life

The call of Lent is the call to repent, to turn around and begin walking again the path that this Jesus walked, the path that leads to justice, hope, freedom, truth and life. The path that first goes through the territory of betrayal, despair, torture, abandonment and death…and then goes further to declare for once and for all that they do not have the last word. God calls us into life, abundant life, life that recognises that God’s mercy and grace can overcome the deepest shame, God’s love can roll back the stones of the greatest hatred and God’s justice will tear down the walls of the darkest thieves of human dignity.

Wherever you are and whenever you join us, the call is to you. Come and worship the God revealed in the story of Creation, in the story of the scriptures, in the story of your very own life

**SONG:** *The Holy Way (Psalm 19)* byRichard Bruxvoort Colligan

Alternative suggestion: TiS 430 Your words to me are life and health

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION & ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

Loving God,

The psalmist sings of your revelation to us

in the majesty of Creation

in the majesty of your rule for our lives

Help us to see you

in the rhythm of each unfolding day

in the call to a life guided by your values

in the wisdom of your story

in the beauty of your fierce love.

In this time of worship

we pause to reflect

on the times when we have missed

the rhythm

the call

the wisdom

the beauty

And instead walked on a path

out of step

unhearing

foolish

captives to pettiness and ugliness.

Guide our feet, we pray

as we walk this Lenten journey

back to the true path

where we find once again

that you are waiting for us

with outstretched arms

and abundant mercy.

and we are reminded once more

that our sins are forgiven

thanks be to God.

**BIBLE READINGS:** Exodus 20:1-17, Psalm 19, 1 Cor. 1:18-25, John 2:13-22

**REFLECTION** By Rev. Linda Young

Imagine, if you will a space especially provided for you to go and pray. A holy place, a sanctified place, a place of peace and tranquillity. However, with Passover is getting near and an incredible influx of people coming into your town, so the priest decides to change your beautiful, holy place into a marketplace. There is no need for this marketplace, as there are many beyond the courts who will provide the livestock needed for the appropriate sacrifices and the exchange of currency. The marketeers take full advantage of the tourists and fellow worshippers by making their prices exorbitant and by coercing them to believe that their sacrificial animal is of better quality and a more worthy gift to God. (Sit with those feelings of exclusion and total disregard.)

This is what Jesus comes up against as he goes into the temple. The place dedicated specifically for prayer by the Gentiles desecrated by opportunistic cheats for do not trade fairly. He acts immediately. He creates a cord to push the sheep and the cows out and disrupts and names the sin for what it is. (What does it now feel like to have Jesus clear and cleanse a space for you?)

There are so many instances we can see in our world that demonstrate injustice, the exclusion of others and the denial of basic human rights. We as a nation have for many years now, held refugees in detention camps with no way for them to find another way out. They are stuck indefinitely until the authorities decide what the process will be. Can you imagine being in a detention centre, in a foreign country, surrounded by barbed-wire fences and never knowing when you will free again? I cannot. I wonder, what Jesus would do? I wonder, what lawful ways we can continue to draw this situation to the attention of the wider population?

More questions arise as I reflect on this passage, “What do we do to minimalise or even discourage others in their faith by what we say and do?” “How do we as church make space for those outside our faith community? Not only make space, but provide places of nurture and care with open arms and a non-judgemental demeanour?” “What would Jesus want to cleanse from us, both individually and as Church, that interfere with the expression of Christ’s love, grace and hospitality?”

God bless.

**TEAM REFLECTION**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE** from *Spill the Beans*

Holy Giver of Laws, we pray:

may those who have fallen foul

of the order of their communities

be restored

in grace and compassion

and may we be seekers and doers of justice

Holy Overturner of Tables we pray:

may those who are oppressed

be given access to what they most need

in generosity and dignity

and may we be consumed by your

passion to create a table where

all have an equal place.

Holy Wisdom,

may those whose foolishness

is lauded as fame, glamour,

business acumen and power

come to know the height and depth

of your humility and strength

and may we have the courage

to live as your holy fools,

sharing the values

of your right-side-up world.

In your name we pray, Amen.

**SONG: Community of Christ** TiS 473

**SENDING OUT AND BLESSING:**

So go into your day and week

Walking in the rhythms of a faith-full life,

beside the One who showed us that

Love is the beating heart of the Law

inspired by the One whose ‘foolish’ dreams

ignite the spark that leads us to

a burning desire for abundant life for all.

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

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