

**St. Margaret's Uniting Church
Mooroolbark**

Sunday 3rd June, 2018

2nd Sunday after Pentecost – Holy Communion

Welcome

All are invited to share morning tea following the service

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD:

ACKNOWLEDGING THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

GREETING

WE SING TIS 398 'Come down, O Love divine'

CALL TO WORSHIP & OPENING PRAYER

WE LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD:

SHARING THE EARLY WORD

WE SING ATFG 561 'Part of a family interconnected'

THE GOSPEL Mark 2:23-3:6 *Pronouncement about the Sabbath*

One sabbath he was going through the cornfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, 'Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?' And he said to them, 'Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions.' Then he said to them, 'The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.'

The Man with a Withered Hand

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Come forward.' Then he said to them, 'Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?' But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

THE PSALM 139:1-6, 13-18 *The Inescapable God*

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

In your book were written

all the days that were formed for me,
 when none of them as yet existed.
 How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
 How vast is the sum of them!
 I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
 I come to the end—I am still with you.

... for the word of the Lord, **THANKS BE TO GOD.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION & WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

REFLECTION ON THE SCRIPTURES

‘Don’t keep history a mystery’.

The theme for National Reconciliation Week reminds us what is needed to take forward steps towards being reconciled as First and Second Australians. As part of this de-mystifying, I heard Indigenous author, Bruce Pascoe share his thoughts at an event in Healesville this week.

He confronted us with the idea that we are not ready for reconciliation, but rather there first needs to be conciliation. It is reference to an unknown history, a history we were never taught in school, one that even today most cannot entertain.

I’m not sure I fully agree with Bruce on this point, but I can understand why he feels this way. Conciliation takes place when differences are so challenging that an independent person is needed to listen to the stories of each party separately – in order to lower tensions, improve communication, interpret issues and the like before reconciliation can begin. You may have seen this in the machinations to prepare Trump and Kim Jong-un for the negotiating table.

Bruce Pascoe is a teller of a history that most Australians cannot see and do not recognise. For that reason I heartily recommend his latest book, *Dark Emu*, as it illuminates a land otherwise lost to us. Have you wondered what Australia was really like before it was so radically changed by European settlement? *Dark Emu* tells a story that de-

mystifies the idea that Aboriginal people were simple 'hunter-gatherers'. And here is the amazing thing – the information in this book comes directly from the journals of early Colonists, reflecting on what they had seen.

It is Early Settlers who witnessed First Peoples as bakers with large store houses for grain. Subsequent research suggests Aboriginal Australians were baking far earlier than the Egyptians. The First Peoples cultivated and farmed the land, particularly native grasses, which is why it was first described by the English as parkland. There were complex waterways and traps designed for easy fishing. There are many other surprises from our history, as told by Colonists and uncovered in fresh ways by Bruce Pascoe.

While we are not really here for an interesting insight into another culture, we are gathered as the people of God to be go deeper and be equipped for our journey of faith in this place. And for that we look for a moment to the Scriptures before returning to ideas of history, conciliation and reconciliation.

We heard a Psalm (139) written by King David about God knowing us intimately. God knows us before we are born, and God is with us all our days. God seeks to love and uphold us to the extent there is no place out of reach for God. Even if we run away, or create hell for ourselves, God is still with us.

It is a beautiful psalm, although it might invoke fear as well. Isn't it a fearful idea that God is present when we try to outrun troubles? And yet David writes this Psalm because that is his life. One day he spies Bathsheba bathing on a roof top. As a result, he could not or would not contain his lust for her. When she is pregnant with his child, he arranges to have her husband killed at war. But like all of us, God had a way of making the king face the consequences of all he has done.

It is through the hard, examining, but reconciling love of God that David writes of God being inescapable. It is in gratitude of finding a place to belong and start anew, despite all that he could not wipe away.

When we approach the history of Australia and what stories are told or left untold, it is my prayer that we find courage to face truth like King David, and find that at the end God remains with us. For this reason I feel that our call as people of faith is to reconciliation rather than conciliation, because through our faith, First and Second peoples find common ground through Jesus Christ. As an act of ensuring history is not a mystery, the Uniting Church has adopted a preamble to our Constitution that speaks honestly about First and Second Peoples.

God was with people of this land in ancient times, and hearing and embracing ancient stories of the movement of the Spirit will deepen our sense of the inescapable God, the God always with us.

These stories shape our identity. A couple of years ago, the Archbishop of Canterbury discovered the man he had known as father was not his biological dad at all. As the story broke, his instinct was to protect the integrity of his mother from the prying eyes of the press. In an interview afterwards he said, "I know that I find who I am in Jesus Christ, not in genetics, and my identity in Him never changes..."

This is the basis for our reconciliation, for our honest telling of the stories that shape and frame us, for our call to listen, learn, and be as one. As we know the love of God described in the Psalm; and as we know the rock, foundation, basis of who we are as beloved children of God, it gives us a way to walk together as First and Second peoples of this land.

For however the past affects us, it is in Jesus that children of God find their true identity.

While most of the generations gathered here in the church have learned a history of Australia that does injustice to reconciliation, things are changing. In the reconciliation event at Healesville, we heard primary school children passionate about making sure history is no mystery. And this telling comes in many positive ways.

One way is through the 'Return Of The Firestick Project'.

If you remember the early Colonial comment about beautiful parklands here 230 years ago, and how once there was ease of movement through what is now thick bush or scrub, here is the reason why it was so. Children from Dixon's Creek Primary School have written a book with local Aboriginal people called 'Parent Trees are talking'. It is a story of a sick bushland that cannot live to its potential because it is choked by scrub. Sick bushland leads to massive fire events like Black Saturday. But the firestick used by Aboriginal people, was a way to manage health of forests, and risk of wildfire. It benefitted flora and fauna alike and made Australian bush more parklike than the thick scrub we know today.

This month Victoria begins its first trial of managing forest fire through Indigenous firestick methods. This has support from farmers, including the Mountain Cattleman's Association, as hope for healing of the land.

In our gospel story today, where Jesus flaunts conventional wisdom about the Sabbath, we are reminded that like King David, he knew his identity and purpose is found in God. His coming was to do the will of the one who sent him, not his own will.

I wonder what we are called to on our journey of reconciliation? Let us keep our eyes fixed on the One who knew us before our substance was being formed; the One who travels with us all our days. Let us remember we are called to a common table and there equipped to live out our identity in Jesus Christ.

Let us tell the history of God in both ancient and new ways, for both form our living, our identity, our journey in Christ, and the reconciliation of the whole of creation.

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD:

OFFERING

During the offering WE SING 'Search me O God' (Leigh Newton)

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE & PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION:

QUESTIONS OF INSTITUTION

What is this meal of bread and wine?

Why do we eat bread?! !!

What does the wine help us remember?

... Your presence in a loaf of bread. **Your presence in a simple cup.**

Remember me, Jesus said, **and we remember.**

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

... *The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving continues, all singing:*

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed, is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

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.**

WE SING 'Come, Word already here' (*Words: Jennie Gordon, Tune: ST JOHN*)

THE COMMUNION

SHARING FROM THE CHILDREN

SENDING FORTH OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD:

WE SING TIS 599 'Take my life and let it be'

SENDING OUT & BLESSING

BENEDICTION TIS 716 'Father we adore you'