

Uniting Church Cluster Service
Sunday 24th June, 2018 Croydon North
Celebration of the
41st Anniversary of the Uniting Church

A gathering of the Cluster –
Congregations of Croydon, Croydon North, Lilydale, Montrose
& St.Margaret's Mooroolbark.

INTROIT TIS 390 "Give thanks to the risen Lord" V. 1

Process in of Bible and clergy

Acknowledgment of the First Peoples of the Land

In this, the 40th anniversary year
of the recognition of indigenous Australians as citizens,
we acknowledge the Wurundjeri people,
the first inhabitants of this place
from time beyond remembering.

We honour them for
their custodianship of the land,
on which we gather today.

CALL TO WORSHIP

You are the God who calls us together

You give us the courage to change.

You are the Christ who has always walked before us,

Who takes us by the hand along the way.

You are the Holy Spirit who never leaves us alone.,

Who calls us on to a new day;

God of mystery and wonder,
Incarnate God of our every day,
We praise you, we worship you,
Our souls long for your presence.

For you are our song

Our hope, and our life.

HYMN TIS 456: *“Your hand O God has guided...”*

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

We thank God for their prophetic vision,
of the Uniting Church,
and for the continuing witness we bear
to the uniting of Christ’s people
in Australia, and throughout the world. Amen.

Loving God, in the celebration of life
and in the midst of a fast changing world,
we give thanks for this your loving community.

We thank you for your presence
and promise of eternal life. Amen.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

God, when times are troubled,
Forgive us when we talk more than we pray.

God, when our hearts may be in the right place
but our words and actions deny the Christ.

Forgive us when we talk more than we pray.

We have not always lived up to the hope that we named at the time of union.

Forgive us and help us to be still
and turn again to you for forgiveness
as we acknowledge our shortcomings.

(silence)

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

In the wisdom of God
the world did not know God through wisdom
for God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom
and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength

Hear then Christ’s word of grace to us

Your sins are forgiven

Thanks be to God

A WORD FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

HYMN 467: *“I am the Church! You are the Church”*

WE LISTEN FOR A WORD FROM GOD:

Psalm 127

Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.

Unless the LORD guards the city,
the guard keeps watch in vain.

²It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest,

eating the bread of anxious toil;
for he gives sleep to his beloved.^[a]

³Sons are indeed a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.

⁴Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the sons of one's youth.

⁵Happy is the man who has
his quiver full of them.

He shall not be put to shame
when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Mark 4: 35-41

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." ³⁶And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. ³⁷A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. ⁴⁰He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

SERMON – Rev Robert Stringer

(Minister Croydon Uniting Church congregation)

“Jesus Stills the Storm”

Today's service marks the 41st anniversary of the formation of the Uniting Church, in 1977

The Gospel reading is a favourite - the followers of Jesus are out in a boat and a dangerous storm blows up - Jesus is in the boat with them, but a sound asleep. Do you know the feeling? Everything is falling apart, your life is in danger and it seems that God is asleep.

It is also a story of grace and the way Jesus brings peace and calm.

To understand the story we need to look at the context within Mark's scheme of events.

The stories leading up to this story in Mark ch 4 are:

1. The parable of the farmer sowing seed
2. The purpose of parables as an explanation of the parable of the sower
3. The teaching about not being a lamp under a bushel basket.
4. The parable of the growing seed.
5. The parable of the mustard seed.
6. The stilling of the storm

As we look at these stories there seems an emphasis on sharing the teaching about the Good news of the Kingdom of God.

The story starts off by Jesus suggesting that **“they go to the other side of the lake.”**

That is from the Jewish side to the Gentile side.

It happens twice in Mark Mk 4:35-41 & 6:13,22 (2nd time there is no storm)

Since earliest time, the Church has recognised the story of the disciples in a storm tossed boat as a picture of the early Church, under threat from destructive forces, their survival is dependent on staying together in the boat and trusting God to do something.

For Jewish people the sea represented a great threat from the elements, especially in a small boat.

How many people feel comfortable in a small boat in the open sea?

The crossing means that the Disciples are in peril from the elements. Jesus is unconcerned and is asleep on a cushion, getting a well-earned rest.

It is a moment of big drama. The disciples are terrified even though some of them would have been well seasoned fishermen.

They cry out to Jesus **“Teacher do you not care that we are dying.”** (drowning)

They betray their profound fear of being overwhelmed, out of control.

The fear/respect of the sea is seen in the Old Testament traditions

Psalm 107: 23 – 32

Jonah 1:4 – 17

Jesus rebuking the sea echoes Ps 104:7

and Ps 106:9 Moses rebuking the Red Sea

Jesus silences their lack of faith as well as the storm itself with the words:

“Peace! Be still” - then the wind ceased and there was a dead calm.

He said to the disciples. **“Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?”**

And they were filled with awe and said to one another,

“Who is this, that even the wind and waves obey him?”

There are some clues that indicate that we should take this story symbolically.

1. Jesus is sitting in a boat teaching Mark 4:1
2. There were other boats as well but we don't hear any more about them 4:36b
3. Some of the disciples were seasoned fishermen, they knew how to handle boats
4. So the main aim of the story is about the **fears and anxieties of the disciples.**
5. The fear of the unknown. The fear of going to the other side of the lake.

Out of that fear and lack of understanding, they ask Jesus to do something to save them.

Jesus responds and stills the storm. This is where the story becomes an acted parable.

They declare the Jesus is the Lord over nature

They see him as a divine being with a mysterious power over nature.

The alternative to fear is faith

Just as the parables – can lead to a lack of understanding that needs interpreting;

so the story of Jesus having power over nature/the sea is yet another parable,

A miracle parable

“Be still”, the sea obeys just as the demons obey and there is a great stillness.

The miracle of the story aims at an inner wisdom and transformation.

Just as the parable of the sower indicates -

The disciples' response of fear for their own well being leads them to view Jesus as the Messiah, the one sent from God.

Their fear of death shook their loyalty

or their fear of going to the Gentiles on the other side needed reassurance.

So what does that say to us today as we celebrate the 41st anniversary of the Uniting Church?

What are the crises that we face today as we seek to be loyal followers of Jesus and take the teaching of the Kingdom of God to the people in our community?

The boat/the church may look fragile but it is all we have got.

If we are realistic we are fearful for the future of the Church and all the wonderful relationship that we share with each other as we attempt to follow as disciples of Jesus.

Example of the Church in West Papua. Prayer and action. Remember East Timor.

The Uniting Church supporting the African National Congress in South Africa.

The coming UC Assembly will be discussing the possibility of giving us clergy the right to celebrate the marriage of GLTBI members. For some of us it is a crisis of faith.

That is frightening for some, but not for many of us who have had a long term ministry with GLTBI members.

The Church has had many crises of impending doom. Women ministers, The formation of the Aboriginal Congress, The closing of congregations

The biggest fear is the same as the disciples in the deep.

How are we going to convey the message of Jesus Christ to our neighbours and to future generations?

The ship of the Church may be fragile but we have always come through when we have listened to the voice of Jesus and the prompting of the Holy Spirit. There is always a space for grace.

A space to agonise in the Church as if we were feeling that we are going to die.

**Do we focus on the storm, the externals, of impending doom or
Do we cry out to Jesus looking for a word of calm and still the
raging storm.**

However as one commentator pointed out that having the wind stop is disastrous for sail boats. **It means that the sailors have to do all the hard labour to move the boat to where it is going.**

Even the presence of Jesus Christ and his great miracles may still mean a lot of hard work on our part to get where Christ wants us to go. If Jesus wanted the disciples on the other side of the lake why not change the wind a favourable direction rather than have them have to go through the storm and then to row to the shore on the other side.

While we may pray that Jesus would work miracles in our lives and in our world and in our neighbourhoods - the miracles that come probably won't let us off the hook from doing some hard work and making an effort to ensure that his message about the Kingdom of God lives on.

Robert Stringer, June 2018

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe in God,
sovereign in grace and love,
maker of all things.

We believe in Jesus Christ,
the eternal Word of God,
the firstborn of a new creation.

We believe in God's eternal Spirit,
pledge and foretaste of the future,
given that we may not lose the way,
who has endowed us with a diversity of gifts.

**We are a pilgrim people
on the way to the promised goal.**

On this way,
we are called to live and work
within the faith and unity
of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

In this unity,
we offer our worship, witness and service
and receive one another in love and joy. We are being led to the free obedience
of the children of God,
and so we look with yearning and hope
to the final reconciliation of humanity with God,
and the renewal of

Adapted from the Basis of Union

HYMN TIS 687: "God gives us a future

JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

OFFERING AND DEDICATION

HYMN TIS 686 *"Lord Jesus, we belong to you"*

THE SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION:

INVITATION

This is an open table set for
all who love Christ a little,
and who seek to turn to Christ again
and live in peace with one another.

PRAYER OF APPROACH

Be present, risen Lord Jesus,
as you were with your disciples,
and make yourself known to us
in the breaking of the bread;
for you live and reign with the Creator
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

QUESTIONS OF INSTITUTION

What is this meal of bread and wine?

This is the joyful feast of the family of God!
People will come all places to sit at the table of the kingdom of God.
Why do we eat bread?!

This is what the Apostle Paul said,
“The same night in which our Lord Jesus was betrayed,
he took a loaf of bread and when he had given thanks,
he broke it and said to his disciples

”Take this bread and eat it.
This is my body which is broken for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

What does the wine help us remember?
“After everyone had eaten the bread,
Jesus took a cup of wine and said to his disciples,

“This is the New Covenant in my blood.
Every time you drink from this cup,
do it in remembrance of me”

(the bread and wine are held aloft)

Your presence in a loaf of bread.
Your presence in a simple cup.
Remember me, Jesus said,

and we remember.

(leader sits again)

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.

Long before the time of exile
you gave us all that we need, loving God.
And yet in times of exile we forget
that you are our source of life and comfort.

Forgive our selfish ways.
Forgive the way we makes ourselves
the centre of the universe.

Remind us again of prophets of your Word.
Remind us again of Jesus sent to us.
Remind us again of our resurrection through Christ.

As we remember, we join with choirs of angels

and the whole of creation to sing:

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 INVOCATION

By your Word and Holy Spirit,
bless these gifts of bread and wine
that they may become for us
the body of Christ
and the cup of salvation
given for the sake of the world.

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*)

[1]

Come, Word already here,
whose cousin cleared the way.
Clothed with delight and fear,
birthed through a woman’s pain;
Word becomes flesh and face to face
we know the source of truth and grace.

[2]

Come, Word not yet complete,
whose blessing we receive,
in bread and wine we meet,
by grace, through faith believe;
the Word that first pushed dark away
speaks in our waiting world today.

[3]

Come, Word who ever was,
who spoke into the dark
and set the world alight
with God’s igniting spark;
intently breathed the nascent flame,
expelled the night with life’s true name.

BREAKING THE BREAD

Christ is the bread of joy, (*breaking bread*)

who shares food with sinners

Christ is the cup of life, (*holding chalice aloft*)

who revives the faint-hearted.

Let us receive what we are; *(bread is held up)*

Let us become what we receive. *(wine is held up)*

The body of Christ.

THE COMMUNION

We will all receive both bread and wine before eating and drinking in unison.

Words such as the following are said before or during the distribution.

The body of Christ keep you in eternal life.

Amen.

The blood of Christ keep you in eternal life.

Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Since we in the Christian community, O Lord, are those who have not seen, and yet are called upon to believe this mystery of faith, send over us, we pray, your Holy Spirit —

The Spirit who brings us life; the Spirit who helps us love; the Spirit who makes all that we do, not easy, but full of meaning. Only with the Spirit's help can we truly be the Church of Jesus Christ. The Spirit's presence in our community gives more than human meaning to the support and love which we show to one another. It is through the Spirit that we are united in peace with all people, everywhere on this earth.

As we believe, so let us live. We pray that all people, looking upon us, your Christian community, will say in all sincerity, "See how they love one another".

And wherever we have walked, the report will go around that the poor are clothed; the hungry, fed; the sorrowful, comforted; and all of creation proclaims the wondrous deeds of God.

All these things are possible, Lord, our God, only in Christ, and with him, and through him. For so you are praised and blessed on earth, in union with the Holy Spirit, today and all days unto eternity.

AMEN.

HYMN: "Dare to Discover"

Daring God,
you call us as your people.
You gift us as community in Christ
to be a church at mission;
to be a church at praise—
no count of cost, disciples
in all we do and say.

Chorus

*Dare to discover
dare to dream,
journey the footsteps
where Christ has been:
building communities of grace—
people alive in hope, in faith—
daring to live God's life,*

Holy Spirit,
dare us - journey onwards to
new horizons beckoned by the Word,
to risk the way of Jesus
whatever that might mean.
We dare to be as faithful.
We dare to live God's dream.....

Chorus

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THE PEACE

The peace of Jesus Christ always be with you. ...
and also with you.

WORD OF MISSION

Go in peace;
may you carry God's Wisdom,
speak forth God's Word,
and embody God's Presence
wherever you are.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

BLESSING

The love of God enfold you,
the wisdom of Christ enlighten you,
and fire of the Spirit inflame you;
and may the blessing of the holy triune God
rest upon you and abide with you,
now and evermore. **Amen.**

ASCRPTION TIS 779: "May the feet of God walk with you"

Please join us for refreshments after Worship