



Uniting World Sunday



Gathering

*Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle. This week, it would be appropriate to find a **white** cloth or scarf to signify that this is a special time of celebration. Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

Video - One In Christ - <https://vimeo.com/673420849>

Light Candle

Once there was someone who said such wonderful things and did such amazing things that people just had to ask him who he was. One time when they asked him who he was he said:

“I am the light of the world, and whoever walks with me will never walk in darkness” This is the one who we follow.

Jesus is light - not just of this place, of just this nation, or just of people like us. Jesus is the light of the world.

And so, we gather, knowing that we are joined across the world by countless thousands of our brothers and sisters. In cathedrals and cottages, people are gathered, candles are lit, and the Spirit of God threads us together in love and grace.

Acknowledgement of Country

From before recorded time, the Wodi Wodi People of the Dharawal Nation cared for this Land.

We praise the Creator for the beauty of this Land and honour those who have offered themselves in tending it.

We acknowledge the Elders and communities who have told the sacred stories and nurtured faithfulness to the Creator. We pay our respects to the Elders who have gone before, all who carry the stories today, and who are emerging.

We ask God’s blessing on all those who continue to work for the healing and restoration of this Land and Her Communities.

Call To Worship

Across the globe we gather to worship.

Our God is here!

God's Spirit dwells with us.

We are one in Christ.

Christ is risen

Christ is risen indeed!

Friends, today is a special service to focus our attention on what Christ is doing in our world.

We in the Uniting Church in Australia are connected in partnership with churches across the Pacific, Asia and Africa. Our partners are vibrant, inspiring, and dedicated people of God who are transforming lives and communities for the better.

Many of our overseas church relationships reach back more than 150 years and have impacted countless lives, through many generations.

Through these relationships, we seek to act as one body of Christ in the world, each playing our part to build hope and end poverty and injustice.

UnitingWorld is the agency that manages these partnerships for the wider Uniting Church, and today we have a chance to hear more about their work and to celebrate our global neighbours together.

Prayer

We pray...

God who knows no boundaries, who neither time nor space can hinder.

God who pursues us with unconditional love and inexhaustible grace.

God who lifts us out of blindness and conflict and shows us the path of reconciliation and unity with each other.

We turn our hearts and our minds to you in worship.

We come to you, each of us in our aloneness, and all of us in our yearning for true community.

Meet us here today, Lord Jesus.

Help us to lay aside the distractions, the anxiety and the sorrows that hinder.

Fill our hearts with your presence and our minds with your guidance.

Refresh and renew our spirits, so that we may once again remember the joy of being known and loved by you.

And today, as we turn our gaze to the wonders that you are working across the world, help us feel true connection and compassion for all your people across the world.

Fill our hearts with joy and humility as we bear witness to the power of your love working through human hands.

Awaken in us again that zeal to be a part of your work.

Fill our eyes with your vision for a world renewed and reconciled.

Give us courage to act boldly in obedience to your call on our lives.

Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

Sing - Come O God Of All The Earth (TIS 181)

Let's stand and sing our song of praise

Come, O God of all the earth:

come to us O Righteous One;
come, and bring our love to birth:
in the glory of your Son.

Sing out, earth and skies!

*Sing of the God who loves you;
raise your joyful cries;
dance to the life around you.*

Come, O God of wind and flame:
fill the earth with righteousness;
teach us all to sing your name:
may our lives your love confess.

Sing out, earth and skies...

Come, O God of flashing light:
twinkling star and burning sun;
God of day and God of night:
in your light we all are one.

Sing out, earth and skies...

Come, O God of snow and rain:
shower down upon the earth;
come, O God of joy and pain:
God of sorrow, God of mirth.

Sing out, earth and skies...

Come, O Justice, come, O Peace:
come and shape our hearts anew;
come and make oppression cease:
bring us all to life in you.

Sing out, earth and skies...

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Story time: Shoes from Grandpa by Mem Fox

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjXKKMWtcbw>

Reflect:

1. In the story, who felt good about the clothes: Jessie or her family?
2. What was Jessie frustrated about?
Getting clothes she didn't want / other people making decisions for her.
3. (sarcastically) But shouldn't Jessie be happy to get anything? No? Why?
The clothes weren't right for her/what she liked doing?
4. Why weren't the clothes right for Jessie?
They were assuming they knew what she wanted without asking her.
5. What should her family have done instead of buying her what they thought she needed?
They should have asked her what she liked or needed?
6. When you give a friend or family member a gift, it feels good, doesn't it? But do you try to think about things you would like, or things they would like?
Ask if they have given someone a perfect gift. What made it perfect for that person?
How did it make you feel?
[If that doesn't work] Ask if they have ever received something they didn't want. How did that make them feel?
7. What does it mean to be generous? What are some generous acts?
8. Can generosity hurt you or the people you're trying to help?
Maybe – if you are giving them things they don't need or want.
What if you send your old clothes to another county but they aren't right for the climate there?
What if you send old books to another country but they aren't in a language anyone speaks?

At UnitingWorld we work with people and churches in other countries to help them in lots of ways. Sometimes they need help accessing clean water or toilets, sometimes they need help to clean up after a cyclone, sometimes they need help running a school for children who otherwise wouldn't be able to go to school.

What do you think UnitingWorld should do if one of our overseas church partners needs our help? *Ask what kind of help they might need from us.*

The best way for UnitingWorld to work with overseas churches is not to assume we know what they need. We aren't better than them, just because we may have more money or opportunities. We have a lot to learn from them too. They are brave, creative, resilient, and strong in faith.

Just like Jessie, our partners know what they need or how to fix a problem and they just need our friendship and fundraising to make those things happen! Our partners are the local church, helping their communities unlock their God-given potential to set themselves free from poverty and injustice. They know their communities so can see simple, inexpensive solutions that we can't.

Prayer

Loving God, you know each one of us, intimately, and you know what we need.

Forgive when we assume what others want or need,

forgive us when we think we know better.

Help us to listen to each other and to respond with gentleness and humility. Amen.

Sing - Beauty For Brokenness (TIS 690)

We sing a song, a prayer, for our world, that we remain attentive...

Beauty for brokenness,

hope for despair,

Lord in the suffering,

this is our prayer,

bread for the children,

justice, joy, peace,

sunrise to sunset your kingdom increase.

cities for sanctuary,

freedoms to share,

peace to the killing-fields,

scorched earth to green;

Christ for the bitterness,

his cross for the pain.

Shelter for fragile lives,

cures for their ills,

work for the craftsmen,

trade for their skills;

land for the dispossessed,

rights for the weak,

voices to plead the cause of those who

can't speak.

Rest for the ravaged earth,

oceans and streams,

plundered and poisoned,

our future, our dreams.

Lord, end our madness,

carelessness, greed;

make us content with the things that we

need.

God of the poor...

God of the poor, friend of the weak,

give us compassion, we pray;

melt our cold hearts,

let tears fall like rain.

Come change our love from a spark to a flame.

Lighten our darkness,

breathe on this flame,

until your justice burns

brightly again;

until the nations

learn of your ways,

seek your salvation and bring you their

praise.

God of the poor...

Refuge from cruel wars,

havens from fear,

Listening for God's Voice

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' ²²On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, ²⁵that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. .

For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God!

Reflection - Rev James Bhagwan

<https://vimeo.com/816795874>

Responding

Sing - Lord, Let Me See (TIS 681)

We sing our prayer that God will help us to have open eyes, ears and hearts for those who are struggling.

Lord, let me see, see more and more:
See the beauty of a person, not the colour
of the skin,
See the faces of the homeless with no-one
to take them in,
See discouragement because she'll never
win,
See the face of our Lord in the pain.
Lord, let me see.

Lord, let me hear, hear more and more:
Hear the sounds of great rejoicing, hear a
person barely sigh,
Hear the ring of truth, and hollowness of
those who live a lie,
Hear the wail of starving people who will
die,
Hear the voice of our Lord in the cry.
Lord, let me hear.

Lord, let me care, care more and more:
Care for those who feel the loneliness, for
those who have no say,
Care for friends who have no job and find it
hard to face the day,
Care for those with whom we sing and
work and pray;
And in care, Jesus Christ will be found.
Lord, let me care.

Lord, let me learn, learn more and more:
Learn that what I know is just a speck of
what there is to know,
Learn from listening to my neighbour when
I'd rather speak and go,

Learn that as we live in faith and trust we
grow;
Learn to see, hear and care, with our Lord.
Lord, let me learn.

Lord, let me love, love more and more:
Love the loveless and the fragile, help
them be what they can be,
Love the way that I would like them to be
looking after me,
For to know you is to love them and be
free;
And in love Jesus Christ will be found.
Lord, let me love.

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Prayer for Others

God of infinite compassion, from age to age we tell the stories of Jesus' time on earth comforting the suffering, healing the sick, speaking out against injustice, challenging the powerful, and bringing hope to all humanity. Though those feet no longer walk the earth, and those hands no longer rest on the afflicted, we know you still hear the calling of your people, and we bring our prayers for the world in this time.

We pray for all people struggling for the essentials of life – for food, clothing and shelter, but also for healthcare and education – we pray that every bowl and every belly might be filled, and that every child might have the hope that comes from learning and dreaming. We pray for everyone who is oppressed or exploited in this time, and for victims of violence and trauma, that their wounds might be healed with peace, grace and justice.

We pray for our partners addressing extreme poverty in places like India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Timor-Leste. Give them hope and courage as they help the most marginalised people to overcome poverty and injustice.

We pray for our partners across the Pacific who are fighting the impacts of disasters and the changing climate, at the same time as preparing their communities and building resilience to future disasters. May we learn from their example and play our part to address the threat of climate change.

We pray for our partners training and equipping the next generation of Christian leaders in places like Zimbabwe, South Sudan, Papua New Guinea and Fiji. Fill them with passion and creativity to be your hands and feet and spread hope in their communities.

We pray for our partners raising up women in the church and community and leading a discussion on the biblical basis for gender equality and anti-violence. In the Pacific, where rates of men's violence against women are among the highest in the world, we pray that our partners' messages continue to cut through and change hearts.

Lord God, we pray for UnitingWorld staff and our partners, and the life-changing work that you are doing through our Christian family cross the globe.

We pray for the courage to remain engaged with the messy, broken, beautiful world around us and that we would each find ways to play our part as the body of Christ – whether down the street or the other side of the world. Amen.

Offering

As we have received, so we consider our response...

We make space now to think about what we have heard and seen today and consider our response to God's nudging today.

As we make our offering - we remember again that this is not just about money - either here in the plate or through a bank transfer - this is also about how we are generous with our time and energy and gifts; and about how we resolve to live differently because we have encountered the living Christ.

Loving God, we join today in celebration of your work in your world.

We give you thanks for all the people reaching out in love and compassion in your name, and for the countless more acts of grace and works of your Spirit that go unnoticed.

We give you thanks, too, for calling us to be part of this story, participants by word and deed in the work of making your Kingdom known to all.

We give thanks for all those who have gone before us and championed this work, and those who weaved our call to support the global church into the Uniting Church's founding documents.

And as part of our response to that call, we bring these gifts, and with them, we recommit ourselves into your service. Use our money and ourselves, here in our local community, and throughout your world.

For we ask in the name of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen

Sending

Sing - Lord of All Hopefulness (TIS 613)

This hymn invites God to accompany us as we engage with our world in every moment of each day.

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could
destroy,
be there at our waking and give us, we
pray,
you bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break
of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
whose strong hands were skilled at the
plane and the lathe,
be there at our labours and give us, we
pray,
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the
noon of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
your hands swift to welcome, your arms to
embrace,
be there at our homing and give us, we
pray,
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of
the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
whose voice is contentment, whose
presence is balm,
be there at our sleeping and give us, we
pray,
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end
of the day.

Sending and Blessing

May God bless us with a spirit of solidarity to fight together against poverty, injustice, social inequality and environmental damage.

May God bless us with the spirit of courage to improve, renew and transform the social order that has lost its conscience because of greed and selfishness.

May God bless us with a spirit of gentleness to hear and understand the voices of those who are oppressed, left behind and pushed aside by the bustle of worldly pride.

May God bless us with a spirit of peace amidst the difficulties and challenges of the world so that we can continue to be God's witnesses who radiate love, generosity, forgiveness and hope.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

(Reverend Dr Apwee Ting)

Liturgy adapted from material from UnitingWorld Sunday:

<https://donate.unitingworld.org.au/sunday/sunday-resources>

Rev Kath Merrifield
21 May 2023