

River Sunday **27th September 2020**

The fourth Sunday of the Season of Creation 2020
celebrated by

Pitt Street and Glenbrook Uniting Church Congregations

This fourth Sunday has been prepared by
the people of Pitt Street.



Gilgais (ephemeral, small water holes).

Eaglehawk Waterhole is situated approximately 2 km west of the Little Desert National Park and state border with Victoria, in the Upper South East of South Australia. Gilgais were a seasonal source of water for first peoples, also sustaining plant and animal life, including ant colonies and yabbies. Gilgais have been generally considered a nuisance for Western farming, grazing and infrastructure development.

Opening

From the mountains to the city through this Season of Creation
Pitt Street and Glenbrook Uniting Churches join for worship.

The Spirit of Life lives and breathes in, around and through all that is, ensuring all is in place to nurture life, clean the air, nourish the soil and refresh every living thing and, an integral part of this living, breathing organism is water. Today we focus on rivers, those veins of life that flow across the lands: essential for life.

Musical Prelude 'By the waters of Babylon'

TiS 708
From Psalm 137
Jewish melody

By the waters, the waters of Babylon,
we sat down and wept, and wept for Zion.
We remember, we remember, we remember Zion.

Toward reconciliation

In this season of Creation, we celebrate all life as sacred and interconnected.

We reflect on generous wisdom, love and humanity held in the faith traditions of Earth, and we pay tribute to all the First Peoples and their long history of being stewards of the land. The Gadigal people of the Eora Nation are the original custodians of the land on which we meet. We respect their history, and acknowledge their suffering under the colonisation of their ancient lands, taken from them without consent, treaty, or compensation. Just as the land survives, so do the culture, heritage and spirit of the Gadigal people and, as we celebrate together, two communities from the mountains to the city we also acknowledge the Elders of the Dhurrug people the same land on which the Glenbrook Uniting Church is situated, the same land that has been nurtured since time immemorial by Australia's First People. We acknowledge and offer respect to their Elders past, present and future.

Welcome

The Uniting Church believes that all people are made in the image of God and that God reaches out to us in love and acceptance and that our relationships with each other should express love and respect and not be abused. We welcome all regardless of race, sex, creed, age, cultural background, sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status, whether you are a person of deep faith, none or are searching.

We Pause

We pause in the daily flow of life -
to come into the sacred presence,
to refresh our spirits
and share our stories of hope and yearning.

Lighting the Candle

We acknowledge the children and young people who are part of our community. We light a candle for them and for children and young people everywhere. As we respect Earth, we care for the future.

All Creatures *(alt)*

To tune TiS 100
used with permission

All creatures lift your voices, sing,
O God of love, our praise we bring!
Alleluia, alleluia!
O burning sun with golden beam,
And silver moon with softer gleam,
O, praise God. O praise God.
Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia!

O flowing water pure and clear,
Make music for your God to hear,
Alleluia, alleluia!
O fire, so masterful and bright,
providing us with warmth and light,
O praise God. O praise God.
Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia!

Dear parent earth, who day by day
Unfolds rich blessings on our way,
Alleluia, alleluia!
All flowers and fruits that in you grow,
Let them God's glory also show;
O praise God. O praise God.
Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia!

Noahs Ark - a young person's presentation

Set on 8th August, Maggie presents three containers to reflect the story of Noah's Ark reflecting a time of drought, flood and the right conditions. Seeds are sown for lettuce, tomato, snow pea and cosmos in containers to reflect drought, flood and just right situations.

29th August plants been growing.
The drought pot has poor growth.
The flood pot has no growth
The just right - grown very well

Reading: Genesis 8:20-22; 9:12-17

The Art of Letting Go

by Rachel Collis
Used by permission

I carried my burden down to the river
My knuckles were white from clutching so tight, for so long
If I waded in and attempted to drown it...
I couldn't let it go 'cause I feared for myself
Is that wrong?

I need a highly skilled surgeon,
to cut out this burden entangled in me
And I need some bloody good answers, urgently

Tell me how to fertilize hope
Teach me the art of letting go
And tell me where fresh visions grow
And teach me the art of letting go, of letting go

Is life just a process of trying and falling...
Of knowing your calling but never achieving the prize
Oh with a red pen in hand I will make my amendments
Deleting and shredding, is that what it takes, to be wise?
I need a prize winning author to
rewrite the script running round in my head
And tell her it must be inspiring.
It must place me in good stead.

Tell me how to fertilize hope
Teach me the art of letting go
And tell me where fresh visions grow
Teach me the art of letting go
And lead me by still waters alone
Teach me the art of letting go
And guide me to a place of resolve
Teach me the art of letting go, letting go...

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Heavenly Parent, we thank you that we can meet with each other online as one congregation. Help us to share the joy of each other participate in the sorrows of those who are bereaved, to feel the pain of the sick, to come into the company of those who are lonely and forsaken.

Help, God, with those who risk their own lives addressing the terrors of an aggressive pandemic. Be at hand with medicos in their work, with nurses, orderlies and all who assist in the caring for the sick and with all attend those in forced isolation.

We pray for the many families of thousands who have died and millions that are now battling with the disease. We pray that one day we may once again join again in the community of nations as one great sisterhood and brotherhood of humankind.

Not only the sick O God, but for the impoverished we pray. Millions have lost the dignity of work, even to the point of lacking the means of a bare substance. We pray for the healing of communities and the determination on the part of the powerful to care for their needs.

Alert our rulers to the meanness posed by climate change and associated extreme weather events.

Regarding the moratorium, alert our rulers to the need for reduced extraction of water and to national fulfilment the increased sharing of water and appreciating the sustaining beauty provided by healthy eco systems.

We pray for the neglected in Australia. For our First People who are often marginalised in a valley of imposed disadvantage. For the chronically poor, for the neglected and abandoned.

And for ourselves, may we enjoy health and healing when it is needed, and food for our bodies. May we alight with renewed trust in the power of love. Amen

Jesus' Prayer

by Rev. Bret S Myers
Used by permission

O God, our Divine Parent,
may your presence be ever revered.
May your peace and justice dwell among us.
May your love and compassion live within and between us.
Nourish us daily with the necessities of life;
sustenance for our bodies, and inspiration for our spirits.
And may the forgiveness we give be that which we receive;
the kindness we show be that which we perceive.
Lead us on virtuous paths, and distance us from evil.
For your world is our world, and your reign our reign;
then, now, and always.
May it be so.

River Wisdom readings and Taizé Chant

A river sings a holy song conveying the mysterious truth
that we are a river, and if we are ignorant of this natural law,
we are lost.

Thomas More

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

TiS 702
by Jacques Berthier
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... the river is everywhere at the same time;
at the source and at the mouth, at the waterfall,
at the ferry, at the current; in the ocean and in the mountains –
everywhere; only the present exists for it,
not the shadow of the past nor the shadow of the future.

Herman Hesse – from *Siddhartha*

In Moslem hadiths (statements inspired by Mohammad),
the Tigris, Euphrates and the Nile emanate from Paradise,
as a result of which they are sources of abundance.
In Vedic and Hindu belief, rivers have divine origins.
The Ganga descends from Heaven and purifies
all who come into contact with it.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

The European names of the rivers are gestures to the history of white nation-building – Lachlan, Macquarie, Darling, the Murray itself. There are older stories. The Rainbow Serpent, which in the stories of the Barkandji lives in the waterholes.... Or Ngurunderi, whose pursuit of Ponde – a Murray cod – created the channel of the Lower Murray. It seems wrong that the word “basin” is so utilitarian... But it can also be thought of as a vast, cupped hand. This is how Badger Bates, a Barkandji elder, describes it..... “Here is my left hand, and in my palm the Barka starts. And here my fingers running to my palm are the Warrego, the Barwon, the Culgoa. Then here, my thumb joint, that is Wentworth, where the Barka meets the Murray. Then across where my left arm meets my shoulder, my body beyond ... that is South Australia, right down to them lakes. And my right arm, here runs the Murray. So, our duty as Barkandji people is to fight for this river, to give them all water. We are connected.”

The Murray Darling Basin
(extract from Margaret Simons ‘Cry Me a River –
the Tragedy of the Murray – Darling Basin’
in *Quarterly Essay Issue 77*, 2020)

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 28:1-10

Taizé Chant

By night we travel in darkness
To search for the living water
Only a thirst to guide us
Only a thirst to guide us

by Jacques Berthier
© Ateliers de Taizé Ltd

River Meditation

- you are invited to have a glass of water on hand for this reflection

I invite you to gaze upon the glass of water before you. Water that has come to you from some river somewhere. May be the Nepean, Cox, Colo or Kowmung Rivers, or the WIngercarribee, Wollondily or Natti Rivers or perhaps, the Shoalhaven or Woronora Rivers.



Imagine that you are sitting on the banks for one of those rivers from which your glass of water has come. It is a lovely spring day and you are sitting comfortably beneath a river gum filtering the sunlight. You are enjoying the slow gently rhythm of your breath as you watch the river flow by.

Listen: Birds twittering, bees buzzing, frogs croaking, fish splashing. Listen to the soft rippling sound of water flowing gentle over river stones. Brilliant clear water that shines and sparkles as it moves softly and smoothly. Feel yourself relax as you become present to this river.

Become aware of those who have sat by this river before you. Families from every nation on earth gathering to picnic on these riverbanks. Swimming and splashing in the refreshing cool waters. This is the same spot that Aboriginal

people came to set their fish traps and gather in yarning circles to tell the Dreaming. This water tells of the events and memories of the people who have sat on these banks. You are one with all who have gathered on these riverbanks across the millenia.

Your attention returns to the water flowing past. Where has it come from? Upstream the water is bubbling and gurgling as it flows over, under and around the rocks and boulders, transporting pebbles as it flows, cascading down cliffs in magnificent waterfalls or meandering in little rivulets formed from the seepage of groundwater. Ground water that nourishes the mountain forests, orchards and farmlands.

Look up and see the clouds. The water suspended in the air. Tiny droplets of water evaporated from oceans, lakes and streams, soil, puddles and leaves. Water that has been circulating across the world and since the dawn of creation, falling as dew, rain, hail, sleet, or snow. Shaping the landscape, sometimes gently and slowly and at times with great force and ferocity. Refreshing the lands, allowing life to flourish.

And so, the waters flow from the mountains to the seas in the rivers that have cradled human civilisations and are ultimately the source of life.

As you watch from the riverbank listen to the water. Listen to the words of Chief Sealth (pronounced See atch) "The Rivers are our brother. They quench our thirst, carry our canoes, feed our children." "Give rivers the kindness you would give any brother or sister."

Imagine the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren for seven generations to come sitting by this river. A river that that was entrusted to you to care for. Imagine the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren for seven generations to come drinking water from this river.

Return to your glass of water. Gently sip the water. Imbibe the water, aware and attentive to the water, all that it holds as it enters your body, becomes one with you. You are one with the water. One with all that is in the water. Water is sacred. Drink this sacred water.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of blessing and life

we give thanks for Sydney's beautiful waterways

we give thanks for laws, campaigns and community actions

to improve the health of eco systems such as the Cooks River -

once Australia's dirtiest industrial canal - we give thanks for the

mangroves, crabs, pelicans, cormorants and spoonbills that urban waterways such as the Cooks River now support.

We give thanks for forgotten songs, the installation of 180 bird cages in Angel Place reminding us of the species that once lived in Sydney.

We give thanks for the Australian conservation foundations report into threatened species near our capital cities highlighting the need for biodiversity sensitive urban design.

We give thanks for the water project on the lower reaches of the Murrumbidgee River in which governments purchased 18 properties comprising 85,000 hectares of land with associated water rights resulting in the wetland being managed for environmental and cultural values as well as for commercial production led by a consortium involving the nature conservancy and also the Nari Nari Tribal Council.

We give thanks for enlightened critique of Australia's failed environmental and biodiversity conservation act provided this year in its 10 year legislative review by Professor Graham Samuel. Samuel proposed new environmental standards and an environmental regulator to stop more extinctions.

We give thanks for excellent overview of the problems in the ABC radio national program, Rear Vision Threat of Extinction and by the community legal centre, the environmental defenders office.

We give thanks for the members of parliament who are seeking substantive reform and who oppose the Commonwealth Government's ill-conceived

delegation of approval powers to the states without strong national standards and means of enforcement being on the table at the same time.

Finally we give thanks for available fresh water, comprising just half of one percent of the earth's water. We give thanks for its beauty, its utility, its physical and symbolic power of cleansing and renewal and for the inspiration that fresh water gives for us to treasure and nurture life.
In your many names we pray, Amen.

Offering and prayer of dedication

This is the time in our service
when we would normally bring our offering to God.

The grace and kindness we are offered transforms us.
We give in response to the gifts we have received.

We pray together:

Spirit of Life,
May what we give today bring healing and hope
for Earth and all of Earth's creatures.
May the whole creation be restored
to wholeness and harmony. Amen.

God moves in a mysterious way *(alt)*

TiS 126
by William Cowper
In the public domain

God moves in a mysterious way,
Great wonders to perform;
She plants her footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
God treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.

Ye fearful Saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Sending out

We are called to open ourselves to radical presence
with God and with each other.

We are called to face reality
with faithfulness, to bear a light,
to bear a spring of hope,
to be a resurrection people.

Go in faith to love one another
and our beloved earth.

Go in gladness,
ready to encounter
the mystery of God's love.

Acknowledgements

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'All Creatures' adapted from All Creatures of our God and King TiS 100
based on the 'Canticle of the Sun' of Francis of Assisi 1182-1226
by William Henry Draper 1855-1933
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Taizé Chants : Alleluia and By night we travel in darkness
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The Art of Letting Go
by Rachel Collis
specially recorded by the composer for this service