

The church is fitted with a hearing loop which covers the body of the church. To receive most benefit, hearing aid wearers are advised to switch their hearing aid to T-setting.

48B 22nd July 2018

Pilgrim Uniting Church 12 Flinders Street, Adelaide

9.30 COMMUNITY WORSHIP

Diversity in unity

LIGHTING OF THE COMMUNITY CANDLES

“Like it or not, we either add to the darkness of indifference and out-and-out evil which surrounds us - or we light a candle to see by.” *(Madeleine L'Engle)* And so we light our community candles.

GATHERING

We gather together as members of God's family,
and brothers and sisters to one another.

One body, one Spirit, one hope,
one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God of all,
who is above all and through all and in all.

We give thanks for the widely different types of people,
and expressions of faith, which constitute God's Church.

We give thanks:

**for those who appear born to express faith
through rigid creeds and behaviour.**

We give thanks:

**for others who seem destined to follow Christ
among innumerable questions and doubts.**

We give thanks:

**for members whose faith appears to be
a profound, childlike simplicity, unhurried and unworried.**

We give thanks:

**for those who seem unable to find one satisfying word
with which to describe God,
yet whose faith is constantly renewed by a wordless awe
in the presence of Unnameable Love.**

Lover of diversity, God of all souls,
continue to give us the grace to treasure each other with all our diversity
and to use these differences as we connect with others. *(Bruce Prewer)*

Friends in Christ, there are no outsiders among us here.

No one has any special standing, or bragging rights.

For we have been brought together by the love of Jesus.

We are God's gathered people, becoming a community of faith
that welcomes all, with no distinctions here.

**We are called to bear witness to a unity of faith and life in Christ
which transcends cultural and economic, national and racial boundaries.** *(Basis of Union)*

SONG: TiS Here in this place (vv1, 2 and 4)

Welcome

Acknowledgement of Land

Prayer of Confession *(based on Ephesians 2: 11-22)*

In the life of Jesus, longstanding walls of prejudice and hostility were broken down between Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free. He abolished rules that restricted life and replaced them with the new commandment to love as he did.

Where have we gone astray? Walls of prejudice still exist and barriers of racism still hold people back from reaching their true potential. We hear the great message of Jesus reconciling people to God, and to one another, and yet we still hesitate to reach out to people when they are different in some way from us.

Forgive us when we erect barriers rather than tear them down.

Jesus has made us members of the household of God and holds us together through the power of his Spirit. Maybe it is because we like to do things the way that we've always done them that creates barriers and excludes strangers, preventing them from ever having the opportunity to experience the reconciling power of Jesus in their lives.

Forgive us when we fail to take risks for the gospel's sake.

We pray that God's Holy Spirit will continue to bind us together in love and peace, building us up as a witnessing, welcoming and forgiving community of grace. Strengthen this church, that we may be a model of ministry and unity for all the world to see. **Amen.**

Song: Here's a new day (insert words - Helen Wiltshire)

Discussion Starter: Share an experience of being excluded and/or an experience of being included. What barriers do we erect, or do we encounter?

Song: Hold the world lightly (Geoff Boyce)

READING Ephesians 2: 11-22 (Reader's Theatre)

The Bible is opened on the table.

We open the pages of the Bible, **and we open our minds to fresh truths.**

Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders.

You were denigrated by the Jews, who were proud of their sign of belonging,
even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts.

In those days you were living apart from Christ.

You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel,
and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them.

You lived in this world without God and without hope.

But now you have been united with Christ Jesus.

Once you were far away from God,
but now you have been brought near to him
through the life of Christ.

For Christ himself has brought peace to us.

*He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when,
in his own body on the cross,*

he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.

He did this by ending the system of law
with its commandments and regulations.

He made peace between Jews and Gentiles
by creating in himself one new people from the two groups.

Together as one body,

Christ reconciled both groups to God

*by means of his death on the cross,
and our hostility toward each other was put to death.*

*He brought this Good News of peace
to you Gentiles who were far away from him,
and peace to the Jews who were near.*

*Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit
because of what Christ has done for us.*

So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners.
You are citizens along with all of God's holy people.
You are members of God's family.
Together, we are God's house,
built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.
And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.
We are carefully joined together in him,
becoming a holy temple for the Lord.
*Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling
where God lives by his Spirit.*

SONG: TiS 453 We limit not the truth of God

WITNESS

We have embarked on a course in which we ask men and women to forget who they are, and remember whose they are and with whom they belong. (Davis McCaughey)

The core issue at Ephesus, and likely a significant issue elsewhere, was how to live as a Christian community that embraced both Jews and non-Jews at the same time. The reading speaks of how Christ has broken down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles. All are now children of God. All now have peace found in Christ Jesus, and the people, Jews and Gentiles together, have become one body in Christ. It is not that the Gentiles have finally found the God of the Jews, but rather God has brought together both, and they are now one people.

SONG TiS 473 Community of Christ
Our offering will be received during this song

OFFERING PRAYER

May these gifts bring light to those who walk in darkness, hope to those who live in despair, and justice to those who are oppressed. Grant to each giver a sense of participation in the most important opportunity of all time: to share your love with the world. To this end we dedicate our offerings and ourselves. Amen.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

"How can God allow bad things to happen to good people?" The lack of a satisfactory answer to this question has led some to abandon belief in God. Often overlooked, however, is the underlying hostility within the question. It implies that God should allow bad things to happen to some people. It presumes that there are those who deserve to lose their jobs to redundancy, their houses to fire, or their children to chronic illness. And if they don't deserve God's love, they don't deserve ours. Believing that this is how God operates requires us to erect "dividing walls of hostility." We draw lines between 'us' and 'them' in ways that prove we deserve every good thing we receive and they deserve all the tragedy they endure. We open ourselves to the truth that God's love extends to everyone.

Listening God, we pray for your Church:
in its fragility and in its strength;
in its nurture and in its mission;
in its pilgrimage and in its establishment;
in its traditions and in its newness...
that it may continue to be what it has always sought to be
– a light in the darkest of places;
a healing for broken lives;
a hope for a searching world. *A silence is kept*

Understanding God,
we pray for our nation,
giving thanks for examples of goodness,
and weeping with those who weep in their poverty, alienation and despair;
looking with admiration at examples of righteousness

and condemning evil in whatever form we find it. *A silence is kept*

Ever-watchful God, we pray for our world, in all its tension and striving,
wonder and questioning, beauty and brokenness.

Where there is rejection:

we pray that the embrace of acceptance might be offered;

where there is isolation:

we pray that the handshake of understanding might be given;

where there are barriers:

we pray that the sledge-hammers of justice might beat upon the walls;

where there is pain:

we pray that the tenderness of healing might be known;

where there is violence:

we pray that the beauty of peace might herald a new dawn;

where there is hopelessness:

we pray that the vision of oneness might be a pointer to your reign. *A silence is kept*

Attentive God,

we pray for those we love –

who, with little encouragement or prompting,

pop into our minds and fill our prayers with their circumstances,

our yearnings with their cries,

our compassion with their tears,

our joy with their smiles,

because we know them so well and love them so much. *A silence is kept*

God who made us in your very image,

we pray for ourselves,

for strength on our journey of faith;

for love in our expressions of service;

for healing in body, mind and spirit.

And we give thanks, that even now as we pray for others,

many others are praying for us. *A silence is kept*

Bless us now with your touch of tenderness:

remind us each new day of Christ's companionship on the Way;

surround us at all times with the Spirit's constancy;

bind us always with the communion of saints. Amen. *(Tom Gordon, Starters for Sunday)*

SONG Benediction *(sung twice)*

May the kindness of our Lord, Jesus

and the love of our God

and the friendship,

and the unity

of the Spirit

be with us.

Be with us. *(words and music: Andrew Dutney)*

God's peace be with you/**and also with you.**

A sign of God's peace is exchanged.