

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR SUNDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER 2020

Welcome/Introduction:

May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also, with you.

Welcome to this service for the Shepparton Uniting and Shepparton Rural congregations. Special welcome to those who are joining us vis zoom and social media and those who have received the hard copies of this service.

Acknowledgement of traditional custodians of the land:

I walk gently on this land. I pay my respect to her traditional custodians, members and elders of the Yorta Yorta nation past, present and emerging.

Call to Worship:

Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful. Let Israel be glad in its Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King. (Ps. 149: 1-2)
Let us worship God.

Hymn: 477 (TiS) 'Jesus calls us here to meet him'.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession:

Eternal God, by your word you create and by your breath you give life.
We worship you in joy and thanksgiving, praising you for the fullness that your presence brings to our lives and our life together.
We praise you that by your word you feed us; we are satisfied and there is always more. Your goodness is displayed in your wonderful works of creation and in your perfect love. We have been rebellious, and we follow our own foolish ways.
Save us Lord, forgive our foolishness and fill our lives with your love that we may love you more dearly and follow you more faithfully. Renew us and sustain us in your grace that we live as your grateful children to the glory of your name. **Amen.**

Declaration of Forgiveness:

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us;
'Your sins are forgiven'.

Thanks be to God. (UIW 2)

Doxology: 772 (TiS) 'Worship, honour, glory, blessing'.

Reading: Mathew 18: 15-20

Message: 'It's a Family Affair'. (Mathew 18: 15-20)

"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone... For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

According to another translation of the same text, it goes like this: "If your brother (or sister) sins against you, go to him/her and show him/her fault". (GNB)

Imagine if the people of the whole world treat each other as we do in a loving family, our world would be a different world from what it is now. If the church treats all people as brothers and sisters as in a loving family, we would have a different church right now.

The passage from the Gospel this morning should not be read in isolation (Mathew 18: 15-20). Those verses are sandwiched in between the parable of the lost sheep and Jesus' exchange with Peter concerning the question of forgiveness (not seven times but seventy time seven).

When you read them together, you'll find that what Jesus is on about is restoration and reconciliation, restoring the wholeness of the community (family of God).

In our individualised, commercialised and marginalised society, it is easy to separate oneself from others and separate others from the community or the family of God. We use human criteria such as economics, individualism and social make up to divide the household of God. We even use biblical text like this one.

We should remember that the very make-up of the church consists of troubled and troublesome people. The expulsion of a sinner as mentioned here should not be treated as a mere solution for resolving conflicts but rather, it is here to emphasise the importance of family/communal values.

The clue that Jesus gives is in the last verse of our reading (v 20). "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

That is the reason and the essence of our being church. It is in his name we are united and belong to God's family and there, God is present to us with all the things that that name brings. The name of Him who made us blood brothers and sisters which nothing can take away.

Through his life, death and resurrection we became one like him/family...and in that family, expulsion is not only unnecessary but impossible.

When I have a conversation with my brother or sisters about matters dearly to each of us, it is in the context of our loving relationship because it is love that undergirds and holds us together as family. We were born into a blood relationship with each other and nothing, nothing can ever take that away from us.

So is our relationship with God and with each other. We are family united by the blood of him who died, was buried. He descended to hell and he conquered death and hell then rose triumphantly to be present in our gathered, reconciled, even troublesome community/family.

We belong together, we are in a loving relationship with each other and God is with us.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn: 145 (TiS) 'The king of love my Shepherd is'.

Joys and Concerns:

Offering:

O Generous God, you have taught us how to give, by giving your only Son to redeem, to sustain and to lead us in your way. We thank you for those who have continued to support your mission in our troubled world. Bless them and their gifts that have been given that your church can faithfully respond to the needs of your people. We pray this in Jesus name. **Amen.**

Prayers of the People:

Gracious God, we lift our hearts to you in prayer for your people. Lord shine your light on those who live in the darkness of trouble and danger from violence, persecution, oppression, displacement, loss and injustice. Comfort those who are grieving and heal those who are not well, that they may see the power of your unbounded and unconditional love given freely in Jesus Christ your Son.

We pray for those who live in the darkness of unbelief. Awakened all to the true light of your salvation that we be united in your kingdom to the glory of your name.

Hymn: 648 (TiS) 'Help us accept each other'.

Blessing: 778 (TiS) 'Shalom to you now'.