

Encounters with God



CALL TO WORSHIP

God is here - present in conversation;
in questions and the sharing of hopes lost, in searching
and in wondering.

Come and find God here.

God is here - present in the journey;
in the company of friends and on the familiar road, in the
untrodden path and in wandering.

Come and find God here.

And before we enjoy the first hymn, may we reflect on the experience of Australians 100 years ago. They too, faced a terrible pandemic, the Spanish influenza. They not only endured the physical isolation required to save lives, but did so after five years of terrible warfare. They too, could find God and draw upon His strength. May we remember them.

Please enjoy our first hymn today

Shine Jesus Shine <https://youtu.be/J3iB3OgCqAc>

First Reading Acts 2:36-41

³⁶ "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Holy God of mystery and encounter, be with us on this journey that we may be aware of your presence. Open our minds to hear your

great story through scripture. Open our ears to listen to your voice and be attentive to your call. Open our eyes to see your work in the world. Open our lives that our hearts may burn for you. Amen.

Second reading is from Luke 24:13-35 New International Version (NIV)

(This passage is also read out loud in the video of the talk)

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles[a] from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them;¹⁶ but they were kept from recognising him.

¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

¹⁹ "What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!

²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

³² They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."

³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Second Hymn: *I can see* <https://youtu.be/cOHrapKFmIU>

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Jesus Christ, hear our confessions this day, we pray. When we become absorbed in our own concerns and forget to look for your presence, **forgive us, Jesus Christ.**

When we become fearful and prefer to walk a well-worn path rather than respond to your call upon our lives, **forgive us, Jesus Christ.**
When we see only confusion and questions and forget to see your ways of wisdom, **forgive us, Jesus Christ.**

Draw us back that we may seek you in scripture, in the breaking of bread, in the waters of baptism; in the gift of hospitality and in the midst of conversation; in the beauty of creation and in stillness of silence. Help us to recognise you in our midst, that are paths may be redirected in your ways.

Third Reading: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

¹ I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.

² Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.

³ The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow.

⁴ Then I called on the name of the Lord: "Lord, save me!"

¹² What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me?

¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

¹⁴ I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants.

¹⁶ Truly I am your servant, Lord; I serve you just as my mother did; you have freed me from my chains.

¹⁷ I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the Lord.

¹⁸ I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people,

¹⁹ in the courts of the house of the Lord— in your midst, Jerusalem.

Praise the Lord.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

God has never left God's people abandoned. God is with us on the journey and Christ is present with us on the way.

God gifts us through encounters at unexpected times and with unexpected people. So I declare to you: We are forgiven, nurtured in freedom. **Thanks be to God.**

It is well, it is well with my soul https://youtu.be/AHe_qmo3gX4

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND THANKSGIVING

Generous God, your gifts to us are many and we are thankful. For the gift of understanding, we give thanks.

For the gift of friendship, wise counsel and company, we give thanks.

For the gift of hope, renewal, and second chances, we give thanks.

Holy God of Easter, you give new opportunities when we feel all hope is lost.

You give wisdom when we feel there is only confusion.

You grant us connection and relationship when we feel abandoned.

You grant us grace that is undeserved yet flows freely from your love.

Our hearts are warmed by your presence and our lives are changed forever.

With grateful hearts we offer our thanks and praise. Amen.

Fourth Reading

1 Peter 1:17-23 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁷ Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. ¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

²² Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. ²³ For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

HYMN: Alleluia, Sing to Jesus <https://youtu.be/56a4w7XxvfY>

DISCIPLESHIP THOUGHT

Wouldn't it be nice if there was the sacrament of a cup of coffee? Perhaps there should be. In the gentle conversation with a friend, God is made known. On the Road to Emmaus the disciples say to Jesus, "we had hoped..." and explain who they thought Jesus was going to be. That phrase carries such a heaviness of heart - what we had hoped for hasn't happened. This Messiah who they thought was

going to reclaim power for the oppressed is dead and they have given up all hope. "We had hoped..."

We know about that phrase today too. "We had hoped mum would get better." "We had hoped our marriage would work." "We had hoped life would bring different choices, we had hoped..." It is into these and many more situations that Jesus offers relationship and hopefulness. For the disciples, it is this that leads them to run back to Jerusalem with good news. And for us, it is in these moments when the mystery of the presence of God and the reality of relationship with God collides and grace flows freely.

[SERMON](#) to listen to and [written to download](#)

There is a crossword available [at the website](#).

OFFERTORY SENTENCE

In response to the presence of God in our lives, let us give of our offering with grateful hearts. As we are presently encouraged to be a cashless society, I ask you to consider giving by direct debit as many in the church are doing already. Additionally you might also consider the needs of those struggling during this time of CoVid-19. The banking details are at [Eden Uniting Church website](#)

OFFERTORY PRAYER

God of relationship, out of love for you, we bring our offering this day. Bless these offerings, that they and we may share your good news of great love with all people. Through Christ we pray, Amen.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

God of the Emmaus journey, we take this time to pray for the journey of life. For those just beginning new adventures and those who are facing endings. **Be present in our midst, Jesus Christ.**

There are many situations in our world that need turning around through your grace. We pray for those whose choices are damaging themselves, others and the world. Help find new paths of grace that healing may be possible. Particularly, may we seek not a return to the ordinary, but to a better future for all **Be present in our midst, Jesus Christ.**

In a world where loneliness leads to pain and depression, we pray for deeper relationships, wider Connections and open communities where everyone finds a place to belong. **Be present in our midst, Jesus Christ.**

For some life is a struggle and companionship of the journey is essential. We pray for those who are rebuilding lives and communities in the face of tragedy; for those who are suffering and grieving; for those recovering from abuse or bullying.

Be present in our midst, Jesus Christ.

Finally, Jesus Christ, we pray for our own journeys. May we walk daily with you, sharing our lives in conversation, learning and relationship. **Be present in our midst, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION

God is with us on the journey, never leaving us abandoned, always surprising us with resurrection moments.

Wherever our path may lead us, may God our creator be our source of love, may Jesus Christ, our companion, be our light, and may the Spirit, our friend and sustainer, be our guide, this day and forevermore. Amen.

HYMN: *His sheep am I* https://youtu.be/7jvF1_YGWfs

Exit Tune *On the Road to Emmaus* <https://youtu.be/ikY5NfrUSV4>

You are invited to join the Virtual "Zoom" Morning Tea at 11 a.m.: Let's consider then: How can I recognise the encounter with God? At the morning tea Marie offered to give her testimony. There is a [longer version available to read](#) at our website.

Here's her introduction:-

Hi All,

Thank you Michael for the opportunity to share our testimonies during our Eden UCA virtual morning tea. I think that is a great idea!

When I worked at SESLHD Mental Health and Wellbeing Recovery College as a Peer Educator we often use stories from our own personal lived experience of living with a mental health condition to explain a theme around a recovery topic - and the results and feedback from the students were always inspiring, encouraging and empowering, that for me, it made me realize how incredible God really is, in that He can help me see that no matter how bad my past was, there is beauty in it, because of the brokenness- beauty that can help others heal; that something so pure and so wonderful can be found even at times when it doesn't seem possible! And that is what gives me hope - no matter how horrible people can be, they cannot touch the purity and innocence, the essence of who we are - God's children. And as a loving Father, He is always with us, even when we push Him away, He stays and watches over us.

For me and many others I have spoken to, it is the stories of hope and resilience that touch people in a way that is so personal, intimate and spiritual- it connects us with one another and with God - and that feeling of belonging and unconditional love is what we hang onto at times of great distress and pain. Even at times when there is no other physical person there for you, God has this incredible and special way of making Himself known to you, I have seen this so many times in my life. The One that really cares gave me the voice that had been taken, to help those living in trauma as well as educate those who in turn educate others that will make a difference (the ripple effect).

I feel, during this period of adversity and uncertainty, remembering and sharing our testimonies will bring comfort and hope to so many. We can also learn about each other and connect in the knowledge and experience of being God's children and His unconditional love.

I look forward to your feedback.

Peace, Love and Hope.

Marie

3 Life-Changing Truths to Know about Encounters with God

1. Don't fear the encounter.

We often fear what we don't understand.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and a sound mind
(2 Timothy 1:7).

You may be in a season when you look left and right and cannot see God. You may fear your future. You may fear what your children are going to become. You may fear that you will always be alone. You may fear your financial future. I don't know what you fear today. But I want to encourage you that in order for God to show up and do a miracle in your life, you need to be in prime position. The problem with receiving a miracle is that you have to be in a position to get one. And none of us wants to be in that position!

God Encounters come at the perfect time, His timing, and in ways we don't understand. But don't fear an encounter with Him. He's going to show up.

2. Don't fret the encounter.

Has God ever showed up in your life? Has there ever been a time when only He could've answered your prayers? Of course! Then, why do we fret that He's not going to show up this time, in this situation?

Philippians 4:6-7 says: *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. And then.... You will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand.*

Don't worry that God isn't going to show up. You will encounter Him. We spend more of our time worrying about life than actually living life. The recipe for God's peace is clear - do not worry about anything. Pray about everything. Tell Him what you need. Thank Him for what He's already done.

3. Don't fail the encounter.

When God shows up, he will show out. He will move mountains. He will bless. He will give freedom. He will replace anger and bitterness with joy. But don't you dare fail the encounter. When He does show up, don't you forget to praise Him all the days of your life. Don't be a fair-weather Christian.

When God shows up for us, we get excited and thankful for about 30 seconds. But then we just add another thing to the list. We start asking Him for something else. We start looking for the next high—the next God Encounter. If God never does anything else for us, He's already done enough. He paid for us to live in eternity with Him. He fills our soul with joy. He gives peace that others cannot even comprehend. He turns crying into dancing.

Let us all be patient between God Encounters, expectant of future ones, and thankful for the miracles He's already done.