



Leura Uniting Church  
10 December 2021  
Baptism of our Lord  
Gail Hinton

## Welcome

*Welcome to worship this morning, to those of you gathered here in the church building and to everyone watching along via Zoom, and blessings to everyone reading the service transcript at home.*

## Acknowledgment of country

*God's Spirit was in this land before white settlement, speaking to the people through custom, law, and ceremony. We acknowledge the traditional owners of the country upon which we gather, the Darug people and honour their leaders, past, present and future.*

## Announcements

### Call to Worship and Prayer of Adoration

*The Spirit has been poured out on us richly  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

*Let us worship the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

*Let us pray,*

*Eternal God, Creator, and sustainer of all life,*

*We praise you for your greatness.*

*Your wisdom is seen in all your works.*

*Your grace and truth are revealed*

*in Jesus Christ your Son.*

*Your presence and power are given to us*

*through the Holy Spirit.*

*Therefore, blessed Trinity,*

*We worship and adore you for ever and ever.*

**Amen.**

## Hymn: Tis 547 Be thou my vision

1. Be Thou my vision,  
O Lord of my heart,  
naught be all else to me,  
save that Thou art  
Thou my best thought,  
by day or by night,  
waking or sleeping,  
Thy presence my light.

2. Be Thou my wisdom,  
be Thou my true Word;  
I ever with Thee,  
and Thou with me, Lord;  
Thou my great Father,  
Thy child let me be;  
Thou in me dwelling,  
and I with Thee one.

3. Be Thou my armour,  
my sword for the fight,  
be Thou my dignity,  
Thou my delight;  
Thou my soul's shelter  
and Thou my high tow'r;  
raise Thou me heav'n ward,  
O pow'r of my pow'r

4. Riches I scorn  
and the world's empty praise,  
Thou mine inheritance,  
now and always;  
Thou and Thou only  
the first in my heart;  
High King of heaven,  
my treasure Thou art.

5. High King of heaven,  
when vict'ry is won,  
may I reach heaven's joys,  
O bright heaven's Sun!  
heart of my own heart  
whatever befall,  
still be my vision,  
O Ruler of all.

CCLI Song # 30639

Eleanor Henrietta Hull | Mary Elizabeth Byrne

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## Prayer of Confession and Declaration of Forgiveness

### *Prayer of Examen*

***We come now to our Prayers of Confession, but instead of me speaking collectively I invite you to journey individually through the Prayer of Examen. Some of you may be very familiar with this ancient form of prayer which allows us to pray in gratitude and to reflect upon the last day or week in an attitude of honest reflection. The prayer also assists us in becoming aware of our shortcomings.***

***The steps are on the screen; however, I will also be guiding you through a short, adapted version of the prayer.***

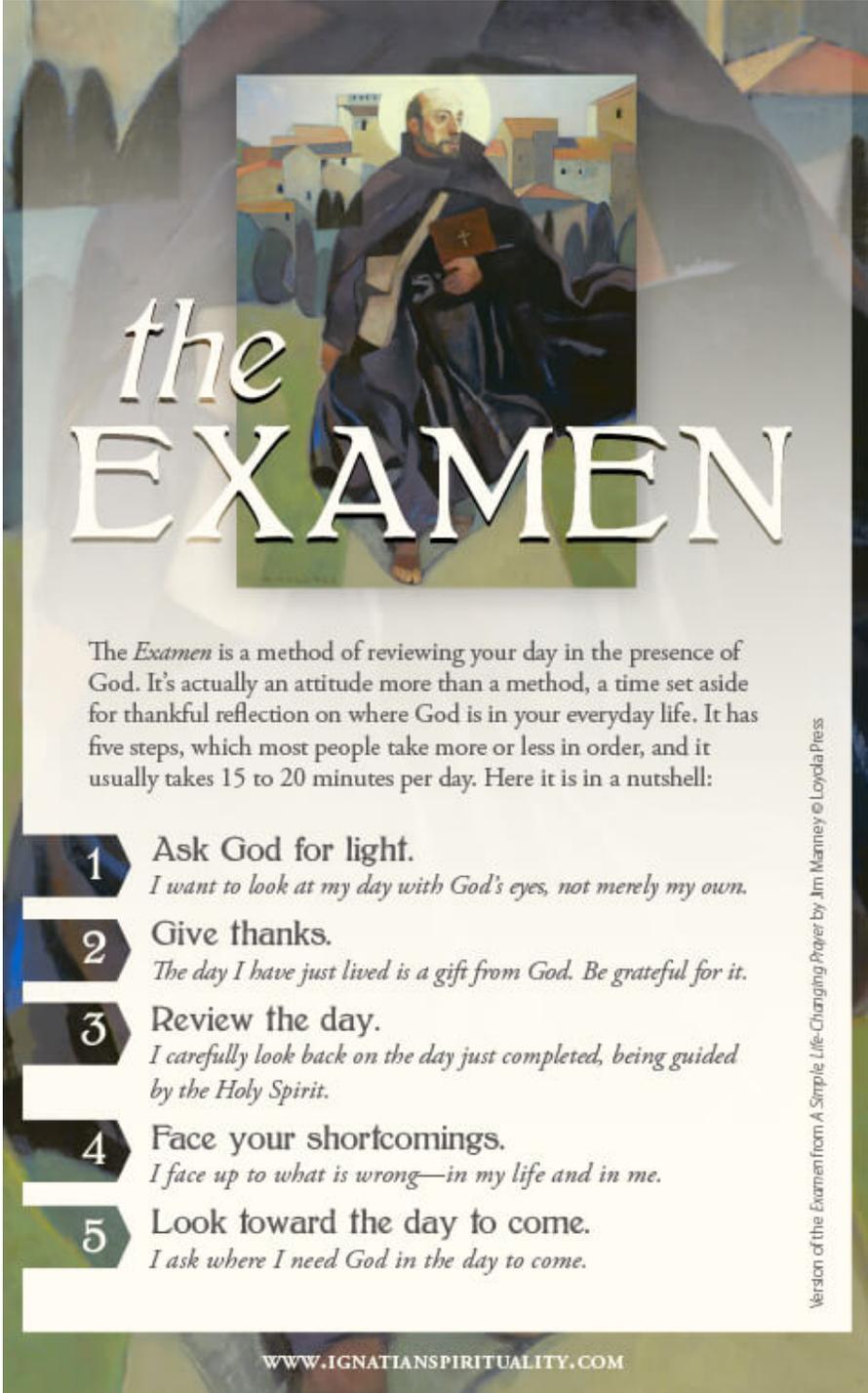
***Ask God for light***

***Give thanks***

***Review the day (week)***

***Face your shortcomings***

***Look toward the day to come.***



# the EXAMEN

The *Examen* is a method of reviewing your day in the presence of God. It's actually an attitude more than a method, a time set aside for thankful reflection on where God is in your everyday life. It has five steps, which most people take more or less in order, and it usually takes 15 to 20 minutes per day. Here it is in a nutshell:

- 1** Ask God for light.  
*I want to look at my day with God's eyes, not merely my own.*
- 2** Give thanks.  
*The day I have just lived is a gift from God. Be grateful for it.*
- 3** Review the day.  
*I carefully look back on the day just completed, being guided by the Holy Spirit.*
- 4** Face your shortcomings.  
*I face up to what is wrong—in my life and in me.*
- 5** Look toward the day to come.  
*I ask where I need God in the day to come.*

Version of the Examen from *A Simple Life-Changing Prayer* by Jim Manney © Loyola Press

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**Readings: Acts 19:1-7 and Mark 1: 4-11 Lorraine White**

## Sermon

*There are many things in life that we take for granted, for instance big things like the sun rising every morning and the earth turning, and little things, everyday occurrences, like having three square meals a day and a safe comfortable place to lay our heads at night. In our Christian journey through life, we also take things for granted and I would like to suggest that one of things is the presence of the Holy Spirit for granted. Now, there may be good, sound theological reasons for this, one of which can be illustrated in the law of aerodynamics. Most of you have probably been somewhere in a massive jumbo jet, although obviously not recently. Think back to your last flight; while you were settling yourself into your seat and waiting for take-off did you wonder 'how on earth is this huge hunk of metal ever going to get air born and stay up there?' Well, did you know that scientists still have no consensus on why aerodynamic lift actually works? "On a strictly mathematical level, engineers know how to design planes that will stay aloft. (that's good) But equations don't explain why aerodynamic lift occurs."<sup>1</sup> (not so good). So perhaps, like the law of aerodynamic lift, we take the Holy Spirit for granted because it just works, without us understanding the 'how's and whys' or even being aware of the Spirit's constant presence. It appears that proof of the law of aerodynamics and proof of the Holy Spirit's presence are both best understood through lived experience, in simply accepting they will both keep us safe and aloft throughout our journey.*

*However, if we are to be quite honest and if we are brave enough to dig a little deeper, we may discover that our apathy towards the Holy Spirit stems from fear. Allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us and take control of our lives is potentially far more terrifying than sitting within about 600 tons of metal in the sky. Allowing the Holy Spirit to prompt us and guides us means we will have to venture out into the world, it means a life that is lived in the face of risks instead of avoiding them; it means living a life in which we are not afraid of making mistakes or of being led into environments that are unfamiliar and strange. In today's reading from Mark, Jesus is baptised, and the Holy Spirit descends upon him, straight away he is led by the Spirit into the desert to face temptation, then he calls disciples, then there are miracles; the fast-paced action of Mark continues, like a downhill roller coaster hurtling towards calvary, towards the cross. Here is a meme I saw on Facebook that really spoke to me, it also made me laugh out loud; I think it sums up journeying with the Spirit quite well:*

God: "I have a plan for your life"  
What it feels like:



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/no-one-can-explain-why-planes-stay-in-the-air/>

*In today's reading from Acts, the difference the Holy Spirit makes is plain to see, verse six tells us that:*

*When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied—*

*In this account the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit is visible and the gifts the Spirit bestows can be understood as empowering mission and spreading the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In our modern context and in our particular denomination these gifts are perhaps considered as too showy and too open to being misused, either as signs that you are in, creating a kind of us and them world mindset, or at worst being employed as tools for marketing and/or manipulation. These reservations are hard to move past, they are in our Uniting Church DNA, however it doesn't mean that we too are not gifted. Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians that:*

*There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. 1 Cor 12:4*

*Knowing that the Holy Spirit empowers us as we journey through life in Christ, is a wonderful thing, yet I wonder if rather than taking the Spirit's empowerment for granted, we actually push it away because our fears are greater than our trust in God? Do we really believe God's promise to never leave us, or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5), to be with us in Spirit every step of the way, to guide us gently and care for us tenderly as our heavenly Parent? I wonder if we truly saw ourselves as the beloved children of God, if we would be braver, take more risks and speak out boldly about our faith in Jesus Christ?*

*In the image of a mum and kid on the roller coaster, there is a tiny detail that I find very moving and tender. Have a look at the way the mother holds her beloved child's hand, the grip is sure and firm yet relaxed and gentle.*

God: "I have a plan for your life"  
What it feels like:



*The mum knows everything will be okay, even though her beloved child clings on for dear life. Last week I asked you to claim your new life, your new birthright in Christ as the children of God. This week I would like to edit that slightly, you are not what the world makes you, you are the **beloved** children of God. In today's reading from Mark, the words Jesus hears*

as he rises from the waters of the Jordan River are the words we need to hear over and over again; ' You are my child, my beloved and in you I am well pleased.'

*When we considered ourselves as the children of God last week, the focus was on the way in which we reflect the characteristics of our divine parent. This week I would like to turn that around by focusing on Jesus' baptism and the way in which Jesus, Son of God willingly takes on all the characteristics of being... one of us. In Mark's gospel we see a very human Jesus, a man who is at times, hungry, tired, angry, sad, outraged, compassionate, loving and anguished. Interestingly, instead of recording Jesus birth as an account of God made flesh, Mark launches straight into an introduction that culminates in Jesus baptism. In Mark's fast paced and brief introduction to the good news, Jesus' humanity is expressed through his baptism, in which he identifies "himself with humanity in its brokenness and sin".<sup>2</sup>*

*In this way as people who have been plunged into the waters of faith through baptism, we not only become the children of God we also claim Jesus as our brother, as one of us. This is an overwhelming honour; to think of Jesus as our brother should make us feel humble, grateful, and overjoyed all at the same time. Yet with this great honour comes the challenge to live as Christ did in this world of ours, if you have been watching global events over this last week, particularly in the U.S. I am sure, like me, you are wondering what on earth is happening to this world of ours? The world can be a frightening place, a world Rowan Williams describes as "the neighbourhood of chaos." In his little book, Being Christian, Williams goes on to say that the Christian will be found "near to those places where humanity is most at risk, where humanity is most disordered, disfigured and needy."*

*So, instead of living safe and cosy lives within our sheltered communities of faith we are called to live out there in the midst of it all, instead of being in the 'in crowd' and falling into the trap of thinking of ourselves as the holy, godly saved ones and everyone else out there as 'them', those other ones, we too like Jesus must align ourselves with all people, everywhere and in all circumstances. I think that this reality is also embedded in the Uniting Church's DNA; in the 1992 Basis of Union, (the document initially drafted in 1977, that united Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Methodists into the Uniting Church) baptism into Christ's body is described as "initiating us into Christ's life and mission in the world, so that (we) are united in one fellowship of love, service, suffering and joy, in the one family of our heavenly Father... and in the power of the Spirit".<sup>3</sup>*

*Our journey through life in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit may at times feel like we are one heck of a roller coaster. Yet the good news is that despite life's circumstances and its challenges we are always held, firmly and securely, tenderly, and gently in the gracious, grasp of the Holy Spirit.*

*Amen.*

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<sup>2</sup> Uniting in Worship 2, The Sacrament of Baptism, 74.

<sup>3</sup> Basis of Union, Paragraph 7. Baptism.

### **Hymn: Tis 418, She sits like a bird**

1. She sits like a bird, brooding on the waters,  
Hovering on the chaos of the world's first day;  
She sighs and she sings, mothering creation,  
Waiting to give birth to all the Word will say.
2. She wings over earth, resting where she wishes,  
Lighting close at hand or soaring through the skies;  
She nests in the womb, welcoming each wonder,  
Nourishing potential hidden to our eyes.
3. She dances in fire, startling her spectators,  
Waking tongues of ecstasy where dumbness reigned;  
She weans and inspires all whose hearts are open,  
Nor can she be captured, silenced or restrained.
4. For she is the Spirit, one with God in essence,  
Gifted by the Saviour in eternal love;  
She is the key opening the scriptures,  
Enemy of apathy and heavenly dove.

CCLI Song # 2235806

Graham Maule | John L. Bell

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### **Offering Prayer**

*Lord and giver of every good thing,  
we bring to you our lives and gifts  
to make way for the healing of the broken and the lost,  
empowered by your Holy Spirit,  
poured out upon us through Jesus Christ your only Son.  
**Amen.***

## **Prayers of the People and The Lord's Prayer: Ross Neville**

Responses

Lord hear our prayer

Response ***Let our cry come to you***

### **Prayer for humankind**

Across our world we hear of the suffering and struggles of people with the Pandemic and Covid 90. We ask for you to guide help and strengthen all the medical staff that are struggling to cope, the research people who are working on solutions to the pandemic, the politicians and rulers that are working on strategies to protect their people, to organize the immunisation of the peoples. Especially USA, UK, India, Iran, Africa, ...

The struggles many are having to maintain their employment and workplace as many of the structures and premises of their businesses are being challenged.

We pray for the patience and charity required for peoples who are angry with the decisions of their government that they are unhappy with the actions that are being taken. Help people to forgive each other. The people in America.

Humankind have so much to learn about love and charity and the mistakes made and not to be repeated from the past. We despair of humankind's hardness of heart and we know you to also but be patient and forbearing with us Lord.

Lord hear our prayer.

***Let our cry come to you.***

Prayer for the created world.

Lord we are destroying our earth, the very air we breathe, the balance of elements and temperatures in our atmosphere. The climate that we have adjusted to live with. We pray for those who are suffering the consequences with fires, floods, droughts, cyclones and earthquakes.

We pray for those people who have the charity and heart to work to save and protect those who are hurting. Especially we remember the firefighters in WA. We also pray for those who are fighting to save the animals, the fish and plants that are being at risk of not being able to survive in the changing circumstances. Guide them encourage them to continue to challenge humankind to care for the environment, to legislate to protect the species that make our earth so complex so special and unique.....

Lord hear our prayer

***Let our cry come to you***

Lay us pray for the spiritual leaders of our world.

Lord your Christian church is struggling to adjust to the world pandemic. The old ways are not being seen as adequate, appropriate or the source of Hope strength and faith that are needed in todays world. The struggle many are having to adjust to new ways of worship or to continue to be involved in corporate worship.

Pour you Spirit on your church leaders and your people so that they may be seen and recognised as prophets, as sources of hope love and guides to help people to know you as comforter, as savior in these times in ways that are appropriate for this generation. We pray for those that are leading your churches here in Australia. Our President Diedre Palmer, our moderator Simon Hansford, and our ministers in our Presbytery and at Leura, Gail Hinton and Myong Hwa Park and the leaders in our congregation as they prayerfully consider ways of ministering in our community at this time.

Lord hear our prayer

***Let our cry come to you***

Prayer for our selves and our acquaintances.

Lord you demonstrated to us how much you valued prayers for healing. You invited us to pray for each other and we pause now to remember those of our fellowship or our acquaintance that are having struggles with their bodies their mental capacities or their spiritual life to cope at this time. Lord we remember at this time.....

Lord we confess to you now of our own need for your grace healing and renewal of our spirit. Lord fill us now with a renewed feeling of your grace love and peace. We come to you now in silent prayer.....

Lord hear our prayer

***Let our cry come to you***

**Let us say now together the prayer Jesus taught us**

***Our Father in heaven  
Hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come, your will be done  
On earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread  
And forgive us our sins  
As we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
And deliver us from evil  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours  
Now and forever.  
Amen***

### Hymn: Tis 407 Breath on me, breath of God

1. Breathe on me, breath of God,  
Fill me with life anew,  
that I may love all that you love  
and do what you would do.

2. Breathe on me, breath of God,  
until my heart is pure,  
until with you I will one will,  
to do and to endure.

3. Breathe on me, breath of God,  
and all my life refine,  
until this earthly part of me  
glows with your fire divine.

4. Breathe on me, breath of God,  
so shall I never die,  
but live with you the perfect life  
of your eternity.

CCLI Song # 99481  
Edwin Hatch | Robert Jackson

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### Blessing

*The Spirit*

*who hovered over the face of the waters  
at creation, at your birth and your Baptism,  
grant you the gift of the freedom of Christ:*

*In the name of God,  
who created you, who formed you, and who loves you.*

**Amen.**