

WORSHIP SERVICE FOR SUNDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER 2026, FIFTEENTH AFTER PENTECOST, SEASON OF CREATION, & FATHER'S DAY, LEURA UNITING CHURCH – Led by Mark Hillis

ACKNOWLEDGING COUNTRY

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We acknowledge and honour the Gundungurra & Dharug peoples, original and continuing custodians of this land upon which we worship God.

WELCOME TO THE SEASON OF CREATION: Video of Assembly President, the Rev. Charissa Suli.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Gracious Spirit, Holy God

We come now in worship:

Enchanted by the beauty of creation;

In fearsome awe of nature's wild elements and places.

We long for discernment to live more wisely;

Loving Spirit, Holy God,

We come now in worship and praise.



Together in Song Hymn 152 Joyful, joyful we adore you.

1. Joyful, joyful, we adore you, God of glory, God of love; hearts unfold like flowers before you opening to the sun above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the dark of doubt away; giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day. 2. All your works with joy surround you, earth and heav'n reflect your rays, stars and angels sing around you, centre of unbroken praise. Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea, singing bird and flowing fountain call to praise you joyfully.	3. You are giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blest, well-spring of the joy of living, ocean-depth of happy rest. You our Father, Christ our brother, all are yours who live in love; teach us how to love each other, lift us to your joy above. CCLI CCLI Song # 3788400 All rights reserved. www.ccli.com CCLI Licence No. 300742
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PRAYER OF ADORATION, CONFESSION & THANKSGIVING

The prayer will begin with Psalm 119: 33-40

Leader: Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes,

Response: **and I will observe it to the end.**

L: Give me understanding, that I may keep your law

R: **and observe it with my whole heart.**

L: Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.

R: **Turn my heart to your decrees
and not to selfish gain.**

L: Turn me away from pride and arrogance;
 R: **be gracious to me according to your word.**
 Incline your ear, and come to me;
 listen, so that you may live.

When we behold the beauty of creation; when we are astonished and alarmed by its awesome scale, God of all we find ourselves wondering, ‘What is this about? Do we really belong here? How should we behave?’ We look around us and see that the Earth’s and ocean’s complex riches ignite different responses in human beings. Some look and see resources that can sustain life. Others behold the world and want to possess its many riches and exploit them for selfish gain. Here in this place, we gather to assert your sovereignty over all around us. May we begin to see your presence in all human activity that honours the earth’s interconnected web of life. Forgive us whenever we perceive other creatures as threatening. Forgive us when we see other people as rivals for scarce resources, instead of family with whom we share your abundance. May we learn to rejoice in the gifts of other creatures and human beings. Forgive us when we fearfully underestimate our capacity for good. Encourage your people to embrace life as a gift, and each other as companions on the way.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Trust in God whose Spirit empowers us to live abundantly, to love and forgive!
Thanks and praise to Jesus Christ our Saviour, AMEN.

SCRIPTURE (Joy Connor)

Romans 13: 8-14

Reader: Gracious God, put your law within us

Response: **And write it upon our hearts** [Jeremiah 31:33]

Matthew 18: 15-20

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to Jesus Christ, the Word!

Together in Song Hymn 630 The Law of Christ alone can make us free

<i>The law of Christ alone can make us free, and love is the fulfilling of the law.</i> 1. As children of our God we’re sisters, brothers; but will God’s love to all the world be known if we do not reflect his love to others? In charity and justice God is shown. <i>The law of Christ alone can make us free, and love is the fulfilling of the law.</i> 2. Millions believe the law of life is cunning within a world of cruelty and greed; how can they know God’s charity and justice if helping hands have never reached their need? <i>The law of Christ alone can make us free, and love is the fulfilling of the law.</i>	3. Christ is at work through us who are his body, he chooses us to witness and to teach, to heal and raise and liberate and strengthen, to be his hands and eyes, his heart and speech. <i>The law of Christ alone can make us free, and love is the fulfilling of the law.</i> 4. There is no promise that we shall not suffer, no promise that we shall not need to fight; only the word that love is our redemption and freedom comes by turning to the light. <i>The law of Christ alone can make us free, and love is the fulfilling of the law.</i> James Phillip McAuley 1917–76 alt. All Rights Reserved. Text: © 1976 Estate of James McAuley. Music © R. Connolly. Reproduced with permission. One License Song# 58f822e3ebf6b
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SHARING THE WORD

A. The one who loves another (Romans 13:8)

[NOTE: A picture of a tiny whitethroat bird, with Wildlife Hospital 'shoes' (UK, Guardian photo) will be projected]

When we look at this little bird, wearing improvised 'shoes,' we may well ask, 'Why does this little one look like that?' The bird had been hurt, injured. Somebody must care about the bird. What kind of person would do this? Do you have an answer?

The story of two sisters from Bali, Indonesia: Melati and Isabel Wijsen. Melati was 12 years old and Isabel was 10 when they began a campaign to get rid of single-use plastic bags from Bali. Most noticeably in the Monsoon Season, throw-away plastics would clog rivers, streams and drains, beaches, fields and village streets. The girls started their movement, *Bye Bye Plastic Bags*. They urged local people and politicians to care enough to act. It took years, but they have achieved serious results. Admired around the world now, a larger movement has begun across Indonesia, called *Youthtopia*.¹

The full quotation from Romans 13:8 is 'Owe no one anything except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.' In this Season of Creation, I can't help wondering whether it is time overdue for Christians to see other creatures, and even this planet earth as our 'neighbour' to whom we owe love. To treat anyone or anything as an object of little value other than to fulfill our own desires is surely inhuman. To furnish a tiny injured bird with protective shoes is an act of love. To remove plastic from a sea turtle's home is also an act of love.

B. Where two or three are gathered (Matthew 18:20)

The story of Aziz Abu Sarah and Maoz Inon. You may have heard of these two men who now regard each other as brothers. Aziz had a biological brother, Tayseer, who was tortured in an Israeli prison (arrested for allegedly throwing rocks) and died soon after from internal injuries inflicted by an Israeli soldier, aged 19. Maoz's parents were killed in the 2023 October 7 attacks by Hamas. Aziz took a chance and contacted Moaz when he heard of Maoz's parents' deaths. Reflecting back on that time, Maoz says:

Yeah, so, it was only three days after I lost my parents and many of my childhood friends and people I knew my entire life, and I was literally — not as a metaphor, I was literally drowning in an ocean of sorrow and pain. And when Aziz reached out to me three days after, offering his condolences, it was like a hand saving me from drowning in this ocean. And in the last two-and-a-half years, we've been working together [on their book] *The Future Is Peace*. And now I can say, yes, the October 7th was the most tragic day of my life. I lost so much and so many. But on that day, I also won Aziz. And I won Aziz as a brother, and a brother to our shared journey. *And what is already proven through history, that we need enough people, enough people that realize that we have the agency to change the future, to create the future we deserve to live within.*²

Following a pilgrimage, where Aziz and Maoz engaged with fellow Palestinians and Israelis up and down the country, the two embarked on a world tour promoting their message of peace. They took part in an 'Arena Peace Event' in Verona Italy and met with the late Pope Francis (2024), and have also met with Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican. Seeing pictures of both meetings (each with three men in a huddle) called to mind, for me, the Gospel for today (Matthew 18:18-

¹ Youthtopia Education: <https://www.youthtopia.education/>, begun by Melati and Isabel Wijsen.

² Transcript from DEMOCRACY NOW 15 April 2026
https://www.democracynow.org/2026/4/15/the_future_is_peace

20): ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven [*remember those words?*], and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name [*what does the text say?*], I am there among them.’ *There is no question about what these two, or three, pray for. Shall we join them?*

Long, long ago, two grief-stricken people were met by a third who fell into step with them. They invited him to share a meal. They recognised someone rather special, and he was there with them always.

‘As we walk along beside you’ [Faith Forever Singing #3]

1. As we walk along beside you, and we hear you speak of mercy, then it seems our hearts are burning, for we find you in the sharing of the word. 2. As we ask that you stay with us, and we watch what you are doing, then our eyes begin to open, for we see you in the breaking of the bread. 3. As we reach for you believing, and we go to love and serve you, then our lives will be proclaiming that we know you in your rising from the dead.	4. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, for we see you in the breaking of the bread. CCLI Song #4135904. © Words: Michael Perry - The Jubilate Group; Music: 2000 Render, Ian P. CCLI Licence No. 300742
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Silent Meditation

NOTICES AND CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH (Kate Prowse)

OFFERINGS OF OUR GIFTS & DEDICATION

We offer our gifts with thankful hearts.

**We bring a gift from our lives
to share with others.**

This bread and wine are gifts,
Which sustain our life and health.
We receive them with thankfulness.

Lord Jesus, be known to us in the breaking of the bread.

THE SHARING OF THE PEACE

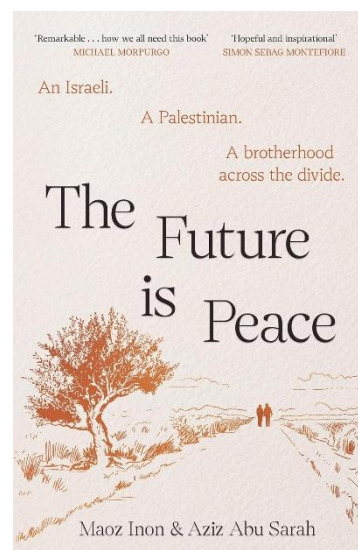
The peace of the Lord be always with you
And also with you.

- *We share a sign of peace with those around us.* -

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (Kate Prowse, Adapted from Methodist Church of Southern Africa for the SEASON OF CREATION 2026)

Leader: Where water flows

Response: Lord, let everything live



God, whose Spirit moved over the deep: We thank you for the gift of water – the waters on the Earth, and under the Earth, the waters above us, and within us. Make us mindful of the care for the planet’s waters, that it may richly sustain life for us and for those who come after us. God of living waters, today we pray for a wounded world where waters are exploited, polluted, and withheld.

We pray for places where plastics, toxins, and oil spills blacken creeks and wetlands, for communities whose fishing waters are contaminated and whose children drink from polluted streams. Heal what has been poisoned. Bring justice where profit has silenced truth.

Where water flows,

ALL: Lord, let everything live.

We pray for all rivers dammed without the consent of the vulnerable; for farmers whose soil dries seasonal flood; for indigenous peoples whose sacred waters are compromised; for the suffering of communities whose livelihoods are stolen by corporate greed, and whose health is sacrificed for global consumption.

Free what has been unjustly controlled. Let rivers flow again with dignity and life.

Where water flows,

ALL: Lord, let everything live.

We pray for oceans burdened by plastic and chemical waste; for coral reefs bleached by warming seas; for great whales navigating through labyrinths of nylon and ghost nets; for the microscopic life, the plankton and the krill, now mingling with the invisible dust of synthetic waste; for the rivers that carry our runoff — the fertilizers, the dyes, and the heavy metals.

Turn our guilt into grace and our apathy into action. Make us a people who live justly and bring healing to every shore and stream.

Where water flows,

ALL: Lord, let everything live.

We pray for communities where rising seas claim communities and ancestral lands, where saltwater invades freshwater wells, where graves are washed away with memory and belonging; for those who have contributed least to climate change, yet suffer first and most. Hold them in dignity and strengthen global resolve for justice.

Where water flows,

ALL: Lord, let everything live.

We pray for informal settlements and rural villages where taps run dry or water is unsafe to drink; for children walking miles to collect water or women burdened by scarcity; for those whose sickness is caused by contaminated supply. We pray for those whose lives are closely intertwined with water - coastal peoples, fisherfolk, marine biologists, water engineers – who can teach us wise ways to live with water. We pray for people to be moved to action and use their inherent or entrusted power to create change. Stir governments, corporations, and communities to protect and share water justly.

Where water flows,

ALL: Lord, let everything live.

Convert our hearts, O God.

Where we have treated water as a commodity, teach us to receive it as a sacred gift.

Where we have consumed without thought, teach us simplicity.

Where we have used water without reverence, teach us to protect it as a gift entrusted to every generation and honour water as a source of life for all.

Where we have been silent and tolerant of injustice make us courageous protectors of rivers, defenders of seas, and companions to those who suffer water injustice until justice and mercy flows like the river of life. AMEN.

INVITATION

Hear the gracious words of our Saviour Jesus Christ:

Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me;
for I am gentle and lowly in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.

Matthew 11:28-29

Hymn 538 (TiS) *Feed us now, Bread of life*

1. Feed us now, Bread of life, in this holy meal; let us know your love anew: we hunger for you. Feed us now, Bread of life, come and live within; let your peace be ours today, Lord Jesus, we pray. 2. Piece of bread, cup of wine: Lord, this food is good: love and mercy come to us — your promise we trust. Piece of bread, cup of wine: who can understand how his mercy works in these? Yet, Lord, we believe.	3. God is here, O so near, nearer than our thoughts. Stay with us where'er we go; Lord, help us to grow. God is here, O so near, in this heaven's meal. May we always feed on you — on the bread that is true. CCLI Song #55360 © 1976 Mann, Robin CCLI Licence No. 300742
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GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Gracious God, it is our joy and delight, our reason for being,
to offer you thanks and praise. 'Now, Holy God, lest we believe that what we have to offer is
more than you have to give, we remember with reverence the one who is both our host and our
Saviour. Born into obscurity, flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone, he came.³ Jesus was raised by
Mary and Joseph, baptized by John 'into solidarity with all who yearn for a better world,
touching those whose disease might contaminate him, dining with those whose company might
discredit him,'⁴ he claims us, by grace to share in his life, his ministry, his death, and his glory.

Therefore, we praise you with the faithful of every time and place,
joining with choirs of angels and the whole creation in unending hymns of praise:

Holy, Holy (sung – TiS 761)

³ *A Wee Worship Book*. Wild Goose Resource Group (2015, 98-99)

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 99.

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.*

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.*

We acknowledge his birth and rejoice in his life and ministry;
we acknowledge Christ shares humanity with us;
and we affirm the words of the Church through countless generations,

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Narrative of the Lord's Supper and blessing of the gifts.

On the night in which Jesus was betrayed,
he took bread, gave thanks, broke it,
and gave it to his disciples, saying,
'Take this and eat it.
This is my body given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way, after supper,
he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it to them, saying,
'Drink from it, all of you.
This is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for many,
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, whenever you drink it,
in remembrance of me.'



By your Word and Holy Spirit,
bless these gifts that we may truly share
Christ's body and blood, and become, by grace, his body given
for the sake of the world.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.
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.**

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

The minister takes the bread and breaks it in full view of the people, in silence or saying:

Jesus is for us the Bread of Life.

The minister lifts the cup in full view of the people, in silence or saying:

Jesus offers us the Cup of salvation.

The minister holds out the bread and the cup to the people and says:

Let us receive what we are.

Let us become what we receive: **The Body of Christ.**

LAMB OF GOD

Jesus, Lamb of God, **have mercy on us.**

Jesus, Word made flesh, **have mercy on us.**

Jesus, redeemer of the world, **grant us peace.**

THE COMMUNION

Receive this holy sacrament
of the body and blood of Christ,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

Words such as the following are said before or during the distribution.

The body of Christ keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

The blood of Christ keep you in eternal life. **Amen**

Prayer after Communion

"As we reach for you believing,
and we go to love and serve you,
then our lives will be proclaiming
that we know you in your rising from the dead."

Amen.



Hymn TiS 537 *Let us talents and tongues employ* [Percussion instruments]

1. Let us talents and tongues employ,
reaching out with a shout of joy;
bread is broken, the wine is poured,
Christ is spoken and seen and heard.

*Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!*

2. Christ is able to make us one,
at the table he sets the tone,
teaching people to live to bless,
love in word and in deed express.

*Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!*

3. Jesus calls us in, sends us out
bearing fruit in a world of doubt,
gives us love to tell, bread to share:
God-Immanuel everywhere.

*Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!*

Frederik Herman Kaan 1929–

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Blessing and Dismissal

The grace of Christ attend you;
the love of God surround you;
the Holy Spirit keep you;
this day and forever. **Amen**