

Hope & Forgiveness



St Aidan's Uniting Church

23rd February 2025

Epiphany 7

Call to Worship

God, the Divine Source of all love
invites us at this time
to come to this place.

So we come
bringing our hurts and joys,
our hopes and fears.

**We come and lay these before God;
we come to worship God.**

Prayers

"Love your enemies,"
"Turn the other cheek,"

These are hard commands,
loving God,
and not something we naturally want to do.

"Love your enemies,"
"Turn the other cheek,"
But, but, but we cry in response
with every excuse why we should not do this.

Yet
"Love your enemies,"
"Turn the other cheek,"
We continue the abuse
of survivors of violence
when we use these ideas uncritically
without reflecting on what they really mean.

And when a bishop calls for compassion
to be shown by those in power
on the little ones of their world,
and death threats are the response,
then we see in action
what it truly means to
"Love your enemies,"
"Turn the other cheek,"

Teach us, O God,

to not respond to violence with violence,
or hate with hate,
but to channel our response with creativity
into holding up a mirror
to those that would hurt us,
to show the potential of being fully human;

Teach us, O God,
to build up rather than tear down,
to balance mercy and justice
and work towards the healing
of our families,
our community
and our world.
Amen.

Words of Assurance

"Does forgiveness abrogate justice? The mercy and justice intention. Without justice, grace degenerates into permissiveness. Justice without grace hardens into cruelty."

God's offer of love
comes with sharing of forgiveness
and the restoration of relationship:
know that you are forgiven,
thanks be to God.

Prayer of Intercession

Loving God,
today more than ever
it seems that our world
needs to know hope,
needs to learn to forgive,
needs to love enemies,
and needs to do so
in a way that builds a future for all your people
and not just those with power.

Today more than ever,
we feel powerless to make a difference
as we see people
being maligned for their difference,

being shut out from society,
or simply told they do not exist.

Today more than ever,
we see powerbrokers grabbing more power
and old patterns repeating themselves
as hate spreads
and the lives and futures of ordinary people
are put at risk.

So, today more than ever,
your world needs hope
and to be reminded this pattern
will once again include a future
where the little ones are cared for,
neighbours – near and far – are loved
and all people are valued
as your beloved.

Help us to pray with our thoughts,
words, and actions:
your kingdom comes. **Amen.**

Benediction & Blessing

Hold fast to that which is good,
render to no person evil for evil,
strengthen the faint-hearted,
support the weak,
help the needy and the afflicted,
and honour all people.
Let us love and serve our God,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.
And may God's blessing be upon us
and remain with us always. **Amen.**

Traditional: Source unknown.