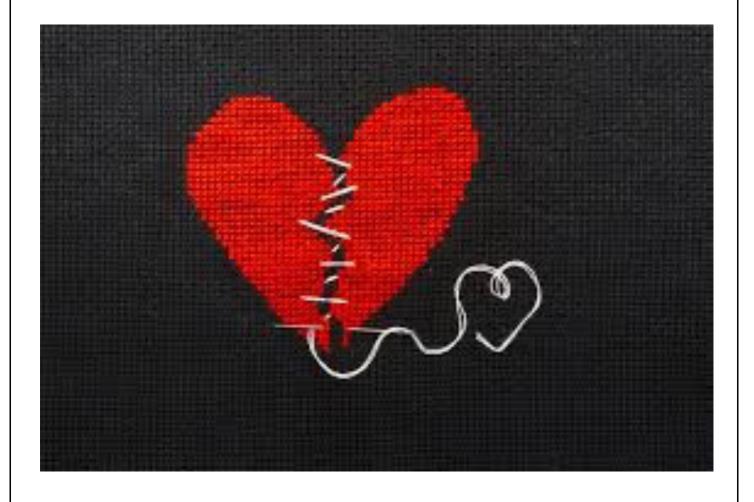
Hope & Forgiveness



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.