

*They'll know we are
Christians by our love...*



St Aidan's Uniting Church
2nd February 2025
Epiphany 4

Call to Worship

Our world feels confusing –
a place where right and wrong
are turned upside down,
where compassion and empathy are called “sins”
and greed seen as a virtue.

This is our world, it is also God’s world;
we are sent into this world
to bring good news to the poor
and release to the captive.

We are not only called and sent,
we are also equipped and nurtured.

Today we come to be equipped;
today we come to worship God.

Prayers

A few years back, I misheard the invitation to a prayer of
“confession” and thought the worship leader had said a “prayer
of confusion.” I have no idea what the subsequent prayer was
about, because it led me off on the mental pathway of reflecting
on the theology and purpose of a prayer of confusion. The more I
thought about the international events for the last two weeks, the
more I thought it was time for another such prayer.

So today, instead of a confession, I invite you to hold your
confusion before God and offer it up as we pray.

I am confused, God.
I am confused when I look out
at all the beauty of this earth
and see people responding in fear.

I am confused when I grow
through the challenge
of knowing who are different
and see other who respond to difference
with utter contempt and hatred.

I am confused when I look
at all that we have learnt as humanity,

all the improvements
we have done together,
at the ways that we can work together
and achieve far more than any of us
could possibly do on our own,
when I look at all of this and yet
there are those who isolate themselves
and retreat into the past –
into an imagined golden age
that never was.

Or worse, they certainly do retreat,
but they retreat to deny
all those wonderful changes
and instead look back to a time
of hatred, war, and separation.

I am confused when people who claim
to speak of the Word call empathy a sin
and see hatred as the way forward.

Take my confusion, O Word of Life,
help me through it,
call me to embody a new way –
a way that lives out your hope,
your love, your grace,
your compassion –
until once again humanity looks to hope
and calls hatred out for what it is.

Remind me again so I have clarity
and understand the compassionate love
that you would have our world know.
Amen.

Words of Assurance

God takes what we offer –
our hurts and pains, our strength and weaknesses,
our moment of clarity and hours of confusion –
God takes all these, and none are beyond God's use.

Offer it all to God and know that you are loved
by the One who loved the world into being.

Prayer of Intercession

There has been so much that has happened this week and it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Any single day in the news could have furnished us with too many people who needed prayers this week.

Overwhelming the compassionate can be a deliberate strategy for those who want to abuse power. It means that those who have the empathy to feel the pain of other people feel too much pain, which can create a “shut down” effect as our own protective mechanisms start up to protect us from all that we are hearing.

So, instead of our usual prayer, I am offering a reflective space. I am simply going to name four groups of people and/or situations and invite you to think and pray for one person or peoples who fit into that category. I suspect that is all many of us can manage at the moment. But focus on that one, trusting there is someone else out there focusing on the others whom we care about.

Who is one person or group of people on the international scene who needs our prayers today? Hold them in your mind or say a silent prayer for them.

Who is one person or group of people in Australia who needs our prayers today?

Who is someone whom you know personally who needs your prayers?

Who is one person or group of people who are called to make lives better for others? Pray for them and give thanks for them and their work.

Amen.

Benediction & Blessing

Go out sharing light in the darkness,
revealing hope in a world
that has forgotten how to hope,
and empathy to those who need compassion
or who need to be reminded
that God is Love.