



Crookwell Uniting Church

“To Know Christ and Make Christ Known”



*Witnessing to God's love for the world
From the main street to the paddock.*

March 2024

Of Sin and Grace

The following is an excerpt from *Feasting on the word Lenten companion : thematic resources for preaching and worship*, compiled by Jessica Miller Kelley.

Easter is the highest holy day of the Christian faith, but to celebrate it in a vacuum, without immersion in all that comes before the resurrection – both chronologically and theologically – robs the day of its true significance. Lent can be a hard sell for many worshippers, with its intentional solemnity and encouragement toward self denial. Others find it to be the most meaningful time of the

year – the most honest time of the year, when we wrestle with the hard things of life and walk with Jesus through the darkest days of his life as well.

Lent is a time of self-reflection and penitence, a time to acknowledge our sinfulness and need for God's mercy. From the church's earliest days, Lent was a time of preparation for baptism of new converts and penitence leading to the reconciliation of those estranged from the community.

On Ash Wednesday, Christians are invited to enter a period of self-

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examination, repentance, prayer, fasting, and self-denial. We are called to use these forty days as a time of reflection on our sins, the ways that we separate ourselves from God and from one another. Thus it is easy to characterise Lent as the sombre, solemn period of the church year, but there is also joy to be found in the journey. The juxtapositions of mortality and eternity, sin and grace, death and life, make the path to Jesus' cross and tomb a rugged, rewarding terrain.

Lent can be a dangerous time. People come to the church looking for a discipline and a new way to live; they come to be challenged – prepared for the heartache and joy of the cross to come. The fallacy of Lent can occur when we contain the season to six weeks of intentionality and introspection rather than building a Lent that becomes a life.

It is dangerous to meet Jesus in the dark places, to ask the same questions of ourselves that Jesus asks of his disciples, to accept Jesus' radical touch. In these moments of utter truth and honesty, we find ourselves vulnerable enough to

connect with the risen Christ as never before.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Gracious God, we come before you in need of forgiveness and grace.

You call us to trust in you completely, but we do not.

We are timid and fearful as we follow your lead. We justify our actions and words, though we know they are not what you require.

We struggle to understand the new life Christ offers, preferring old habits to risky change.

Forgive us, we pray.

Help us to be born again into the life of Christ, trusting that you have included us by grace in the family of faith.

In Christ's name we pray.

Amen.

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Worship & Readings

Sunday 3 March (Communion)

9:30am Crookwell and
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Readings: Isaiah 35:4-7; John 9:1-41

Sunday 10 March

9:30am Crookwell and
crookwelluniting.org

Readings: Ezekiel 7:1-14; John 11:1-46

Sunday 17 March

9:30am Crookwell and
crookwelluniting.org
2:30pm Jerrara

Readings: 1 Kings 17:8-16; John 12:1-11

Sunday 24 March

9:30 St Bartholomew's

Readings: Isaiah 50:4-9; Philippians 2:5-11;
Mark 15:1-39

Easter Services

Maundy Thursday, 28 March

7:00pm Crookwell

Readings: Mark 14:12-72; 1 Corinthians
11:23-26

Good Friday, 29 March

9:30am Crookwell

Readings: Isaiah 50:4-9; Mark 15:1-47

Easter Sunday, 31 March

9:30am Crookwell

Readings: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Mark 16:1-8



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Meeting the Uniting Church Again for the First Time

As many of you already know, the Uniting Church has a strong commitment to social justice and advocacy. The Church believes in taking real steps to make the world a better place. It informs decision makers such as politicians, policy makers, practitioners, and the wider community as part of its pledge in the 1977 inaugural Worship address which promised to “engage in a fearless prophetic ministry in relation to social evils which deny God’s will for justice and peace (and) to act with God alongside the oppressed, the hurt and the poor.” This policy work is far-reaching and based on wide ranging consultation and research, as well as theological reflection.

Recently, Uniting Church President, the Rev. Shaon Hollis expressed her deep concern for the unfolding situation in Gaza, and called for the protection of innocent civilians. “Our hearts ache and cry out for peace to prevail,” Hollis stated.

The Uniting Church has joined the National Council of Churches in Australia in demanding the releasing of all hostages and the opening of humanitarian corridors for the delivery of vital assistance.

During Lent, Christian groups around the world will be walking the length of Gaza (approx. 40 km) to raise funds for humanitarian support groups and to assist refugees. Uniting’s chief advocate for this cause is the Rev. Alex Sangster, who will be joining the Melbourne walk. Alex advocates as part of the Working for Justice Circle.

This group provides a space for members of the Uniting Church (and others) to act on their calling to be a prophetic voice for justice in our church, our community, and our world. It promotes social and economic justice, human rights, peace, and care for the environment.

The Circle supports the work of the Assembly to encourage wider theological reflection on issues of social justice.

If you would like to receive regular updates on the work of this part of the Uniting Church, please visit

<https://uniting.church/working-for-justice-sign-up/>



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