

**PENTECOST 7**  
**7/7/24**  
**CAVES BEACH**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Be confident; hold your heads up high!

**God's glorious presence is with us.**

Be confident; rejoice in solidarity!

**God's Word will strengthen us.**

Be confident; face the unknown future!

**God is present for us, in time and beyond.**

Be confident; be ready for action!

**God has entrusted us to do God's work.**

**Opening Prayer**

A baby opens her eyes to the world for the first time,  
**and we open our hearts to our loving God in worship.**

A butterfly opens its wings in the sunshine for the first time,  
**and we open ourselves to see God's creation in a whole new light.**

A young child goes through the school gates for the first time,  
**and we open ourselves to looking at Jesus in completely new ways.**

A newly qualified nurse finds herself on the hospital ward for the first time,  
**and we open ourselves to serving as disciples of Jesus with an enthusiasm we had never imagined. Amen.**

**HYMN 215** You servants of God

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptLLr\\_WjCz8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptLLr_WjCz8)

**PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION**

Almighty God,

look upon us and see the extent of our love for you.

We praise you for your loving kindness that accompanies  
and sustains us on life's journey.

We know that there is never a moment when we are not enveloped in your  
love,

a love that permeates every corner of the universe.

Your goodness and mercy are beyond measure,

and we give you thanks and praise for all that you are.

We are filled with awe at the beauty of creation that extends to the farthest reaches of the cosmos.

Your creativity and wisdom bring us overwhelming joy, when we think that you hold all things together in grace and mercy.

We worship and adore you. We love you. We give you our praise.

**Eternal God,**

we confess that the ministry you put before us seems daunting and beyond us.

The needs of our world overwhelm us, and our capacity to respond is too limited.

Often, we feel intimidated by the evil we encounter.

So often, the opposition to your ways seems impossible to challenge.

Forgive us, we pray –

forgive our inability to understand the power of your Spirit.

Forgive our inability to speak up when a word of truth is needed.

By your grace and love, help us to trust that what we have to offer is sufficient to meet every need, whether it is spiritual, or physical or monetary.

We pray that we may have the courage to go and do whatever you ask of us,

certain that we never act alone.

Loving God, renew and restore us in the image of Christ, so that all will see your glory and grace.

In his name, we pray. Amen.

## **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

God is always more willing to forgive than we can ever imagine.

If we truly repent and seek God's way, we will be renewed in mind, heart, and spirit.

Through Christ we are forgiven and set free to be children of the living God.

Thanks be to God.

## **READINGS**

- **2 Corinthians 12:2–10**

<sup>2</sup> I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God

knows. <sup>3</sup> And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows—<sup>4</sup> was caught up into paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. <sup>5</sup> On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. <sup>6</sup> But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, <sup>7</sup> even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. <sup>8</sup> Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, <sup>9</sup> but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

- **Mark 6:1–13**

He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. <sup>2</sup> On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! <sup>3</sup> Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. <sup>4</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown and among their own kin and in their own house.” <sup>5</sup> And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. <sup>6</sup> And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. <sup>7</sup> He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. <sup>8</sup> He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff: no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, <sup>9</sup> but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. <sup>10</sup> He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. <sup>11</sup> If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” <sup>12</sup> So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. <sup>13</sup> They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

**HYMN 562** I'm not afraid to own my Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ex0NEUcj58&t=13s>

## **SERMON**

The last few years we have heard conflicting statements about Covid injections, flu injections and most sorts of vaccinations. People are concerned about how safe they are. There are a lot of so called experts each with different ideas.

Today I am looking at the same sort of issue when we come to prophetic preaching. I am picking up on Paul's statement this morning about his ability to deliver God's message.

A famous preacher once said that one of the most difficult things about hearing God's message is the fact that God so often chooses unexpected people. I want to reflect about the messages we actually listen to and which ones we should follow through on.

As a minister I like to think that God has some wonderful messages that I am entrusted to deliver. However, given human nature, there is no doubt that sometimes my messages might come across as being a bit tame or even seem to miss the mark. I am sure that some people wonder if I am barking up the wrong tree at times.

There is always a tension with how we interpret scripture especially when we balance it with the ideas of that community. In making the message more palatable we can all too often be accused of delivering a sugar-coated Gospel.

Sometimes I personally tend to think that God can have a perverse sense of humour. Like when God feels the need to deliver a life changing message and He chooses someone who doesn't fit easily into our expectations of prophetic preachers.

This is certainly the impression I have of the people in Jesus' home synagogue. Jesus comes into His childhood hometown, from His current base in Capernaum, along with His new disciples. It appears to be His first

visit home after being baptised by John the Baptist and calling His disciples together.

The fact is that Jesus' first chance at preaching to His home audience sees Him fail miserably. This man had grown up in the village. They knew Him as a child and He learned His trade there. They knew all the embarrassing stories from His childhood.

It didn't take long for Jesus to be the focus of disparaging remarks from those villagers.

- Does he now think that he is better than us?
- What right does He have to now tell us how to live?
- What can he teach us that we don't already know from far more experienced teachers?

When Luke relates this same story he allows us to hear some of the themes on which Jesus is preaching. Picking up on Isaiah, Jesus quotes that prophet saying: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . ." and then He goes on to say: "Today this prophesy is fulfilled among you." It is at this point that Luke tells us that the audience becomes hostile and rejects His teaching.

Mark is a bit gentler on the audience in his account and he does not go into detail about Jesus' message. Mark's Gospel tells us that the embodiment of Jesus teaching comes out of His actions as much as His words. For Mark the message Jesus has is rejected because the messenger does not match their expectations of Him as a person. They felt that they knew Jesus too well to be swayed by anything that He could possibly say.

People so often build up pictures of other ministers and outside teachers who they have only heard about in the past and they tend to down-play the messages that they have heard from others more recently. When God gives us a profound message through the words of someone we know too well we tend to down-play the possible impact on our lives. Sometimes it is because we know the messenger and consequently we give little respect to their opinions.

People think that if the messenger is imperfect, just like me, they can't really have any profound new insights that we have not already considered.

There is also the fact that we are not prepared to stop and reconsider a message that we have heard all too often in the past. Sometimes it is only when we hear the same message from someone new that we might stop to reconsider our ideas.

It is not always people that we think that we already know who fail to hold our attention. Sometimes when we know little or nothing about another person we can tend to give them very little credence. Let me quote to you an example:

A few years ago a class of trainee ministers had to do a simulation game exercise. They had to pretend that they all survived a plane crash in the desert and together they had to make group decisions about how important for survival various objects salvaged from the plane would be. Now most of the men were gung-ho young people who all fancied themselves as tough and resourceful Aussie bushmen, even though they were really just city boys.

There was one quietly spoken middle aged woman in the class. As they discussed the differing views she offered her opinions and all the would-be 'Crocodile Dundee' men spoke over the top of her and took very little notice of her suggestions. What could an aging woman know compared to all these Boy Scout graduates?

At the end of the day, when the individual and group answers were compared to the opinions of an Army Commando survival specialist, her answers beat all of those from the men. She'd been a missionary in a New Guinea jungle for over twenty years and they had all grown up in the suburbs.

One of the strengths of the Uniting Church is that we do have people prepared to speak out, even if we don't always agree. I am often brought back to the story of John Flynn who was for so many years considered a person not really suited to parish ministry. Quietly he built up the most successful rural and remote ministry model in the world and at the same time he initiated the Royal Flying Doctor Service which is the template for our rescue planes and helicopters today. His ministry and message went for so many years unheard.

God does not speak through a chosen few who happen to be held in high esteem by the hierarchy of any particular church or community. This was

certainly the case throughout the Bible. What real authority did Moses have to confront the Pharaoh of Egypt?

One of the strengths of our system is that the profound word of the prophetic among us comes out through the will of the community, not just the word of an individual. Our forebears said that the will of God is best determined by the community gathered to listen and pray, not by a single individual, no matter how respected they may be.

But it is very important to hear the subtle nuances of this teaching, because in today's social climate it can sound like mere democracy, and it is not. Democracy says the majority preference is right, or even if it isn't, it gets its way. Just assemble the people and whoever has got the numbers rules the day. As we can see from what happened that day in Nazareth, the majority is not always right. Let alone trusting a crowd of angry people and we end up with Good Friday!

Democracy simply seeks to give authority to the desires of the majority. We, as a Christian community, need to listen and pray and discern where God's will is taking us. The smallest minority voice in the meeting may actually be the voice of God speaking to us, and that the best chance of us hearing and recognising that voice is for us to gather a range of people, and prayerfully listen to their opinions.

Our primary role when we gather to make decisions is to prayerfully listen in order that together we might discern what God is saying to us. And what God is saying to us may come from those we least expect to hear it from.

- God may be speaking to us through the uppity young man who we know only too well and whose scabby knees we used to put Band-Aids on and who has grown up gaining far more knowledge than humility.
- God may be speaking to us through the quietly spoken middle aged lady who is polite enough to go along with the group even when she knows better.
- God may be speaking to us through the young woman who suffers schizophrenia and, like Christ, knows what it means to be broken and rejected.

- God may be speaking to us through the visitor, the one whose vision is not hindered by knowledge of how we've always done things around here in the past.

How often did Jesus appear to people as a stranger and was recognised only after the conversation had begun, or even concluded?

The one thing we can be sure of is that God is speaking to us. And it sure isn't up to us to be giving God guidelines about who to use as the messengers!

**HYMN 601** O Master let me walk with Thee  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoWzpjPyPaQ>

### **PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING**

May the gifts we bring reflect our love for God  
and our willingness to serve the common good.  
Let us come with generous hearts to serve in the name of Christ.  
All we have comes from your loving kindness, O God.  
May what we bring be a sign of our love for you  
and a means of extending your realm of justice, healing and hope.  
Enlarge our generosity and open our eyes to the need around us  
so that all may see your goodness and grace. Amen.

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
You lived on the margins of society,  
seeking those whom society would shun.  
You never turned your back on anyone in need.  
You healed the sick, released those who felt imprisoned,  
and empowered people who had lost their way.

We pray for people known to us and need such ministry today.  
Grant them your healing touch.  
Renew their minds and hearts by the indwelling of your Spirit, we pray.  
Enable us all to live with the confidence that you are with us forever.

Merciful God, we pray for our world.



We pray for peace in every land.  
We pray not only for a cessation of war and hostility  
but for a peace that enables every person to fulfil the potential you have  
placed in them.  
May every child grow in the freedom to accomplish their dreams,  
with sufficient food, water, and love to be the best they can be.

Loving saviour, you have shown us how to live.  
Empower your people to live faithfully,  
so your realm becomes a reality.

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 for ever. Amen.

**HYMN 584** Just as I am

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enJ8JzW\\_A48](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enJ8JzW_A48)

## **COMMUNION**

Hear the words of institution of this sacrament as recorded by the apostle Paul:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: "This is my body which is for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, for the remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

*1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

With this bread and this cup we do as our Saviour commands: we set them apart for the holy supper to which he calls us, and we come to God with our prayers 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.**

It is right that we should always offer thanks, O God, because you have created and sustained us and all things.

And so we praise you  
with the faithful of every time and place,  
joining with choirs of angels and the whole creation  
in the eternal hymn.

**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 praise you, O God,  
that in your mercy you gave your only Son, Jesus Christ,  
that whoever believes in him

should not perish but have eternal life.

We give thanks for his humble birth,  
for his life of ministry and love,  
for his sufferings and death on the cross,  
for his glorious resurrection and ascension,  
and for the promise that he will come again.

O God, by your word and Spirit  
bless and sanctify this bread and this wine,  
that they may be for us  
the communion of the body and blood of Christ,  
and that he may ever live in us  
and we in him.

God, accept us,  
as we offer and present ourselves, our souls and our bodies,  
to be a holy and a living sacrifice;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit  
be all honour and glory, now and forever.  
AMEN

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.  
The cup we take is a sharing in the blood of Christ.  
The gifts of God for the people of God.

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

## **DISTRIBUTION**

### **AFTER COMMUNION**

Let us pray:  
We thank you, God our Father,  
that through word and sacrament  
you have given us your Son  
who is the true bread of heaven

and food of eternal life.

So strengthen us in your service  
that our daily living may show our thanks;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**HYMN 531** Sent forth by God's blessing  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzMUetfzEgw&t=22s>

### **BENEDICTION**

We know what is required of us:  
to live faithfully and to fulfil Christ's call on our lives.  
May we live according to Christ's way,  
Obedient to the call that has been placed in our hearts.

Let us go empowered by the Spirit to serve God each and every day  
and may God's grace make us whole,  
may Christ's light shine upon us and show us the way,  
and the gifts of the Holy Spirit equip us for service. Amen.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH\\_HdkWs74](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH_HdkWs74)