



# 'Worship at home' May 15<sup>th</sup> 2022



In this liturgical season of Easter,  
we continue to celebrate the risen Christ  
who makes all things new. **Light a candle**  
to remind yourself that Christ is indeed risen and with you.

## Opening

O Living God of past and future,  
we praise you for this present moment.  
Fill us with your joy and empower us with your Holy Spirit,  
that our strength may be renewed  
to sing a new song of your glory  
in a world which longs for your justice and peace.  
All this we ask in the name of Jesus,  
in whom we become your new creation.

~ from *All Things New*, written by Rev. Susan A. Blain and Rev. Scott Ressman  
**United Church of Christ** <http://www.ucc.org/50/pdfs/worship-resources.pdf>



**Do you have a favourite colour or food?**  
**Do you barrack for a particular footy team?**  
**Has this ever caused passionate  
discussion or even rivalry?**

Opinions, expectations and viewpoints do not always have only one right answer. In many aspects of our life there can be a diversity of ways of seeing and interpreting our world. Our way of seeing or interpreting does not make someone else's way of seeing to be incorrect.

Most religions are based on particular viewpoints and beliefs about right and wrong, which shape the way their followers live and relate to others. The Jewish people were bound by purity codes determining what they could eat, and when, where and with whom. In particular, Jewish people were not allowed to eat with Gentiles. Jesus was a Jew, yet he ate with both Jews and Gentiles, and this became a point of contention with the Jewish leaders.

After Jesus' resurrection, both Jews and Gentiles came to follow his Way, and there was much discussion about how Christianity could incorporate both together, and which beliefs were important or foundational for this new and growing faith. They were challenged to see things in a new way, and to open themselves up to exploring new possibilities.

### **Acts 11:1-18**

*Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God. But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers criticised him. "You entered the home of Gentiles and even ate with them!" they said. Then Peter told them exactly what had happened. "I was in the town of Joppa," he said, "and while I was praying, I went into a trance and saw a vision. Something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners from the sky. And it came right down to me. When I looked inside the sheet, I saw all sorts of tame and wild animals, reptiles, and birds. And I heard a voice say, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.' "No, Lord,' I replied. 'I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure or unclean. ' "But the voice from heaven spoke again: 'Do not call something*

*unclean if God has made it clean.' This happened three times before the sheet and all it contained was pulled back up to heaven. "Just then three men who had been sent from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were staying. The Holy Spirit told me to go with them and not to worry that they were Gentiles. These six brothers here accompanied me, and we soon entered the home of the man who had sent for us. He told us how an angel had appeared to him in his home and had told him, 'Send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. He will tell you how you and everyone in your household can be saved!' "As I began to speak," Peter continued, "the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning. Then I thought of the Lord's words when he said, 'John baptised with water, but you will be 2*

*baptised with the Holy Spirit.’  
And since God gave these  
Gentiles the same gift he  
gave us when we believed in  
the Lord Jesus Christ, who  
was I to stand in God’s way?”  
When the others heard this,*

*they stopped objecting and  
began praising God. They  
said, “We can see that God  
has also given the Gentiles  
the privilege of repenting of  
their sins and receiving  
eternal life.” Good News Bible*

Peter witnessed the gospel of Christ’s resurrection to Cornelius and his family, and the whole household experienced a baptism of the Holy Spirit, a transformation in Christ who makes all things new.

**Reflect on various groups of people who might hold  
a different viewpoint or interpretation than you do  
on something you find important.**

**How might you be open to new possibilities  
or to see things differently?**

It can be so easy to judge or exclude those who don’t see the world as we do, or who disagree with us. In Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, woman and man. No matter our colour, race, gender, ability, no matter our differences in how we view the world, or even our differences in how we understand our faith, we are all welcome in the family of God as the Holy Spirit works to transform our lives and bring newness of life.

**“Behold,  
I am making  
all things  
new.”**  
Revelation 21:5  
Photo: iStock

Once we believed in “us” versus “them”

Now we know that all are one in Christ

**Behold, a new heaven and a new earth!**

Once we believed in clean and unclean

Now we know that all are one in Christ

**Behold, a new heaven and a new earth!**

Once we believed everyone had to think the same

Now we know that all are one in Christ

**Behold, a new heaven and a new earth!**

Once we believed in status and money  
Now we know that all are one in Christ  
**Behold, a new heaven and a new earth!**  
Once we believed in divide and conquer  
Now we know that all are one in Christ  
**Behold, a new heaven and a new earth!**  
**Christ makes all things new. Amen**



- adapted from St. James' - Rosemount United Church [www.sjruc.ca](http://www.sjruc.ca)

Sometimes we might be asked to eat with Gentiles, or to listen to or engage with those who are “different” from us. We are called to love each other, even when we don’t agree. We are challenged to put aside our assumptions and expectations, or the way we have always done things, in order to see things in a new way, and to open ourselves up to exploring new possibilities. Life is full of challenges, and of change. Our God is not a static God – but a God of surprises, and new opportunities. May the risen Christ make us one.

### Pray for

- our churches as we commit ourselves to valuing diversity in our unity, and unity in our diversity
- that we might show love and care for those we don’t like or agree with
- those who feel excluded because they are “different”
- that we might build community with each other and find new ways of being church together



### Closing

Though we are many,  
**Christ makes us one.**  
Though we are broken,  
**Christ makes us whole.**  
Though we may disagree,  
**Christ draws all things together**  
**both in heaven and on earth.**

So go in the peace of Christ to bless and be blessed  
through One God – Creator, Redeemer, and Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**