

A song to sing or to read: The Church's one foundation (TiS 457)

The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord
She is his new creation by water and the word
From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride
With his own blood he bought her and for her life he died.

Elect from every nation yet one o'er all the earth
Her charter of salvation one Lord, one faith, one birth
One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food
And to one hope she presses with every grace endued.

Through toil and tribulation and tumult of her war
She waits the consummation of peace for evermore
Till with the vision glorious, her longing eyes are blessed
And the great church victorious shall be the church at rest.

Yet she on earth has union with God the Three in One
And mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give to us the grace
Like them, the meek and lowly in heaven to see your face.

Tune and Lyrics in the Public Domain

Closing Prayer

Loving Father, our Rock and our Salvation, we thank and praise you for the fellowship of your church. May your spirit inspire us by example and faithfulness to be witnesses to our neighbours, family and friends of the way and love of Jesus. Bless our Dubbo Congregation and guide us to build on your foundation. **Amen**

A Blessing and Commissioning

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Jesus Christ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Amen**

Thank you to Rev John Mason for preparing today's reflection.



Church in a Bag
Sunday 21 June
Dubbo Uniting Church



A Gathering

Seek the Lord while he is to be found.
Call upon him while he is near.

The Lord is in his holy temple.
Let all the earth keep silence before him.

God is Spirit, and those who worship him
must worship him in **spirit** and in **truth**.

Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God
and those who love are born of God and know God.

Behold, the dwelling of God is with us.
God will dwell with us, and we shall be his people.



Preparation

Heavenly Father, help us to understand more clearly your love by which we have been surrounded from the first moment of our lives. Help us to build on the Foundation that has been laid for our lives so that faith and trust in you will show itself in love towards our fellows. Grant us courage and strength to face the burdens, hurts, pains, doubts, and temptations so that others may see that it is your church, your foundation on which we build.

We pray for your church throughout the world, the Rock that you have given us to be our foundation. We pray that in these days of crisis, prejudice, and testing, that we and all your church may stay firm on that foundation with greater courage and wisdom than ever before. Touch our lives with your Spirit so that through our everyday living we may proclaim that the way of Jesus is the way to live at peace, to live our lives as Jesus taught us. Hear our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord as we say the Lord's Prayer.



Today's Readings: Psalm 86:1-19, 16-17

Matthew 7:21-28

As today is the 43rd Anniversary of our Uniting Church I chose the reading in Matthew because in it, Jesus is telling us some very important things about his Church.

Some years ago, we spent a holiday at Kiama right on the main beach. We were surprised to see that the building on the beach seemed to be practically out in the sand when it was high tide. We envisaged that in a large storm the waves might break on the building. But we were wrong. We were looking from a distance. When we got up close, we found that the building was built on a massive rock foundation that jutted out into the sand. I am sure many of you would have sung the old song "Build on the rock and not upon the sand".

Every year there is great trouble on some of the beaches on our beautiful coastline where great storms crash onto them where foolishly people have been allowed to build homes, and even highrise blocks of flats right on the edge of the sand. Every year some of them are destroyed as the sand is washed away.

These two stories lead me to read again the wonderful conclusion to what is known as the "Sermon on the Mount" in which Jesus tells two stories. One is a glimpse of Judgement. He says that many people will cry "Lord, Lord!" and Jesus says the Judgement will be "I never knew you".

The other is the classic picture of having the wrong foundation. The house built on the shore disappears into the sinking sand.

Do not make the mistake that Jesus is judging people of different religions, or different church practices like whether the person was baptised as an infant or an adult or what sort of order of service they use. No. His claim, "I never knew you" is a total distinction between the people who regularly hear God's word, are regular church goers and for whom the way of Jesus is important and do something about it – as against those who do nothing about it, who just cry, "Lord, Lord!".

Let me share two stories from my reading. Thomas Hardy has this gem. "Heidi was one of those innumerable people who were born into a Christian home, Baptised, Sunday School, Confirmed, attended Communion but for all that it had not meant a single thing in terms of offering or appropriating a Christian idea or ideal into her life. Nothing has happened."

HG Wells has a character he creates - "Mr Pump had two hats. One for Sundays and one for the rest of the week. The Sunday one he took out of its box every Saturday night and brushed it lovingly until it shone. He wore it to church and lifted it to all the ladies, placed it on the pew while he knelt for prayer. On Sunday night he put it back in its box. On Monday morning he got his other hat from the hall where he left it, put it on, went to work and was a different person". These are telling illustrations of people who build on the sand and those who build on the Rock. Faith and trust only become real when they are put into action.

Not only do we need the church as our foundation but the church needs us. It needs us as witnesses out there in the world living the life, loving our neighbours, and caring for the needy, the lonely, the outcast, and the poor. It is no easy task, for sadly the majority outside the church have no idea what we are about: what Jesus taught. Indeed, they more often than not have very wrong ideas and loudly will brush aside Christianity with false understanding and no interest in learning the truth. Today, we thinking Christians must realise that the old foundations are being shaken. But put negative thinking out of your minds. The Church is not finished. The Uniting Church is proof of that, arising from three churches (Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational) which pledged to join together not as United but Uniting – open to the future.

The Church is Christ's Church and the 'gates of hell will not prevail against it'. It will face storms but will stand firm, for it is built on the Rock.

