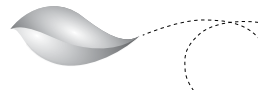




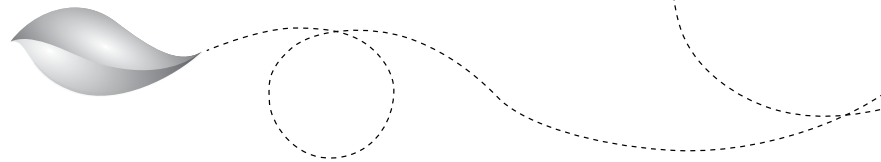
A journey through Ephesians





The Commission on Worship's Department of Visual Arts was asked to provide artwork to guide our journey through the six days of General Convention of Synod. Geoff Schirmer's black and white photography explores symbols in landscape and nature as metaphors of the human spirit, weathered by, yet enduring, the seasons of life.

Images: Geoff Schirmer, pastor/chaplain emeritus



a journey through Ephesians

You are invited ...

during the six days of General Convention to journey through St Paul's letter to the Ephesians. You are encouraged to find some quiet time every day to read one chapter.

The bishop who will preach on the text for the day has provided some devotional notes to guide your reflection and prayer time. You might also find inspiration in the striking photos provided by the Commission on Worship.

Members of congregations across the LCA/NZ have been invited to journey with you during these six days. This devotion guide is available to them (and to you) on the Convention website.

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ 'open the eyes of your heart, so that you may know him better'.



Tuesday

Gathering

'Melaleucas'

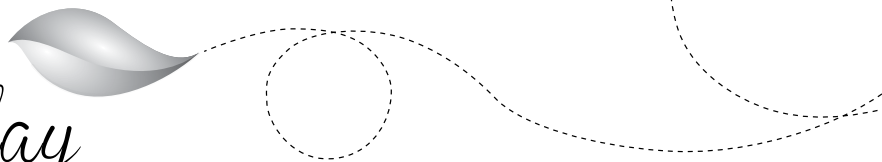
Phillip Island, Victoria

Gathering as one, yet unique



God's word for today

Ephesians Chapter 1



Focus

The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, open the eyes of your hearts, so that you may know him better (Eph 1:17,18 adapted and combined)

Reflect

1. What do you see in the picture? Is this grove of *Melaleucas* a picture of our LCA Synod, where each brother or sister brings a unique perspective to our General Convention gathering? How will you truly hear the voices of others during these days of Convention? What might be blocking your listening and your hearing? How will you support and love others?
2. The light playing on the *Melaleucas* turns their imperfections into something unexpectedly striking, even beautiful. Reflect on your own imperfections, and on how God in Christ has recreated you for his good purposes. What he has done for you, he has also done for all your brothers and sisters at Convention. Look for God's created and re-created beauty in each person you meet today.

3. One of my childhood homes was surrounded by a grove of *Melaleucas*, just like these in the picture. At night-time they looked like ghosts, ominous and frightening, guardians of a mysterious darkness. What are your fears today, as you walk with your brothers and sisters into General Convention? Remember that Christ, who loves you, is walking with you.
4. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ wants to open the eyes of your heart, so that you may know him better. In what ways can you imagine that might happen today? In what ways would you like to know him better?

Pray

God of my Lord Jesus Christ, open the eyes of my heart, so that I may know you better. As I step into these days of Convention, remind me that I am covered in your forgiveness, mercy and love, so there is nothing I have to fear. In Jesus' name, Amen.

These devotional notes have been provided by LCA Bishop John Henderson, who will preach on the text for the day at the opening service of General Convention on Tuesday, 29 September 2015.

Wednesday

Confessing

'Storm Tree'

Bridgewater Peninsula,

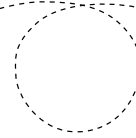
Western Victoria

Confession, from darkness to light



God's word for today

Ephesians Chapter 2



Focus

In him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (Ephesians 2:22).

Reflect

1. Why do we confess our sins? Consider what we are taught in the Small Catechism. Dr Luther writes: 'Which sins is a person to confess? Before God one is to acknowledge the guilt for all sins, even those of which we are not aware as we do in the Lord's Prayer.'
2. Reflect on the photo. How does this portray our life as God's people: 'sinners before the mercy of God'?
3. Read these words from Ephesians 2: 'You are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone'.

How do we become 'saints'?

What does our Lord Jesus Christ do to build us together as his church?

Consider how we sinful human beings, rebel against his 'building' works.

4. 'Let us daily die to sin, let us daily raise with him – walk in the love of Christ our Lord, live in the peace of God.' This is from the baptism song, *Father Welcomes*. Consider how your baptism prepares you to come to God with a true heart to confess your sins.

Pray

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hidden. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love you and worthily praise your holy name; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(from *Lutheran Hymnal Supplement*: Order for Confession and Absolution)

These devotional notes have been provided by LCA Queensland District Bishop Paul Smith, who will preach on the text for the day at the holy communion service on Wednesday, 30 September 2015.

Thursday



Listening

'Afternoon Light'

Dog Rocks near Geelong, Victoria

Be still and know that I am God

God's word for today

Ephesians Chapter 3



Focus

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 3:10).

Reflect

1. In the picture, the lone tree in the wilderness has a bent trunk. The trunk looks like an ear listening intently in a quiet place. Ask the Spirit to prepare your ears, and your heart, to hear God's voice today.
2. St Paul admits that many things disqualify him from life with God and calls himself 'the least of all God's people' (v8). What do you admit would disqualify you and leads you to repent?

St Paul says he became a 'servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace' (v7). Listen for that grace today.
3. What is the 'wisdom' and the 'mystery' Paul refers to in this passage that we are all a part of, and are also called to proclaim? (v9,10)

4. How is the church 'Exhibit A' – God's primary witness – when it comes to his strategic plan to bring everything back together in and through Christ? (v10)
5. The bent trunk of the lone tree also looks like a mouth open and speaking into the wilderness.

What is the message from this text that God wants you to speak of to anyone who 'has ears to hear' in the wilderness of life today?

Pray

Thank you, Father, for including me in your plan to bring everyone and everything back to you through Christ. Help me to hear your word of grace daily, and help me, as part of your church, to make its mystery and wisdom known. In Jesus' name, Amen.

These devotional notes have been provided by LCA South Australia/ Northern Territory District Bishop David Altus, who will preach on the text for the day at the holy communion service on Thursday, 1 October 2015.

Friday



Feeding

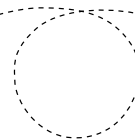
'Agave'

*Royal Botanic Gardens,
Melbourne*

*... in whom we live and move and
have our being*

God's word for today

Ephesians Chapter 4



Focus

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20).

Reflect

1. We have heard it said that 'we are what we eat'. From a physical perspective, it's obvious what is meant by this short statement. We can also say something very similar about our lives as the people of God, who receive (eat) the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ in the sacrament of holy communion; we are what we eat. Sometimes we even pray after the Lord's supper along these lines: 'Enable us to be his [Jesus'] body in the world', or, 'Help us be the bread that we eat', or 'Help us be what we have received'. Having eaten and received, we are then sent from the Lord's supper to be Christ's body and presence in the world: people of forgiveness, life and hope; people of peace, mercy, kindness, love and compassion.
2. Our reading from Ephesians for this morning describes the new reality of those of us who have been washed in the waters of baptism and fed with the Bread of Life. When we become what we eat and what we have received, we live lives

worthy of the calling we have received (Eph 4:1); we become those through whom the Shepherd will gather and feed others with his love.

3. What does that life look like? Paul tells us: we will be 'completely humble and gentle'; we will be 'patient, bearing with one another in love'. We will 'make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace and we will speak the truth in love as we grow up into Christ' (Eph 4:1–16).
4. What does this life look like? It looks like Christ living in me; living in you.

Pray

Jesus, Bread of Life: thank you for giving me everything I need, and thank you for feeding me with food that will last to eternal life. Help me to be your body and your presence among the people with whom I meet and talk and live today. Amen.

These devotional notes have been provided by LCNZ Bishop Mark Whitfield, who will preach on the text for the day at the holy communion service on Friday, 2 October.

Saturday



Living

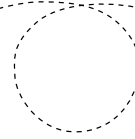
'Windswept Tree'

*Bridgewater Peninsula,
Western Victoria*

*In Christ, weathered by,
yet enduring, the seasons of life*

God's word for today

Ephesians Chapter 5



Focus

You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.
Live as children of light (Ephesians 5:8).

Reflect

1. All life on earth is fuelled by the sun. Even mushrooms need some light, and feed off the compost of leafy plants. Life comes from a source, and life is the fruit of that source. How much do we appreciate this? Or do we imagine that we have life from within ourselves?
2. Life has many dimensions, with human life having most dimensions of all. Alone among creation we are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26). This includes a heart-to-heart relationship with him and with others made in his image. His own being is the source of this dimension of our being as well. But the Fall cast a shadow over this and now the human heart is restless until it rests in him (St Augustine). What restlessness are you experiencing now? What darkness of the heart?

3. Jesus is 'the light of the world' (John 8:12). He has come to shine the light of God's truth and grace into our darkness. Only he is the source of the complete life we long for, and we will flourish and be fruitful to the extent that we receive him/his light. Receive his light into your darkness today.

Pray

Heavenly Father, may all that I do this day find its origin in you, and through you come to completion. Shine the light of your Son, brought by your word, on me and grow the fruit of his life in me; all through him who is the Light of the World. Amen.

These devotional notes have been provided by LCA Victoria (including Tasmania) Bishop Greg Pietsch, who will preach on the text for the day at the holy communion service on Saturday, 3 October 2015.

Sunday

Praying and Sending

'The Road'

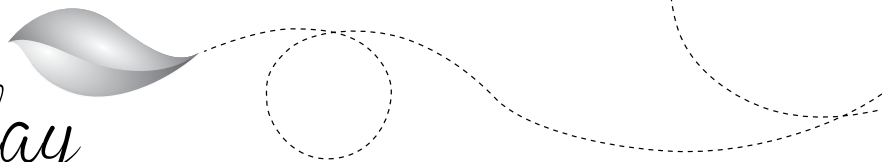
*Gums at the foot of Kaiserstuhl,
Barossa Valley, South Australia*

In Christ, we continue the journey



God's word for today

Ephesians Chapter 6



Focus

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power (Ephesians 6:10).

Reflect

1. Put yourself into the picture of the gum trees. How will you discover what lies around the bend up ahead? What does your experience of Convention tell you about the future of the church? Can you give your joys and sorrows to God? How do you search your heart for the way ahead?
2. Our concluding message from Scripture is 'Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power'. How does this verse speak to you after your experience of our Convention? Do you hear God telling you anything as we walk into the future together, even though we might have expressed different views on some important things?
3. In Ephesians, St Paul writes about the whole armour of God. The familiar Sunday school image is a soldier decked out for battle. All the items listed are also gifts of God: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Spirit. Consider therefore what it means to 'be clothed with Christ', so that we

look and sound like him, so that when others see us, they see him. What is the nature of the strength and power we have when we are clothed in Christ-like humility, peace, self-control, forgiveness and love?

4. Imagine Jesus is walking with you as you negotiate the path through the gum trees. What do you hear him saying about your fears and disappointments? About his strength and power? About his love coming to life?

Pray

Heavenly Father, you hold your church in your strong and loving hands, and it is safe there. As I return home, give me confidence to walk into the future, knowing that you are already there to walk beside me. Clothe me with Christ, so that people might see him when they see me, and know his love has come to life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

These devotional notes have been provided by LCA Bishop John Henderson, who will preach on the text for the day at the closing service of General Convention on Sunday, 4 October 2015.

