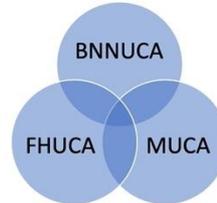




# Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

The Uniting Church in Australia  
Congregations of: Blackburn  
North / Nunawading; Forest Hill;  
and Mountview (Mitcham);  
in a shared ministry together



**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2021**



Parliament of World Religions, Melbourne, 2009

## **Acknowledgment of Country:**

We acknowledge the first peoples on the land we now live. We acknowledge that before what we now call Australia, there were many nations, many languages, many songs sung in this land. We acknowledge that we walk upon a land that was taken, not ceded. It is in this place that we come seeking truth telling, deep listening reconciliation

## **Opening Song**

**YouTube Gurrumul and Paul Kelly – Amazing Grace (9 Sept 2015)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVORrx9jliE>

'Amazing Grace' is taken from Gurrumul's latest release 'The Gospel Album' out now. iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/au/album/the...> JB HiFi: <https://www.jbhifi.com.au/music/brows...>

**Hymn 474 Here in this Place – Helen Jackson (recorded)**

## **Prayer of Confession:**

We don't get reconciliation without first confessing our wrongs. We are sorry as a Church for our role in the actions that removed aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children from family, from country, from generational connection.

We are sorry for the misreading of sacred texts that have been used to dehumanize the first peoples of this land. We are sorry for confusing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the mandate to colonize this country. We are sorry for the systemic marginalization of our First Peoples that leads to disproportionate incarceration, destruction of language and black deaths in custody.

We are sorry when we are not the sustainers of life in the spirit. We are sorry when we ignore the ongoing cries of First Peoples as we destroy the sacred lands in the quest for wealth. We are sorry for ignoring the wisdom, grace and courage of first peoples.

We are sorry.

God of reconciliation, teach us to hear difficult truths, uncomfortable story, and the ongoing desire of an Australia built on ancient and divine wisdom. Be with us in this journey.

## Readings

### 1 Samuel 8:4-20, 11:14-15

<sup>4</sup>Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, <sup>5</sup>and said to him, “You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations.” <sup>6</sup>But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to govern us.” Samuel prayed to the LORD, <sup>7</sup>and the LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. <sup>8</sup>Just as they have done to me,<sup>[a]</sup> from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so also they are doing to you. <sup>9</sup>Now then, listen to their voice; only—you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.” <sup>10</sup>So Samuel reported all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. <sup>11</sup>He said, “These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; <sup>12</sup>and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plough his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. <sup>13</sup>He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. <sup>14</sup>He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. <sup>15</sup>He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. <sup>16</sup>He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle<sup>[b]</sup> and donkeys, and put them to his work. <sup>17</sup>He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. <sup>18</sup>And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the LORD will not answer you in that day.” <sup>19</sup>But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; they said, “No! but we are determined to have a king over us, <sup>20</sup>so that we also may be like other nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles.” <sup>21</sup>When Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. <sup>22</sup>The LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to their voice and set a king over them.” Samuel then said to the people of Israel, “Each of you return home.”

### Samuel 11:14-15

<sup>14</sup>Samuel said to the people, “Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingship.” <sup>15</sup>So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they sacrificed offerings of well-being before the LORD, and there Saul and all the Israelites rejoiced greatly.

### Mark 3:20-35

<sup>20</sup>and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. <sup>21</sup>When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” <sup>22</sup>And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul in him, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.” <sup>23</sup>And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? <sup>24</sup>If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup>And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. <sup>26</sup>And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. <sup>27</sup>But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered. <sup>28</sup>“Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; <sup>29</sup>but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” — <sup>30</sup>for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.” <sup>31</sup>Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. <sup>32</sup>A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and

sisters<sup>[a]</sup> are outside, asking for you.”<sup>33</sup> And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?”<sup>34</sup> And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers!”<sup>35</sup> Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

## Response to the Readings Walking Through trouble (Psalm 138) lead by Richard

**Bruxvoort Colligan** - Please Sing along. (Recorded)

### Sermon

#### Doing Things God’s Way – Rev Tina

*In the name of the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen*

*(1 Samuel 8:4-11, (12-15), 16-20, (11:14-15), Mark 3:20-35)  
Psalm 138, 1 Corinthians 4:13-5:1)*

There is a church sign at Mountview Uniting and over the past eighteen months a member of the church has faithfully been putting up encouraging messages. The lady and her dog Barney go and put up the sign. They were out there doing the sign when we were doing the recording for this week’s Sunday Service, and this is a photo of Barney and the sign.



We hope that people who walk by or work at local businesses or some of the thousands of drivers who queue up on the road beside the sign over the next few months while waiting to get onto Whitehorse Road, take time to read it. I actually went to see the sign after the recording, and they were still there. While we were there, a couple of ladies out for a walk stopped to read the sign and said: Yeah! We’ve got to hang in there!

The sign is based on Psalm 138. Don’t lose hope. Hang in there. Hopefully the message lifts people’s spirit, now that we are in our third (or fourth) lockdown.

Perhaps some good things come out of lockdown.



It's back to caring for our neighbours. One of our neighbours dropped by with a bucket of lemons and mandarins. She's been doing it tough. Her husband died just before lockdown number one and her dog died during lockdown number two. Several of our neighbours have lost partners and parents over the past two years. I'm sure you can share similar stories about your neighbours.



I walked my dog, Moses, the other day in the local park and the community's back. The parks have been mostly deserted since the last lockdown and I missed seeing the community out there, families, elderly, young people, dog walkers, bike riders. Now they're back, and it's crowded and people are greeting one another and stopping for a chat.

This lockdown has been a wakeup call for many people. Thousands have rushed off to get tested or have a vaccine. I actually was one of them and had the first vaccine shot during the week, after checking things out and making a decision. I just dropped by at the Austin Repatriation Hospital, and it took less than an hour. It was very organised with people having tests kept separate from those having a vaccine. We lined up with masks and afterwards waited for fifteen minutes to make sure we were ok. That's me having the vaccine.



It's getting serious. I hope you've had the vaccine.

So, how do this week's readings speak into our lives?

1 Samuel is about mob mentality. The people are afraid and come to Samuel saying they want to do things their way and choose their own king. Samuel isn't pleased because they are rejecting God's ways. Those who have power and wealth want Saul to be their King and fight their wars. Saul is a puppet king, and his story ends in failure and tragedy. The soldiers are afraid to fight because they believe God is not with them. Saul takes things into his own hands by taking on a priestly role. After this it's all downhill for Saul.

Saul's failure makes way for King David, the anointed and promised one, God's choice. Society changes and becomes more centralised, and more people have power over the economy and the political situation. Perhaps he is a victim of history and social changes beyond his control.

The gospel is also about the need for centralised control of society by powerful people. Crowds of people gather around Jesus wanting to be healed and taught by Jesus. Scribes are sent to discredit Jesus, accusing him of being the devil. They end up digging a hole for themselves. Jesus' response makes it clear what he does is about God, the coming of the Kingdom and the work of the Holy Spirit. The scribes cannot respond, without offending God.

I wonder if there are similar things going on within our society at the moment. There seems to be a lot of chaos, fear, blaming, frustration, demonising, confusion and mob mentality in some places.

Jesus experienced being demonised by scribes while the crowd looks on. Jesus' family think he has mental health issues and they have come to restrain him. Perhaps all this was painful for Jesus. Perhaps his family's place in society and the synagogue was being threatened by Jesus' mission. Perhaps the authorities sent them and the scribes.

Any one of us would find it terribly disheartening if our family treated us this way for working or ministering in response to our love for God. It was even tougher in Jesus' time. Kindship and family were central to a person's identity and place in society and the Jewish faith.

People must have been shocked to the core when Jesus chose God above his family. But then everyone knew the *Shema*. *The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.*

Jesus takes things further. He says while looking at those around him: Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother. Jesus' first priority is to God and his family are those who do the same. Where is the good news for us in these readings and the gospel?

Is it a call to get our priorities, right? In the midst of the present chaos and uncertainty, does doing things God's way and putting God first help us? We are called brothers and sisters in Christ. We are part of Jesus' family and are called to remain united in Christ.

Paul in the reading from 1 Corinthians calls a divided community living in a Roman colony where there is chaos and violence, to stay united. To keep on focusing on the faithfulness of God and God's call to be Christ in the world. 'Get your priorities right', he says. Stay focused and do not lose heart.

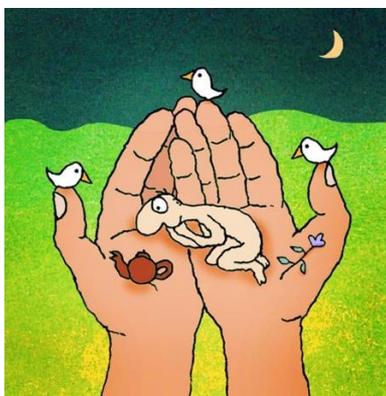
It's important for us to not lose heart.

To stay focused on God as our anchor in the midst of uncertainty.

I once met a man called Fatee. He was in hospital dying of a rare blood cancer and had two weeks to live. I remember his words: *Read the psalms and they will keep you.* I'm sure many of you have a favourite psalm you go to which gives you strength and courage in the midst of chaos and uncertainty. People may have come into your life at a certain time and offered comfort through the psalms or a reading or prayer.

My parents gave me my great great grandfather's bible before they died. His name was Henry William Lyndon from Tarnagulla. He wrote his name in his bible and dated it 1898 and marked psalms 40-44 as his favourites. My brother and sister-in-law are about to have a son and will call him Henry. I'll pass the bible onto him.

The first verse of psalm 40 in Henry's bible says: *I waited patiently on the Lord, and he inclined unto me and heard my cry.* Perhaps this verse comforted him during a challenging time in his life.



Today's psalm 138 offers us a way forward. It teaches us to live God's way. We give thanks to the Lord with our whole heart in all circumstances, for God's steadfast love and faithfulness. We can have confidence in God and know God hears us when we call out in prayer. Trusting in God strengthens our soul. The Lord fulfils his promises to us. These are comforting verses.

This image is by Leunig. When I look at it, I imagine God holding each one of us in the palm of his hand. The little birds remind me of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit. The flower symbolises creation and nature. I love the teapot. Most of us will be relying on our teapots or cup of tea. When everything gets too much, try to get out there in nature or have a cuppa.

The invitation is to try to live simply during chaotic times and stay focused on Jesus. To put God first and trust in the Spirit and remain united in our worship, praise and prayers of God.

Now there is a short video of quietness so you can rest a moment in God's presence. May God be with you and your loved ones during these challenging times.

## Time for Quiet Reflection

### Hymn 125 The God of Abraham Praise – Helen Jackson (recorded)

### Offering Prayer

God of abundance, we, your people of abundance, bring our offerings to you. Be with us as we seek wisdom in our own spending as well as that of the Churches. May all life be an offering to your presence. Amen

## Prayers of the People, by Derek Moore, followed by Candle Prayers

Let us come before God in prayer.

Today we pray for the nations of Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland – countries with long and complex histories. We pray for the wellbeing of their populations during the current pandemic, and for religious tolerance between their peoples.

In the Ecumenical prayer cycle, we pray for St Luke's Catholic Church in Blackburn South and in our Presbytery for the Burwood Heights congregation in Burwood East. Lord, please bless these faith communities and be with them in their worship and restricted outreach.

We uphold to You the staff of the Uniting Age Well Home Help Services. We pray for their wellbeing and for their recipients. May these households manage as well as possible, during the current lockdown. We pray for the medical teams throughout Victoria dealing with the latest COVID surge. May they not become over-fatigued due to high workloads. We ask that the COVID testing results be made available as soon as possible. May the enhanced immunisation rollout be effective.

Lord, please strengthen us all so that we can endure these difficult times.

You are all invited to join me in the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your Name.

Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us in the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen

### Prayer: Dhurga Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, your name is holy.

Father, you come to our land.

We will hear your dream in our land,

The dream they hear in Heaven.

Please give to us our food today.

We will let go other's sins.

When they do them to us.

Father, don't let us go down to the track to sin.

Protect us from the Evil One.

You hold the land, you hold the power.

You hold the light.

Today and tomorrow and tomorrow. Amen.

Adapted from The Dhurga Lord's prayer by The Rev. Sally Apokis

### Benediction

As we move from this moment take note of those to your left and your right, in person, on your screen, in your neighbourhood and in our politics. That is your household.

Our blessing today is taken from 2 Chronicles 7:15-16 "Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time."

## Hymn 650 Brother, Sister let me serve you – Helen Jackson (recorded)

YouTube St Botolph's Church, Colchester

Brother, Sister Let me Serve You

<https://youtu.be/ttW9oQ-yiuU>