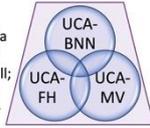




**Whitehorse
Uniting
Cluster**

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



Sunday 27 November 2022 Advent 1

Introit –YouTube - Be Still for the Presence of the Lord – Northern Baptist Association 2011

<https://youtu.be/ZugvUQ4m90U>

Welcome

May the worship be a blessing for you



Acknowledgement

We acknowledge those who were here before us, the first inhabitants of this place
We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today.

Call to Worship

Keep Awake

For the night is far gone and the day is near

Be Ready

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ

Prayers of Adoration (Rev Tina)

Lord Our God, mighty and powerful

We come before you with humble hearts

Knowing all can be achieved through prayer and your Spirit moving within our hearts and amongst us

You are Lord over all creation, the cosmos and universe

Who are we that you care for us?

You, Lord, come amongst us and lead us on. You fill us with hope

The night has far gone, and the day is near

Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Jesus our Lord, Emmanuel, God with us and for us
 We need not be anxious about the future for you are already there
 You are Lord of all times, past, present and future.
 All is timeless for you, Lord. All is mystery for us.
 We need not worry, for you, Lord, teach us how to hope
 Your love for us fills us with trust, peace and love for God, others and ourselves.

The night has far gone, and the day is near
Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Holy Spirit, you help us keep awake and be ready for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ
 You help us remain grounded in God and fill us with the deepest peace
 You inspire us to be a people of hope, the body of Christ
 A non-anxious presence in the world.
 You help us be God's peace in the world and bring hope into the hearts of others

The night has far gone, and the day is near
Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Prayer of Invocation

Holy Spirit
Come upon us and bless us
 Fill our hearts with the fire of God's Spirit and give us hope and courage for the journey
Come Holy Spirit. Come upon us and bless us

Prayer of confession and quiet moment

Lord, we come before you in this moment of silence with all that's on our hearts. We seek your forgiveness and healing. Transform our hearts, Lord. Forgive us.

Quiet moment

Hear then Christ's words of grace to us
"Your sins are forgiven"
THANKS BE TO GOD

Advent Wreath

On this first Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of Hope
May the light of Christ always be with us lighting up our lives
May we always walk in the light of the Lord, as we journey in trust and hope.

We light this candle and call it hope

May this candle remind us of our longing for the Lord to be with us
We wait in hope for the Lord to surprise us and break into our lives
O God, Come and travel with us through advent
Give us courage to spread hope in the world

Hymn 628 In Faith and Hope and Love
 Cantus Choro Al B's Music 2016
<https://youtu.be/Plyz5kg834M>

Readings

Isaiah 2:1-5

2 The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

²In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

⁵O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

Romans 13:11-14

¹¹Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; ¹³let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Matthew 24:36-44

³⁶'But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son,^[a] but only the Father. ³⁷For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man.

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YouTube Hymn 609 May the Mind of Christ my Saviour

Written by Kate Barclay Wilkinson (1925)

Music composed by Cyril Barham-Gould

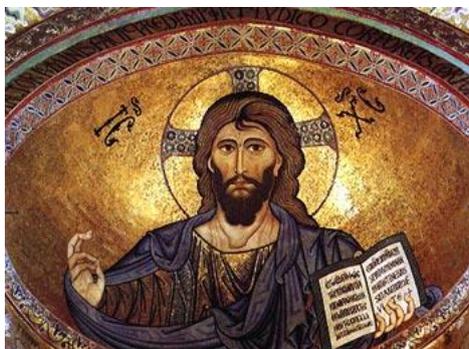
Chet Valley Churches 2020

<https://youtu.be/gE5fOXSymBc>

Sermon – Rev Tina

Come Let us walk in the light of the Lord

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen



The gospel calls us to stay awake and be alert to the coming of Christ into our lives.

So how can we do that?

People seem stressed today. They don't rest enough and are too busy, stressed, and anxious. Perhaps society and the church in the west are anxious. There is a lot happening in the world and church that causes anxiety.

Worries, fears, and anxiety can be caused by what we see happening around us with wars, natural disasters, an aging church, the rise of migrant churches, change due to technology and the suffering caused by inflation.

People tend to find bad news a demotivator and good news a motivator. The good news of the gospel reminds us of the big picture where we are invited to journey through the darkness of worry, anxiety and negative thinking and embrace hope.

Worry cannot change anything and hope changes everything.

The gospel asks us to put on the armour of light. What if every morning when we got up and got dressed, we imagined putting on the armour of light. What if we made the resolution not to allow ourselves to be defeated by anxiety and worry, fears and negative self-talk or anyone else's negative talk.

Today's gospel invites us to hold fast to hope and remain steadfast in our faith and we have certainly done that over the past few years. We have faced many challenges and hope has kept us going. Hope we would make it through the tough times, and we have made it through, together.

Sometimes reality can be our best friend and we need to take an inventory of what is happening around us. We need to take stock and sometimes let go of what is no longer working for us, so we can step forward in faith to discern what will work for us. Once we find it we need to embrace a new way of being, with courage and hope. That is what our journey has been like over the past eighteen months.

Paul speaks of the flesh. Perhaps he invites us to pray and allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit so we can be fruitful. It's easy to feel defeated by life and to give up and say, 'I'm past it' or 'I can't do it.' These are not good voices.

I remember how my grandmother used to say, '*We do the best we can with what we have and get on with it.*' That was her generation's motto.

I remember trekking in the rain for over twelve hours in the mountains of Nepal. It was Mother's Day, and I was far from my family and missing them and my own mother had died a few years previously. I was having a pity party and feeling cold, miserable, and felt like giving up, except that wasn't possible.

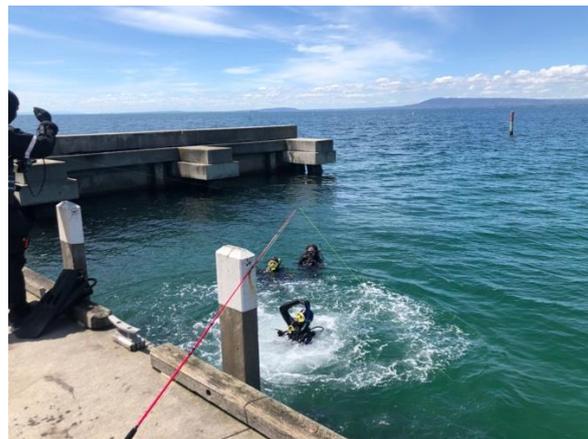
An elderly woman walked up beside me. She was bent over and carrying a large sack of rice on her back which was tied around her, and she was holding a large black umbrella. We greeted one another, saying, 'Namaste.' She waved me over to her and under her umbrella and patted my cheeks and back. She held up her umbrella and sheltered me from the rain with it and we walked on together through the heavy rain. She was my mother that day. All my sad and negative thoughts disappeared. It was like my heart filled with sunshine. When the rain stopped and the sun came out I thanked her. I didn't want her to be slowed down by me. She was carrying a heavy load. She went on ahead, then turned, smiled, and waved and I smiled and waved back.

Now I'm not recommending carrying a heavy sack of rice on your back. What happened was an act of kindness and compassion which blessed both of us. It really doesn't matter what we do. Jesus said even a glass of water will do. Her love cured me. Our love cures others and ourselves.

There is a picture taken by the James Web space Telescope (NASA) of the place where stars are born and there are pictures of the pillars of creation. You can find them on Google. If we look at the big picture where Jesus is the cosmic Christ and Lord of over all of creation, we can come to know that love is the most powerful force in the world. Love defeats the darkness. Jesus' love defeated the darkness when he died on the cross for us. Jesus calls us to embrace love and love others as he loved us.

Today's gospel invites us to come and walk in the light of the Lord and put on the Lord Jesus Christ. His armour of light defeats the darkness of fear, worry about the future, self-doubt and giving up. His light and love are the cure, and it defeats negative thoughts and makes it possible for us to hope and that hope is like a light in the darkness.

I was watching people learning scuba diving a few weeks ago. They had to jump off the pier into the water with full gear. Some were bold, some waited, and one person held back and was the last one to jump.



It took a step of faith for each of the people and after they jumped and landed in the water, they were so happy.

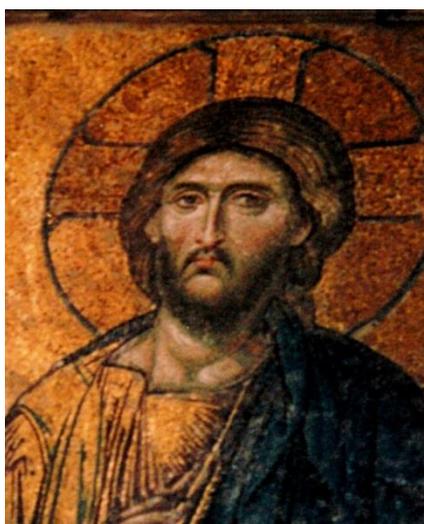
I heard it's important to do something new every day. I'm not recommending jumping into the water off a pier wearing full scuba gear. It's not something I'd like to do. But I do know our brains like it when we do something new. They grow new cells. I've decided my new thing is having a go at maths. I'm taking it one step at a time. That's all that's required. From time to time, I draw a foot in my diary to celebrate when I understand what I'm doing.

Find your new passion and have a go at it. It's important to have a go and keep on taking steps. We keep on learning new things until the day we die. Maybe you can try drawing a foot in your diary, or on your calendar every time you take a step of faith and try something new.

I've been watching the falcons on Facebook They nest up on the top of a tall building in Collins Street and a webcam records their mother laying eggs, them hatching, the babies being fed by both parents, and growing bigger and then flapping their wings and flying for the first time. There were four this year. Sadly, one flew into a building and didn't make it. But none of them would have made it if they didn't take a step of faith and fly off the ledge.

It's never too late. God has a plan for all of us, wherever we are on the journey. All of us can take a step of faith, no matter where we are on the journey.

Our willingness to hope and put on Christ's armour of light and love keeps us going on this amazing journey.



The Lord be with you

Quiet moment

Hymn 272 Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

Sung by Fernando Ortega

Words by Charles Wesley

Music Rowland H Prichard

(Scott Bacher 2016)

<https://youtu.be/OdmO8UPIWoo>

Offering prayer

(about offering up ourselves and giving thanks to God for all we have)

Lord and giver of every good thing we bring to you our lives and gifts for your kingdom all for transformation through your grace and love made known in Jesus Christ our Saviour, amen

Prayers of the People – Trevor de Run

Merciful God, we pray for your world and in particular today, for the Southeast Asian countries of Brunei, Malaysia, and Singapore.

The country of Brunei is governed by the constitution and the national tradition of the Malay Islamic Monarchy. Islam is the main religion of Brunei, practiced by 79% of the population. Although religious freedom is protected under the Bruneian constitution, Sharia Law, a strict Islamic penal code based on the Quran, is currently in place in Brunei. In May 2019, the Brunei government extended its existing moratorium on LGBT rights with the death penalty to the Sharia criminal code, that made acts of homosexuality punishable with death by stoning. Public celebration of Christmas was made illegal in the country since 2014.

Malaysia is a federation of 13 states and three federal territories. The 13 states are based on historical Malay kingdoms, and 9 of the 11 Peninsular states, known as the Malay states, retain their royal families. The King is elected by and from the nine rulers to serve a five-year term. 70% of the population are considered bumiputra, with Malays being the largest group of bumiputra, are defined in the constitution as Muslims, who practise Malay customs and culture. 22% of the population are Malaysian Chinese, 7% are Malaysian Indian and the balance 1% of the population are termed as Others. Islam is the dominant religion in Malaysia and is the country's official religion, is practiced by 64% of the population, 19% practise Buddhism, Christianity is practised by 9% of its population, Hinduism 6% and the balance 2% who practice traditional Chinese religions or declared no religion. The country recently held its 15th general election on 19th November, which resulted in a hung parliament. As no 'coalition' by the various political parties could be formed to govern the country, the King has called for a 'unity government' to be formed by the political parties with the most seats, which is yet to be resolved.

Singapore, officially the Republic of Singapore, is a sovereign island country in maritime Southeast Asia. Singapore has a highly developed market economy, based historically on extended entrepot trade. It has the world's eleventh largest foreign reserves. Religion in Singapore is characterised by a wide variety of religious beliefs and practices due to its diverse ethnic mix of peoples originating from various countries. Religion in Singapore encompasses Buddhism (33%), Christianity (19%), Islam (14%), Taoism (10%) and Hinduism (5%).

In our world, we pray for the people of Indonesia who have been affected by the 5.6 magnitude earthquake on the island of Java on Monday, which has killed at least 268 people, but is likely to be higher with several remote areas still unreachable. We remember too, the people of Ukraine and pray that the attempt by Russia to occupy their country for the past ten months, will cease with the complete withdrawal from the remaining areas of Ukraine that have been occupied by the Russian troops.

Heavenly Father, for the presbytery, we pray for the Whitehorse Uniting Cluster made up of the congregations of Blackburn North/Nunawading, Forest Hill and Mountview, Uniting Church. Give guidance for the congregations of our church who today will be nominating its representatives for the Council Membership to the new single Church Council for Whitehorse Uniting. Bless the Ministers Rev. Tina Lyndon, Rev. Peter Cannon, as they provide the ministry for the congregations of the Whitehorse Uniting Cluster.

We offer our prayers for the staff and students of Billanook College, an independent co-ed school with an early learning program through to Year 12 in Mooroolbark, operated in association with the Uniting Church in Australia.

Keep us safe during the coming week and be with us in all we do. Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray...

The Lord's Prayer

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.

YouTube Hymn 687 God Gives Us a Future – tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64lXkcwZ06M&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLsLD2rC&index=16>

Dismissal

Go forth into the world in peace
 Be of good courage
 Hold fast to that which is good
 Render no one evil for evil
 Strengthen the faint-hearted
 Support the weak
 Help the afflicted
 Honour all people
 Love and serve the Lord
 Rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit
 Amen

Blessing

We go in Peace
 in the love of God
 in the Power of the Spirit
 May the Lord Bless and Guard us
 May the Lord make His face shine upon us and be gracious unto us
 As we bring Christ's love and peace to the world.
 Amen

Hymn 779 May the Feet of God

Robin and Dorothy Mann 2015

<https://youtu.be/WfOFIWxGaP8>

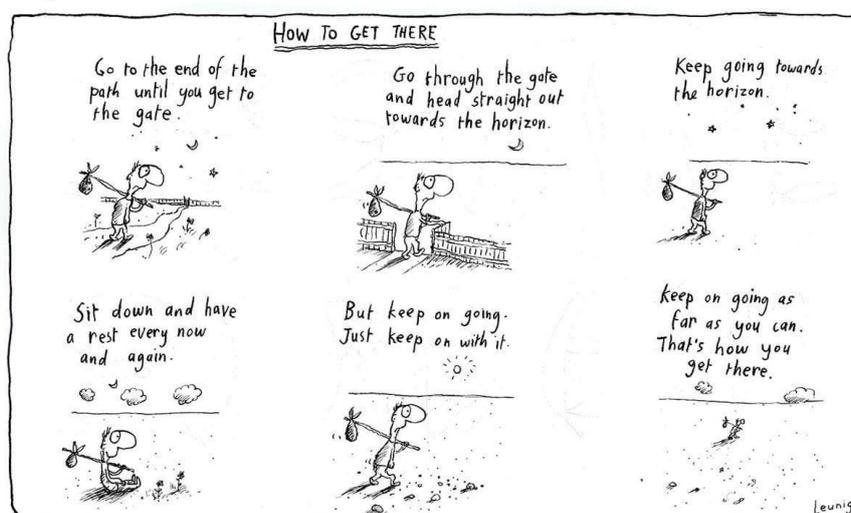
Pastoral Care tips for Advent – Rev Tina

Scripture says: **Take heart.**

Society and churches may have something in common. Both are said to be systems. A system has been defined to be an arrangement of people or things that are related and committed to form a unity or whole. Cells, ecosystems, societies, and churches can be systems, where patterns and relationships are formed. I'm reading a book called:

'How your Church Family works, Understanding Congregations as emotional systems' by Peter L. Steinke and he describes how a church becomes a system.

Systems like stability and change can create anxiety. Yet we live with change. It's a reality of life. We also live within a society and church that experiences anxiety about current events and the future.



Leunig – used with permission

So how can we maintain a calm presence within anxious times? Each of us is a distinct individual yet we belong to a family, church, community, and many other groups. When one of us suffers the whole church family suffers.

Anxiety can make us become more reactive rather than proactive. Perhaps at times we may get caught up in feelings of fear and find it hard to think clearly. It's different when we come from a centred place of prayerful discernment, calm, love, peace, and hope.

People tend to be motivated by good news and discouraged by bad news. I watched this YouTube, and it offered some insights into what motivates people. It's general.

How to motivate yourself to change your behaviour | Tali Sharot | TEDxCambridge
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xp0O2vi8DX4>

We have entered a new church year at the same time we have become a new church. This is good news. It is the spirit at work amongst us. We need to give thanks to God and to all who have helped us on this journey.

It has been a journey where we have experienced so much good will. A journey where we have got to know more about one another.

Our community is growing in many ways, with increased hope, joy, faith, and love amongst us. As we journey into the future may God's Spirit inspire us to become peacemakers and a quiet calm presence in an anxious world. May we become a refuge offering peace and love to people within our community.