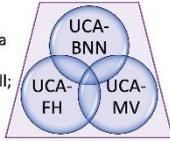




# Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



## Service of worship

# Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the First Nations People, the Traditional Owners of this land and their many unique cultures and languages. We respect the knowledge and wisdom of Elders past and present. They have never ceded their sovereignty and we commit to walking with them in their quest for truth, justice and treaties.

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We come from many places and situations.

***Our lives differ but we have all received the good news of hope and joy.***

It is a news that grace is available to us

***And that God's love embraces us.***

Hear again the good news!

Christ is risen!

***He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!***

**PRAYER OF PRAISE** (including a selection from Psalm 30 by Jeff Shrowder Material may be reproduced for use in worship if acknowledged. © Jeff Shrowder <http://thebillabong.info> Used with permission)

God of life, through all the ups and downs we face, you show us in the good news of Easter that life and renewal has always been your intention. In the midst of our joys and sorrows, you are there with us, inviting us to participate in your life-giving path. As the ancient songwriter wrote (in Psalm 30):

O Lord, a fractured relationship with you is like a death;

***Yet your one desire is life – community with you.***

With darkness weeping remains,

***But joy comes with the hint of morning light.***

**HYMN: TIS 106** (tune: 106(i) Nun Danket Alle Gott)

Now thank we all our God

### A PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

#### ***YOU BREAK IN***

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You break in, O God,  
on the road  
you break in, O God,  
exactly the way we don't believe  
you break in, O God,  
and change everything

You break in, O God  
with a call  
you break in, O God  
with an invitation  
you break in, O God  
with the truth

You break in, O God  
with a new realm  
You break in, O God  
with a new world  
You break in, O God  
with your intent for the future

God, break in again  
and call us to be your workers  
God, break in again  
and use the gifts we are to build your realm  
God, break in again  
and change our world once more.

## READING: JOHN 21: 1 – 19

21 Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 3 “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

4 Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

5 He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered.

6 He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. 7 Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. 8 The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. 9 When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

10 Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” 11 So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

16 Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

17 The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. 18 Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” 19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.

Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version © NIV® Copyright © 1973 1978 1984 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

## Watch a music video of Bono from U2 singing “Grace”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-eCttFx2dg>

This is a beautiful reflection on the difference grace makes and the challenge it is in the way we live. Use the link to view the video.

## SERMON (by Rev Pete Rivett)

We know that this account of resurrection is a late addition to the Gospel. It is an epilogue that is likely to have been written from a context of a community seeking to understand or affirm something within their community. The writer of John cleverly allowed for additional stories in chapter 20 when he said there are many things that Jesus did

that are not contained in the text. It is likely that this experience of Jesus had circulated for generations before it came to be included in the gospel.

But like everything in the scriptures, we do not have to take it literally, but we do have to take it seriously.

It is no surprise that in following our Resurrection/New Creation motif we find ourselves back at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and community building. We see once again the miracle of abundant harvest with fishing. We witness the feeding miracles in the distribution of bread and fish. We see all these acts of Jesus as statements that Jesus is still Jesus, doing Jesus things beyond death.

By the way, the 153 fish is a reference to all the known fish at the time. It is a symbol that this fishing captures the universe, all known fish. This is a mission beyond Galilee and into the whole world.

Peter is a problem for Christians. We want to get stuck into him because he denied Jesus 3 times at the time of execution. Traditionally we claim that we do not want to be like Peter, we will never deny Jesus. However, Peter, throughout the gospel tries to save Jesus from his inevitable confrontation with the religious elites and the empire power of Rome.

Peter is constantly trying to save Jesus from the cross. When Jesus announces, he is going to Jerusalem to die, Peter tells him there is a way other than death, Jesus responds by calling him a Satan, a trickster.

After the arrest of Jesus, when all the other disciples flee, Peter goes and stands in full view of the authorities and denies that he knows Jesus. Yes, Peter was in the garden, but lies as he claims Jesus was not there. He is trying to convince the authorities that they have the wrong person. He is trying to save Jesus from execution, again.

Now we find Peter responding to the risen Jesus with passion and joy. But he does a strange thing - he was naked in the boat, but he puts his clothes on then leaps in the water and swims to shore to see Jesus.

Is this a reference to the new creation of resurrection with echoes of Adam and Eve? When Adam and Eve realise their sin of eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, they dress themselves in leaves to hide their shame before God. Is Peter getting dressed an echo of the same relationship?

But there is something new happening in this Story. In the Genesis story Adam and Eve were removed from closeness to God because they took no responsibility for their actions. Their shame separates them from God and life within the eternal garden. God banishes them.

Jesus however invites the disciples, particularly Peter, to a meal of fish. Then rather than berating and banishing Peter he charges him with guiding and leading a community. Not just those new to the faith (lambs), but to all people at all stages of faithfulness, even including the existing disciples (sheep).

The prophetic words of Jesus at the end of the reading, referring to Peter being led as he ages to places he does not want to go is likely a prophetic image of his martyrdom, belief is that he was crucified in Rome, but also, given Peter's attempts to turn Jesus away from his destiny in Jerusalem, it is likely a reference that as he matures into his leadership he will be led to his own Jerusalem experience, his own sacrifice for the call of God.

So how might we read this reading today?

The mainstream Church has worked to save Jesus, we have domesticated his wildness and sanitised his crucifixion. We have made it a consumer product that requires very little investment for the great return of eternal life. We, like Peter, have worked hard to save Jesus from defilement. We have worked hard to translate his difficult teachings into spiritual laws or purity doctrine so we can avoid the difficult and costly work of following Jesus. We have been Peter. But this resurrected Christ charges us with growing communities. We have lambs, children, those who are still maturing into faith who must be nourished. We have sheep in our midst, adults, those who have matured and are maturing who still need nourishment and continual new life, new ways of understanding. We tend to think discipleship is only for children or the youth, forgetting that our journey of discipleship requires us to be led to places that we do not want to go. That as we mature into this Christ living, we will find ourselves being guided towards many ways of sacrificial giving of ourselves in our Jerusalem.

The risen Christ, the universal Christ who surprises us with nourishment, who guides us to grasp the whole of the world, calls us into uncomfortable maturity.

It is a beautiful motif that we end the reading with the renewed call to Peter, The risen Jesus invites Peter, once again - "Follow me."

[HYMN: TIS 151](#)     The love of God is greater far

[PRAYERS FOR OTHERS](#) - John Gerrard

Loving and caring God, we bring to you our prayers for others. All people of the world need your care and guidance Lord, but today we particularly bring before you our prayers for the people of Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

***We give thanks for:***

- the magnificent expanse of mountains, grasslands and deserts in these Central Asian countries
- the rich natural resources
- the incredible ethnic diversity
- cultural traditions and practices that have been preserved for centuries amid the challenges of modernization
- Christians who, although they are a tiny minority, have courage to witness to the gospel and find the strength to live according to God's word
- those who in spite of danger dedicate their lives to serving others.

***We pray for:***

- the people in these lands who suffer from poverty and repressive rule
- an end to clashes related to tribalism, traditionalism, and modernisation
- the land, air and water that have been damaged by human abuse
- good relations between Muslims and Christians
- an end to oppression and violence.

In our **ecumenical** prayer cycle we remember today your people worshipping and serving at St Alfred's Anglican, Blackburn North. St Alfred's runs regular face to face services and also a range of internet based information and discussion programs online. Be with their congregation and leadership team as they reach out into the community, we pray. May they know your presence and guidance as they serve you.

Within our own **Presbytery** we pray today for Burwood and Burwood heights congregations. We thank you, O God, for the difference these congregations are making in their communities and ask that you will bless their efforts. In their worship may they know your presence and be strengthened through that knowledge.

We remember in prayer, too, the Uniting Kildonan community services arm of the Uniting Church. Bless the 7000 workers who, through Kildonan, care for families, homeless people, those battling drug addiction and others in need.

Within our cluster of congregations we seek your blessing on our people, on our worship and our work together as we strive towards a stronger, more diverse and more efficient cluster arrangement. Make us innovative and open to change, we pray, even if this means moving beyond our comfort zones.

Be with our cluster ministry team as they work amongst us bringing fresh insights from your word and inspiration to live out your way every day.

We pray especially today for those we name silently in our hearts, those for whom we want God's particular blessing.

We bring these prayers in our Saviour's name, praying the words that he taught us:

**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 forever. Amen.

## PRAYER OF DEDICATION OF THE OFFERINGS

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Risen One,

As the disciples brought their abundance so we bring our gifts and our lives.

As you fed your disciples with bread and fish enable us by our giving and living to sustain and encourage others in body and spirit. Amen

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Men from around the cluster are welcome to come together over lunch at the Mitcham Hotel at 12:30pm on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> May. For further details, contact Jeff Randles (0409 593 738) or John Baker (0477 544 695). Feel free to bring a friend.

HYMN: TIS 477      Jesus calls us

## BLESSING

(inspired by John 21: 15-19) © B D Prewer, used by permission, [www.BrucePrewer.com](http://www.BrucePrewer.com)

Christ asks if we love him  
If we say yes, he says; "Then care for one another."  
This is our opportunity to make a difference, to live lovingly  
on the frontiers of his bright new world.

***We cannot promise to do it perfectly, but we can give it a go,  
relying on his abundant wisdom to take our small love,  
and fit it into a larger pattern of good for all creation.***

May God bless the world in which you move,  
and bless your home and bless your friends.  
May God bless the eyes with which you see,  
and bless the ears with which you listen.  
May God bless the way you use your hands,  
bless the way you employ your tongues. *(From a Celtic prayer)*

As a bonus from the living God in Christ Jesus,  
grace, mercy and peace will be yours, today and always.

**Amen!**

HYMN: TIS 779      May the Feet of God walk with you