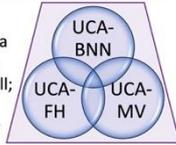




Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



Ascension Sunday 22 May 2022



Hymn 768 Praise God from whom all Blessings Flow

2012 Heidi Nadine (md1801)

<https://youtu.be/RBz7vuJ2b1A>

Welcome

May the Worship Bless 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

May Jesus Christ open our minds

May we understand scripture

May the eyes of our heart be enlightened

May we know the hope to which Jesus Christ has called us

May Christ be our light

As we follow him into the future

Hymn 619 Have Faith in God

Maranatha Praise Band with Lyrics 2012 (Whispers of my father)

<https://youtu.be/NTIO6AosWZo>

Prayer for Enlightenment – Rev Tina

Open our eyes Lord - May we experience your grace
Open the eyes of our hearts - May we be enlightened

Lord, may we come to know what you are inviting us into
May we come to know you as the Cosmic Christ

Lord over all the universe - May we come to know you Lord
 May we participate in your redemption of the world.

Lord, may we embrace “hope” in your divine plan for all of creation.

May we be blessed in knowing of the divine power that raised you from death.
 For you Lord have ascended into heaven - You have told us to wait on the Spirit
 You have promised to empower us for your ministry and mission in the world.

You Lord call us to walk in trust
 Step by step as we follow you
 on unknown pathways into the future
 For you are Lord over all the church
 For you are Lord over the universe
 You are the light of our lives.
 Amen

Music to listen to: Christ be our Light Bernadette Farrell. 2013. (Mark G)

<https://youtu.be/Zlq3bhdgQoc>

Readings

Ephesians 1:15-23

⁵ I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love^[a] towards all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸ so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰ God^[b] put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²² And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. NRSV National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Luke 24:44-53

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah^[a] is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses^[b] of these things. ⁴⁹ And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.’ ⁵⁰ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.^[c] ⁵² And they worshipped him, and^[d] returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³ and they were continually in the temple blessing God.^[e]

Young at Heart – Journeying through the Storms of Life during change

What sustains you and gives you courage, as you follow Jesus
 on the journey through unknown places, to God’s future for you?



Music to listen to: Don't be Afraid – John Bell, Iona, Scotland

2017 Chorus Pro Musica

<https://youtu.be/LXCMv5IF-TM>

Sermon – Connections - Rev Tina

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



Many years ago, I set off on a pilgrimage through Israel and had the opportunity to walk through an ancient tunnel built by King Hezekiah in 701 BCE. The tunnel began at a spring down the bottom of stairs outside the walls of Old Jerusalem and went under the walls all the way to the centre of the city, to the pool of Siloam: the pool where pilgrims gathered to ritually wash themselves before going to the Temple. It was also the pool where Jesus healed the blind man.

The tunnel was carved out of solid rock and must have taken years. The passages are about 6ft high and 3ft wide. I was with a group of people and Peter, a Jesuit and I borrowed torches from two Palestinian youths, for a price, and set off. The tunnel was pitch black and filled with water up to our waists in places and twisted and turned left and right and left again. It took more than an hour to walk through it and at times I was afraid. I didn't know what to expect. We were walking into the unknown. I hoped God would get us to the end of the tunnel and our torches wouldn't run out. When we finally arrived at the pool of Siloam, the youths were waiting for us and asked for more money when we returned their torches. The pool had columns and the water was quite green. We walked up steep steps to the road above us, where many walls had black marks on them, perhaps from explosions or bombs.

I look back to this memory from time to time and ponder whenever I begin a new journey. We often set off on new journeys, into the unknown, with hope, where we do our best to overcome our fears and follow Jesus. New Journeys where we step out in faith and walk with trust.

We believe and hope God has a divine plan and purpose for our lives, our loved one's lives and Christ's church, our community of faith. A purpose greater than us and bigger than our lives.

There are moments when we are afraid of the unknown and change as we journey. There are moments when our eyes are opened during prayer or the eyes of our hearts are opened when we listen to the gospel. Moments when we have insights and understand God's greater purposes. Moments when we feel empowered by the Spirit. On these journeys the light of Christ overcomes the darkness and our fears. We come to journey confidently and put our trust in God. We come to know God is with us, every step of the way.



Leunig – Used with permission

In today's gospel Jesus opens the eyes of our hearts and reveals profound connections. He reveals how scripture and God's promises have been or will be fulfilled in him as a suffering Messiah who is raised by God. His ascension brings about God's promise to send the Holy Spirit upon us. He reveals the connection between his going and the coming of the Spirit of God. We must have the Ascension. It heralds the first Pentecost, where Jesus' disciples are empowered for continuing Jesus' mission in the world. Jesus departs and they must wait, until they receive the Spirit.

It may have been difficult for the disciples to understand Jesus as divine and as suffering. It may have raised questions such as: How can God suffer? How can God be vulnerable? Yet Jesus stood in solidarity with us, being born, baptised, eating and drinking and accepting all peoples, suffering and in pain and feeling abandoned. Jurgen Moltmann in his book *The Crucified Christ* spoke of God suffering on the cross with Jesus. Perhaps God held Jesus in his arms as he died.



Faith

The gospel speaks of repentance, a re-alignment of our lives, dispositions, and behaviour towards God's purposes. When we experience re-alignment, we may feel chaos within as we are transformed and prepared to embrace God's purposes and begin a new journey. God is constantly changing and transforming us. Sometimes it's so gradual and gentle we are unaware of the changes until we look back over our life and come to know of them. Other times transformation comes upon us suddenly through loss or an encounter with God and we may find the journey takes on a life of its own where we are taken to places we never dreamed we would go and we come to know wonder, grace and of the magnificence of God, where through God the impossible becomes possible. All that's required of us,

is to do as the hymn says: Trust and obey. As we journey, we are transformed until we are fully alive in Christ and discover the deep peace of fulfillment within our soul.



Peace within

What is fulfillment? Perhaps the connection between service as witnesses of Christ and reception of the Holy Spirit, both at Pentecost and during ongoing prayer.

What is our response to the gospel?

What is our response to Jesus' call to His church, and to us?

Jesus' disciples responded in four ways; they worshipped him, recognising God in him; they blessed God and gave thanks to God, recognising God's divine intervention; they returned to Jerusalem and remained in the Temple, remembering Jesus' words, and obeying them faithfully and lastly, they felt great joy at knowing of God's disclosure of divine redemption in their lives and community.

Then they waited faithfully on God and to receive the Spirit of God, as we must wait on God and the Spirit to lead us through this time.

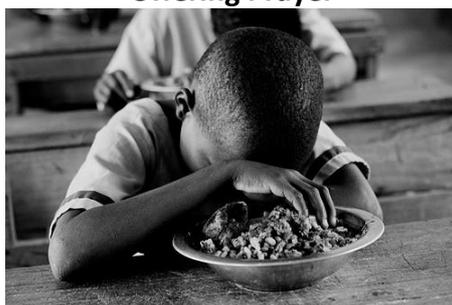
The Lord be with you

YouTube – Jesu' lover of my soul

Saint Michael's singers

<https://youtu.be/lWi8wJedi0>

Offering Prayer



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 Savior, amen

Prayers of the People – Tim Joyce

Almighty God, enlarge our hearts that they may be big enough to receive the greatness of your love. Stretch our hearts that they may take into them all those around the world who, with us, believe in Jesus Christ. Stretch them that they may take into them all those who are not lovely in our eyes, and whose hands we do not want to touch; through Jesus Christ, our saviour.

(Variation on an African prayer)

Lord, We pray for Your Church, for the Whitehorse cluster of churches. We thank you for the ministries of those who lead us. We pray that you will grant them energy, wisdom and clarity.

We pray also Lord for other churches and agencies. As part of the ecumenical prayer cycle we pray for Nunawading and Waverley Lutheran Church and we pray for the Uniting Church congregation of Carlton (Church of All Nations). We pray for their worship communities, their members their participants, their special ministries and their outreach programs. We pray for LifeAssist (Uniting) – for the aged care and disability services they provide. Bless those who provide these services. May their work be rewarding and appropriately rewarded. And we pray for those who receive their care.

Bless this ministry of the Uniting Church.

Loving God - We pray for the world. We pray this morning for the Indian Ocean Islands of Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles.

We **pray** for:

- the fragile environment and the unique plants, animals and lands, that they will be protected, especially as the sea rises
- tourism and other economic developments, that they will not threaten, but enhance life for all the people in these countries
- churches, that they will grow through evangelistic efforts and in their work with those of other faiths
- Christians to be bolder in their public witness for justice and reconciliation, especially in times of political turmoil.

Merciful Lord - We pray for the poor, neglected and marginalised. For indigenous people – that opportunities for justice, reconciliation and mutual understanding and respect will not be lost. For displaced people – that they will be welcomed as they flee unimaginable circumstances. For victims of war. For perpetrators of war and for the international community as they struggle with how to respond. Lord - We pray for peace.

For people of colour who have suffered injustice at the hands of the law, who do not share equally in the wealth of their society and who are discriminated against. We pray for our governments - local, state and federal. That they will govern for all. That they will govern with compassion. That the most vulnerable will be at the front. That none will be left behind. That they will take seriously the profound responsibility that has been vested in them.

Lord - Enable us to be agents of Your love in the world.

Merciful Lord - We pray for those in special need at this time. For the sick the lonely and the grieving. We pray for those in our own community, family, loved ones and friends who are suffering hardship, loss or ill health. Lord - We entrust them to your care and pray that you will surround them with your love.

We pray all these things through Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray ...

Our Father in heaven hallowed be Your name

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven

Give us today our daily bread and 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

Hymn 687: God gives us a Future – tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64IXkcwZ06M&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=16>



Blessing

We go in Peace
 With the Love of God
 In the Power of the Spirit
 May the Lord Bless and Guard us
 May the Lord make His face shine on us and be gracious unto us
 May the Lord Look kindly on us and give us peace. Amen

Hymn 749: Thuma Mina Somandla

First – Plymouth Church Lincoln Nebraska USA

<https://youtu.be/axbo9Wqri5Y>

Pastoral Care Tips – Rev Tina



Come join us for a walk along the Yarra in Warrandyte after Together at 10 on June 5th (See the Notices)

Music – O the deep, deep, love of Jesus Fernando Ortega and Audrey Assad 2016

<https://youtu.be/1vUhwjydk8A>

Trusting God. *Joan Chittister, The Breath of the Soul, Reflections on Prayer Used with permission*

The Purpose of prayer is the process of falling into God. As the mystics say, we are beginning to learn that God alone is enough. The truth is that none of us really knows where we are going and must never take it for granted that we do. We can plan our lives, but we cannot guarantee them.

Prayer: Lord, give me the trust it takes to go through life confident in your care and your love through all the twists and turns of life. Amen

The church is being transformed. We hear negative comments. People say the church is dying or shrinking or people are no longer coming, or we are out of touch. That's what people say.
 But what does God say?

The invitation is to look deeper!

It's not our fault the church is being reshaped by God. It's part of God's divine plan for the church. We just need to "catch up" with God's plan and trust it and not put our own expectations on God's plan. We need to keep on following Jesus and put our trust in God's faithfulness to us.

Sometimes the journey can be like walking through a dark tunnel. We need to be patient and trust that we will walk out into the light again. There will be twists and turns and darkness and maybe an occasional crisis and chaos, but with perseverance Christ stays beside us and holds the Christ light before us, every step of the way, until things become clear as the day. Until then we wait with hope for the Spirit to empower us and for the eyes of our hearts to be enlightened through prayer and the gospel. God is faithful to us, and we are called to remain faithful to God and walk in God's ways.

Faith is a walk of trust where we follow Christ and live his way. We give thanks for daily blessings and do our best to live in hope, knowing we are being led by the Spirit of God.

The Love of God from Lullaby Hymns for the Weary Soul. Katy Kinard, 2013

<https://youtu.be/cflhn5Vm6Og>