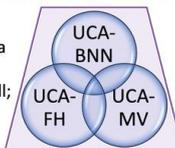




Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



Easter Day Sunday 17th April 2022

Praise God

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
praise God, all creatures here below,
praise God above, you heavenly host,
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

*Thomas Ken
1637-1711 alt.*

Welcome

Blessings on this Easter Day

Acknowledgement

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.



Aunty Joy

Call to Worship

Jesus Christ is Risen!
He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

YouTube Hymn –Christ the Lord is Risen today, Charles Wesley

Islington Baptist church 2010

<https://youtu.be/nzy7jFNUc3w>

Prayers Adoration and Invocation

**Congregation's response: Give thanks to the Lord.
For he is good, and his steadfast love endures forever**

Prayers Adoration

Lord, you raised Jesus from the dead
and transformed the world through Jesus, giving us eternal life, Alleluia

**Give thanks to the Lord.
For he is good, and his steadfast love endures forever**

Jesus through your death and resurrection you defeated darkness, sin, desolation, and death. You fill us with joy, awe, wonder and our hearts burn. You call us to believe in you, so we may find eternal life.

**Give thanks to the Lord.
For he is good, and his steadfast love endures forever**

Holy Spirit, our comforter and guide sent to us by God.
You give us courage to follow Jesus and overcome obstacles.
You inspire us to believe in all God promises us.

**Give thanks to the Lord.
For he is good, and his steadfast love endures forever**

Alleluia, Come Holy Spirit!
Come Holy Spirit!
Come and bless us on this Easter Day

Prayer of Confession

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we come before you in this moment of silence with all we need to confess.
Transform our hearts and surprise us with your grace and forgiveness.
Forgive us and give us grace to forgive.

Silence



Hear then Jesus Christ's words of grace to us
"Your sins are forgiven"
Thanks be to God

**Reading - David Rowe
Luke 24:1-49**

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in, they did not find the

body.^[a] ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵ The women^[b] were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men^[c] said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.^[d] ⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” ⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.^[e]

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[f] from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad.^[g] ¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” ¹⁹ He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth,^[h] who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.^[i] Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him.” ²⁵ Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah^[j] should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening, and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us^[k] while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

³⁶ While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”^[l] ³⁷ They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.^[m] ⁴¹ While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate in their presence.

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^[n] 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^[o] 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.”

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YouTube Hymn - Yours be the Glory – Edmond Louis Budry
 Thine be the Glory 2017 Hymn Channel St Mary's Church Portsea
<https://youtu.be/GaoV5w2Qfaq>

Young at Heart - Butterflies and Easter Eggs

Where are the butterflies in your life?
 Can you leave the empty tomb behind?
 What is life giving for you?



YouTube Hymn– I know that my Redeemer lives
 2020 - 7-year-old Claire Crosby – The Crosbys
<https://youtu.be/pJeoTfxa-3k>

Sermon – He is Risen! Rev Tina



Photo from Revised Common Lectionary

It is the first day and the women are the first witnesses, who hear and see God's messengers. They feel bewildered, for they have not come to know in their hearts Jesus has risen. Faith is a journey and they had come to prepare Jesus' body for burial. The angels rebuke them, saying: *Why do you look for the living amongst the dead? He is not here but has risen.*

Do not look for the living amongst the dead, the tombs of the dead. You will not find Jesus amongst the dead for he is living. God is God of the living. The women feel perplexed. The antidote is remembrance. To remember Jesus' words about suffering, dying, and rising.

What do you remember after a lifetime of listening to Jesus' words in scripture? Remembrance is central to our faith, where over time the words of God become etched into our hearts and shape our soul.

Women's words were not believed, and they were not considered credible witnesses. Every word women spoke, fell on death ears. The women may have known the truth in their hearts but in their culture, they were marginalised.

They had no voice. Their words did not count. Ponder on whose words don't count in our society. Whose voices do not count. Whose voices are not heard. Remember God came to the voiceless and chose them as the first witnesses to the raising of Jesus from the dead. What will happen when Jesus finally returns? Will he seek out the voiceless, humble, and marginalised again?

Peter, human and frail, is the only one to believe the women's account about the empty tomb. His heart is moved by their account, and he goes to the tomb, to find out for himself and sees it is empty and he leaves feeling amazed. Something must have shifted in his heart. Because of his openness and willingness to listen and desire to seek God, not long after entering the empty tomb, Peter becomes the first witness who sees the risen Jesus.

Later that day, Jesus joins two of his disciples who are walking on the road to Emmaus. They are grieving the loss of Jesus. They do not recognise Jesus. Their eyes are not opened. Jesus listens to their story and then they listen to him as he interprets scripture about himself. Truth and revelation are slowly being revealed, but their minds seem to be closed.

They, like most disciples, cannot accept a suffering Messiah and Jesus helps them slowly understand suffering is part of the journey of faith and his suffering was part of God's plan. Their hopes once dashed are raised again. Their faith in Jesus is no longer in ashes.

Yet, their eyes remain closed. Closed eyes, symbolising a lack of comprehension, faith and understanding. We all have moments like this on the journey.

The irony of this situation is Jesus is alive and walking beside his disciples. This brings back memories of that famous poem, footsteps.

It seems a divine comedy when Jesus says: What things? And the disciples say: Don't you know? Then they tell him about what they know of his death. Then Jesus tells them what he knows of his suffering, death and rising on the third day. He knows. They do not. Once again things are reversed.

As they journey together there is an elephant in the room. The empty tomb. Where is Jesus? It's a puzzle. A troubling question.

They mention the women's story but do not believe them. They focus on the past and on his death and not on the future. There is no future without Jesus. They are slow of heart. Heart in this context is about their inner commitment to God, the dispositions and attitudes that guide their hearts. They fail to embrace God's ways.

But we are invited to remember the words of the messengers at the tomb who told the women not to look for the living amongst the dead. Talk about the church dying is about loss and fear. We will not find Jesus there. He is ahead of us, building up His church, his people, planting seeds in their hearts, creating a new world of faith and new life. He is among the faithful who have belonged to churches all their life and he is among the new churches being birthed in this nation. He is alive and living and dwells with promise, hope and new life and within the eternal pattern of life that goes on and on. He is not back in the past. He is no longer on the cross.

For some reason the disciples want to stay with Jesus. Perhaps they need to cling to him and something in them wants him to stay. When they reach Emmaus, they urge him to stay with them. Then over a simple meal their eyes are opened in the breaking of the bread, that symbolises the breaking of his body. They finally recognise him.

At that moment, Jesus disappears.

How often do we come to know one another over a meal? How often do we come to know Jesus during communion when we receive the bread and the wine? Our intimate moments with one another and God. What moment stands out for you from this year's Lenten and Easter journey? There were many moments for me, and these are a few, sharing over meals with the Lenten Study, being part of Maundy Thursday as we shared scripture amongst candles and music and the choir singing, a choir that began as a small group of people wanting to sing, when we faced lockdowns, and now has grown and has leaders who are musicians and teachers, and they sang for us on Good Friday. What has inspired you and made your heart burn this, Easter?

Yet, revelation is so fleeting. We have these glimpses of the divine that sustain us forever on the journey of life. It was like this for the disciples. It is like this for us.

After Jesus disappeared the disciples said to each other: Did not our hearts burn? Their hearts burned as Jesus was talking to them on the road and interpreting scripture to them, scripture that obviously penetrated to the marrow of their bones.

Now the disciples rushed all the way back to Jerusalem to share about their encounter with Jesus and this divine breakthrough into their lives, only to discover that Peter has also had an encounter with the risen Jesus, and his words and theirs are believed by the other disciples.

Suddenly Jesus is standing amongst them, and they do not recognise him. They think he's dead and a ghost. They are filled with doubts.

Doubts are part of faith. We all have doubts and those doubts prompt us to test things out and go deeper with our faith. Questions are good for us and invite us to explore our faith and seek answers and our hearts are open when we explore our faith.

The disciples stand before Jesus with their doubts and questions and Jesus responds by saying look closer, what do you see? He may have reclined with them at a table for he asks for food so they can see ghosts don't eat food. Then he reminds them of scripture and interprets it to them, so they come to know in their hearts, how he suffered and died and now has risen.

Then, whether they are fully convinced or not, Jesus commissions his disciples for ministry and asks them to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit to empower them, as he promised.

In the same way we are convinced and commissioned. It is Easter Day and we have heard an account of what happened on that first Easter Day so long ago. What we remember over our lives about Jesus convinces us to continue the journey as his disciples until we come to know Jesus is Risen!

We too are commissioned for ministry, and we too are invited to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus promised, where we will be empowered afresh to minister in Jesus' name.

The Lord be with you

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 Saviour, amen

Prayers of the People – Michael Plumridge

God who created us, knows us and cares deeply for us all. Please hear us as we pray.

In the World Prayer Cycle, we pray this morning for the countries of Belarus, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine. Lord, we particularly bring before you the war in this region. We bring before you, our lamentations. Lord, we lament the loss of life; we lament the loss of infrastructure; the loss of homes and livelihoods. We lament the displacement of more than 10 million people. For those who remain in Ukraine we lament the loss of sanitation and basic amenities, and we pray for those who are now starving as food supplies dwindle and supply chains are interrupted or destroyed. We give thanks for neighbouring countries especially Poland that continue to accept refugees. We give thanks for those who are providing practical and emotional support – grant them strength we pray. Lord, we give thanks for those individuals and organisations who provide honest reporting. Thank you for the truth-tellers. We thank you for the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky for his bravery and his example to the Ukrainian people. We pray for those from whom the truth is concealed – that they may learn what is really going on. Lord, we pray for Moldova and Belarus. We pray for the citizens of these countries in facing the challenges of the current time. We thank you

also for the presence of the Church in the region and we ask that you grant strength to the workers of Hungarian Interchurch Aid.

In the Local Prayer Cycle this morning we pray for the Anglican Church of the Holy Name, Vermont South. We pray for them as they celebrate the crucified, risen Lord.

In our Presbytery we pray for our Uniting Church brothers and sisters at Boronia Road. We ask your blessing on all those who worship there.

We pray for the service recipients and staff of Home Help Services, part of Uniting AgeWell. We pray for safety, ongoing independence and wellbeing for all older Australians.

Lord use us in your work; grant us a deep desire for justice; grant us courage; grant us understanding and help us to have love at the centre of our lives.

We pray this and all our prayers in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

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

Communion and Prayer of Thanksgiving



The Spirit of the Lord be with you
And also with you
Lift up your hearts
We lift them to the Lord
Let us give thanks to the Lord
It is right to give our thanks and Praise

Holy, Holy, Holy God
Our life, our mercy, our might
Heaven and Earth are full of your Glory
Save us, we pray, you beyond all
Blest is the one who comes in your name
Save us we pray, you beyond all

And so we cry, Mercy:
Mercy!
And so we cry, Glory:
Glory!
And so we cry, Blessing!
Blessing!

And so we cry, Come, Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit!

And so the church shouts, Come, Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit!

And so the earth pleads, Come, Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit!

And so we cry, Amen

Amen!

Life-giver, pain-bearer, love maker.

Source of all life that is and shall be

Father and mother of us all

Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!

The way of your justice be followed by all peoples of the world!

Your heavenly will be done

By all created beings!

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom

Sustain our hope and come on earth!

With the bread we need for today, **Feed us**

In the hurts we absorb from one another, **Forgive us**

In times of temptation and test, **Strengthen us**

From trials too great to endure, **Spare us**

From the grip of all that is evil, **Free us**

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever, **Amen**

Christ is the bread of joy

Who shares food with sinners

Christ is the cup of life

Who revives the faint-hearted

Let us receive what we are

Let us become what we receive

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Invitation

This is the table of the Lord

It is an open table where all are welcome

These are the Gifts of God for all the People of God

May we who Share these gifts be found in Christ

And Christ in us

We have the Bread together

The body of Christ keep us in eternal life - **Amen**

We have the grape juice together

The blood of Christ keep us in eternal life - **Amen**

Prayer after Communion

Blessed be God who calls us together

Praise to God who makes us one people

Blessed be God who has forgiven our sin

Praise to God who gives hope and freedom

Blessed be God whose word is proclaimed

Praise to God who is revealed as lover

Blessed be God who alone has called us
Therefore, we offer all that we are and all that we shall become
 Accept, O God, our sacrifice of praise
Amen. Accept our thanks for all that we are.
Our hands were empty and you filled them.

YouTube song – One Bread one body

John Michael Talbot 2015

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNNOQm6WO54>

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

Dismissal

In all things and at all times remember Christ is with you.
 Make your life your worship to the praise and glory of God. Amen

YouTube Hymn Shalom to you now – tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oqiFenPwXy&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=35>



Pastoral Care Tips - Rev Tina

The Journey Within

Easter is a time when we remember God being incarnated into our lives. We are invited to reflect upon our life journey, purpose in life and contribution to the world. It's a time to ask questions such as: What have we done or given that's made the world a better place? What will we leave behind as our legacy? It's also a time when we may engage in self-examination, reassessment, or reflection. We may choose to journey within or strive to make sense of our world and our place in it and ask more questions. Where do we come from? Where are we going? Why are we here? What's our purpose?

For some, Easter brings back memories of personal Good Fridays and times of deep suffering and loss. Some people may feel as if they are on a cross, and feel overwhelmed by feelings of grief and a sense of abandonment by God, while others may feel as if they are in a tomb-like place or cocoon waiting for life to bloom, or for the sudden dawn of new life on Easter morning, when God appears on the horizon, revealing death is not the end, but the beginning.

Prayer is our humble conversation with God. We listen with our hearts and are nourished. During Easter we may bring our questions before God. Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do loved ones suffer? Why me?

We look to Christ who went ahead with his mission and risked all, knowing it would end with his death. His actions revealed complete trust in God and total love for God and for us. Bad things happened to Jesus. Most people say: He chose to die, or it was meant to happen. How else would the resurrection have occurred? But no one chooses a violent death. Jesus struggled. His heart was troubled, and he felt abandoned by God as he died upon the cross. He was human and fragile like us. He suffered, felt pain, grief and faced the darkness of rejection and hatred.

Some say: Where was God when Jesus died on the cross? Jurgen Moltmann, a well-known theologian wrote in his book *The Crucified God*, that God was on the cross, suffering with Jesus. When we face our Good Fridays, God suffers with us. We are not alone or abandoned.

If only we could turn around on our dark tomb-like days, when all seems lost and see the opening of the tomb, and like Lazarus walk out into the sunshine, to discover the resurrected Jesus, standing there with arms outstretched, waiting for us to come to him. The stone was rolled back ages ago, but we didn't realise it – at first. It took our loved ones, a community of brothers and sisters in Christ, to lead us out into the light where our hearts were transformed.

In John's gospel three Greeks come representing the world and ask the apostle Philip: "*Sir we wish to see Jesus.*" Jesus chose that moment as his hour to enter into God's plan to be raised up in glory upon the cross, where he died, then to be raised from the dead, drawing all to him, after defeating all darkness, sin, evil and brokenness in the world.

Let us be raised up too and drawn to Jesus. Let us die to whatever is a barrier to our being raised up. Let us turn away from darkness to the light and come face to face with Jesus. Let us allow others to lead us to him, with love, with kindness and with compassion.