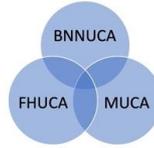




# Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

**Introit – Be Still for the Presence of the Lord** tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-yBLNgQkvY&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLsLD2rC&index=5>

Be still,  
for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here;  
come bow before Him now  
with reverence and fear:  
in Him no sin is found -  
we stand on holy ground.  
Be still,  
for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here.

*Words and music: David J Evans*

## **Welcome**

May the worship be a blessing

## **Acknowledgment**

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.

## **Hymn 398 Come down O Love Divine - Verse 1 sung as the Call to Worship**

Come down, O Love divine,  
seek now this soul of mine,  
and visit it with your own ardour glowing.  
O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear  
and kindle it, your holy flame bestowing.

## **Prayers of Adoration, Invocation and Confession**

Lord our God  
We come before you today giving thanks for your gracious hospitality towards us  
and your love for all your children

**We give you our thanks and praise**

Jesus our Lord  
You are amongst us today  
Inviting us to come and sit at your feet today and listen to your good news

**We give you our thanks and praise**

Holy Spirit  
You fill our hearts with God's love and the good news  
That gives us eternal life and transformation out of which we ground our ministry in service to God  
**We give you our thanks and praise**

Come Holy Spirit, Come  
Open our hearts to the good news today so we may find life and serve God  
**Come Holy Spirit**

Loving God, transform our hearts  
Forgive us if we haven't loved you with all our being and others as ourselves  
Forgive us as we come before you in this moment of silence

### Silence

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

**YouTube Hymn Come as you are, Taizepeople 2010**

<https://youtu.be/16RywnFAJpY>

### Reading – Luke 10:38-42

<sup>38</sup> Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." <sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; <sup>42</sup> there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

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### Sermon- Rev Tina



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

Jesus and his disciples are on their way, they're on a journey where Jesus has set his face to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51) and he arrives at Bethany, a small village, 2.63 km away from Jerusalem and goes to his friends' house, Mary, Martha and Lazarus' home, and Martha offers him hospitality.

I wonder if hospitality was usually offered by the male of a household. Perhaps Martha's actions are as ground-breaking as Mary's.

At the time women were expected to be in the kitchen and so Martha was in the kitchen slaving away and cooking all by herself while Mary sat at Jesus' feet, and we can understand and hear her cry: *It's not fair! I'm doing all the work.*

It was ok for men to sit in the main reception room and talk and discuss things, while women did all the cooking. But Mary chose not to stay in the kitchen. She chose to sit at the feet of Jesus and be taught by him, a role reserved for men. That may be one reason why Martha got upset.

And when Martha made a fuss, she got an unexpected rebuke from Jesus, who affirmed Mary's choice. Not that Jesus was ungrateful. Perhaps Jesus would have preferred a simple meal that didn't require a lot of fuss, like bread, olive oil, olives, water, wine and some vegetables, what people ate most days. Perhaps simplicity would have been ok.

For Jesus said: *There is need for only one thing*

I wonder about the meaning of a better choice being about sitting at Jesus' feet and listening.

The heart is a receptacle, a vessel. It contains blood that is life for us and pumps that life force throughout our body. We would not live without our heart. It is also a receptacle for the Word of God, the spiritual life force that enters and dwells in the core of our being.

Perhaps Mary has embraced the journey of discipleship by sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to him speak of the coming of the Kingdom of God. Perhaps exposing Martha's approach as inadequate is more about challenging the status quo and encouraging people to rethink how they live their lives.

Hospitality is not all about food. It is more. Perhaps it's a willingness to sit at Jesus' feet and at the feet of others, to open up one's heart and be truly present to them and listen to Jesus and others.

Martha's approach to hospitality leaves her feeling agitated, worried, distracted, and anxious, which can be a barrier to offering hospitality. I've cooked many meals for groups of friends and spent more time cooking while they are sitting around a table having meaningful conversations that I'm too busy, distracted and stressed to be part of. Am I offering true hospitality from the heart?

What does hospitality look like today? Most people make a time to come to our houses, and a lot of planning goes into the meal. In Jesus' time guests were welcome anytime and often arrived at unexpected times without any notice. Martha would have had to run down to the market or kill an animal or find some veggies in the garden or borrowed from a neighbour. No wonder she is stressed. She would have appreciated Mary's help.

There is a sharp contrast between how Martha and Mary offer hospitality, but there are deeper issues at work. Mary is focused on her guest and his needs. Perhaps Martha assumed she needed to cook up a feast and that's how she shows her love.

Perhaps it's about priorities? Being present to Jesus first and the kingdom, then worrying about food afterwards. Perhaps Jesus is saying our ministry and service needs to be grounded in our relationship with him.

I'll share a little about my journey on the Camino so we can explore how we make a choice when all of us have a bit of Mary and Martha in us. All of us engage in contemplation and action.

There is a map of the Camino journey from France, over the Pyrenees and across Spain to Santiago. It's about 1000km and we did 470 kilometres. People walk for many reasons. To find meaning or new directions, to grieve, to let go, to find forgiveness or simply because they love to walk. It's a journey where one encounters breathtaking beauty and people celebrating life.





Food is a work of art. These are some photos of the food.

All along the way are opportunities for prayer, worship, and contemplation within nature. I came upon an elderly lady caring for a tiny stone chapel in the middle of the main street and she'd filled it with white lilies.

Along the way people have woven crosses made from twigs into fences. Perhaps they are seeking redemption or repentance. Crowds of people bring a pebble from home to place on a mountain of pebbles that have built up over 1000 years since the cross was first placed there and has been recently replaced by a modern one. The cross is called Cruz de Ferro.



My friends who journeyed with me, two lapsed Catholics and an atheist were fast walkers and the fastest was the spotter who found us accommodation for the night. I preferred to walk slowly and engage with people, try the food, join with locals playing music or dancing or admire the beauty of nature. But we all went to mass together and received pilgrims' blessings all along the way.



One of villages we stayed at had a small café with this sign on it: *No Corras, Camina*. It means 'walk don't run' (when doing the Camino). This was something we learned to do as we walked.

There is a little of Martha and Mary in all of us and life is about finding a balance between these two ways of being. Perhaps today's good news is if we ground our actions in the gospel and prayer, we can become a

vessel of life that God works through. Our hearts become vessels for Jesus' teachings and these teachings inform our actions.



The Lord be with you

**YouTube Hymn Brother Sister let me serve you, Chet valley Churches 2020**

<https://youtu.be/EQaOErUUjm8>

#### **Offering Prayer**

God of new beginnings,  
We offer these gifts to you today because we love you.  
Take our gifts and use them for your good.  
With hope we pray, amen.

#### **Prayers of the People – Geoffrey Willis**

Let us pray. In our prayers for others we especially pray for the war situation in the **Ukraine**. Dear Lord, you must be weeping over the foolishness and greed of the Russian President and for the dreadful plight of so many millions of refugees. We pray for wisdom as the leaders of the world formulate trade embargoes in response to the war. May their actions not inflame the situation or lead to further acts of retaliation. Dear Lord, please uphold those who are caring for those who are being injured in this war. Please protect the first-responders who are providing assistance in cities which have suffered from bombing and other acts of inhumanity. We pray also for the organisations providing relief services to the many displaced persons who are trapped in war ravaged towns or who are joining the long lines of refugees. Lord, we pray for a quick and humane resolution to the aggression in the Ukraine. May good sense prevail and may a diplomatic solution be found quickly.

Closer to home, we pray Lord, for those affected by the **floods** in Queensland and New South Wales. We pray for those who have lost their homes and for farmers whose livelihood is threatened. We pray especially for children who are traumatised by this disaster and whose schooling has been curtailed during the emergency. Dear Lord, please protect the members of the various emergency services as they bring relief to their fellow citizens. May governments and municipal councils be adequately resourced to provide restoration of services and assistance to those in need.

In the World Council of Churches prayer cycle, we pray for the **United Kingdom** and **Ireland**. We thank you Lord that these countries have provided many of the customs and the heritage which we have adopted, including our legal and parliamentary systems. But we pray that the scars and memories of colonization may continue to heal. Dear Lord, we give thanks for the efforts of churches in the United Kingdom and Ireland to cater for new expressions of religion and spirituality as the countries become increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-religious. Lord, may the challenges of increasing secularism be met in imaginative and non-threatening ways. We pray too for government efforts to resolve differences and political tensions over how they should relate to the rest of Europe.

In our ecumenical prayer cycle, we pray for the Priest and people of **St Luke's Catholic Church, Blackburn South**. This church in Orchard Grove is celebrating 60 years of witnessing their tradition. We pray, dear Lord, for their Parish Priest Rev Father Gerard, their primary school Principal Liz Sullivan and Parish and School Staff. Lord, we pray that their Lenten Retreat, which was held last weekend, was a blessing to those who attended. We pray too that their weekly bulletin will help to bind their members together.

In our Presbytery we pray for the people of the **Oxley Road Congregation in Auburn** and their minister the Rev Steve Crump. This congregation has a long history dating from its first service held under a gum tree in 1853. The current large church is heritage-listed and is a maintenance liability with a dwindling congregation. We pray for their Lenten Bible Study which is based on Tom Wright's Commentary on Luke.

Today we pray for **Uniting AgeWell's Condare Court in Camberwell** which provides respite and permanent accommodation. We pray for the staff and residents as they relate to each other in friendship and helpfulness. We especially pray that arrangements to protect residents from COVID-19 and its variants are effective without being too onerous for families of loved ones.

Finally Lord we pray for **ourselves**. We ask for your blessing on our planning to be a Cluster. May the congregational workshops, to commence soon, provide helpful ways of charting our future. We pray for our Ministry Team and for our Ministry Student, Daniel Farnsworth. May his time in the Cluster help him in the development of his ministry capabilities. We pray too for the work of Centre 81 as it provides food and fellowship to those finding life to be tough. Bless our receptionists and the Centre 81 Committee as they provide kindness to those in need. Lord, we pray for those amongst us who are finding that life is a struggle. May they know your peace and may their medical regime be beneficial to their health and well-being.

Let us join together as we say the prayer which Jesus 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*

**YouTube hymn Father, we adore you - A peaceful Praise and Worship HD 2001**

[https://youtu.be/-ygVy\\_rDhwo](https://youtu.be/-ygVy_rDhwo)

### **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

**Hymn 779 May the Feet of God** tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhiG-Vj8CGU&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=40>

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## Pastoral Care Tips – Rev Tina



*Leunig, used with permission*

Always look on the bright side of life reminds me of a song I heard in a Monty Python movie called *Life of Brian*, where Brian is hanging on a cross singing: *Always look on the Bright side of life*. I'm not sure if it's helpful to say to someone who is suffering: *Always look on the bright side of life*. People don't want to be told to be positive when they are suffering and hurting deeply and perhaps many people are afraid of pain. Yet what's often needed is a willingness to sit in silence with those who are suffering, and be present to them, and listen, if they want to speak. Sometimes it's so painful there are no words that can be said. To sit with someone and be present to them in the silence when they are suffering deeply, is an act of love. Of course, sometimes practical help may be needed, a meal cooked, flowers dropped off, the dog walked, a phone call or visit.

I've been reading Joan Chittister's book: *Song of the Heart*, where she reflects on the psalms and there is a quote from Psalm 68 about the hospitality of God. *Guardian of the orphan, defender of the widowed. Such is God who gives the lonely a home*. For us, as Joan says: *hospitality is basic. It's what teaches us about all the other things in life. It's what prepares us to deal with all the other things. It is hospitality that teaches us honesty and self-control, devotion and love, openness and trust. The way of hospitality is more difficult and more meaningful than any asceticism we could devise for ourselves.* (i.e.: fasting, going without.)

So, if each of us is a little like Mary who sat at Jesus' feet and Martha who worked in the kitchen, one day we will be with someone who is suffering and we will choose either to sit at their feet and listen to them or pray for them and comfort them or cook for them, and offer practical support and help, according to our gifts. However, people can order food online and almost anything else, but they cannot order someone to come and sit with them and care about them. Love cannot be ordered online.

There are a lot of lonely, suffering, people out there in the community and in our churches. We can choose to be Mary or Martha or both, as needed, yet Jesus still says: *Mary has chosen the better way*. What are we to do?

Joan Chittister said: *Hospitality is the fine art of having an open soul and a listening mind in a world where, alone, we would all die from starvation of the soul*. Perhaps love informs our hospitality, whether it's listening with our heart or cooking wholeheartedly for others.