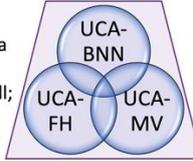




Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



Together at Ten -Sunday 3rd April 2022

INTROIT: Richard Bruxvoort Colligan's "Forty Days, 2020

Youtube link: [\(47\) Forty Days \(A theme song for Lent\) - YouTube](#).

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

When we journey together, we share an experience and a story. A shared story is a bond. When we meet with those who share that story, we are at home, we share life, and we are affirmed. God is made known in our midst and we recognise we are part of God's story.

OPENING PRAYER - Rev Peter

Open our eyes and hearts to see and know you are with us. Help us to see in each other the face of your love and grace.

Help us by your Spirit's presence to be the face of your love and grace to them. Amen

SONG: ALL ARE WELCOME - Marty Haugen

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/GlnVLP0qFEo>

ANNOUNCEMENTS



READINGS

Isaiah 43:16 – 21

(NRSV)

¹⁶Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, ¹⁷who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: ¹⁸Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. ¹⁹I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. ²⁰The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, ²¹the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.



LUKE 24:13 – 35 (NRSV)

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles 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. 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, 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. 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 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 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. ©NRSV National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

CONFESSION- Rev Peter

What helps you recognise God's presence?
 What hinders you recognising God's presence?

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 – Rhonda Goodall

Let us come together as we prayer for others

Lord our God, how great you are. Our constant friend, comforter, wise counsellor, confidant and protector, steadfast in your love and forgiveness.

Today, Lord, we give thanks for the enduring peace of the Balkan states of Albania, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia and may they continue to live in harmony and tolerance with each other and prosper for the benefit of all their peoples.

We pray for the people of the Ukraine who are presently suffering from the Russian invasion of their country which is causing such misery and wanton destruction. Be with this nation and support the leaders of the Ukraine, Lord, as they repel the invasion and assist in any peace negotiations to end this bloodshed. We pray, Lord, that you will have some influence on the Russian leader Putin to end the carnage and retreat from the Ukraine.

In our ecumenical prayers, Lord, we remember the stairway church Whitehorse, Bayswater UCA Ferntree Gully Scoresby and The Epworth Hospital Chaplaincy. Be with their leaders and ministers as they make decisions on their outreach programs and minister to those within and outside their realm of responsibilities. May you guide them, Lord, to promote their work within the communities for the glory of your name and the benefit of the people with whom they minister.

Lord we pray for our own church community at Mountview, that we may always be a welcoming community and be fearless in our outreach to others bringing the word of the Lord to those in need by our conduct and help for others. Be with our ministers within the cluster as they convey the message of your word to us. Lord we remember those infirmed amongst us, you know who they are. May you ease their suffering and may they feel your presence and enveloping comfort supporting them in their time of need.

Lord, may we all know your peace and feel your love, that we may walk our life journey with you by our side confident of your presence in a world of change and disruption. Hear our prayers, Lord, which we bring before you, amen.

YouTube Come down O Love Divine – Fernando Ortega 2016

<https://youtu.be/2DbytPhyJzo>

YOUNG AT HEART- Rev Tina

The Uniting church is a place where all are welcome. We may have a different theology or upbringing or church background or be filled with doubts and questions, but our church is a safe place where we are all accepted and loved. Throughout life we meet people who are different to us, who long to be accepted for who they are, just like we do. People naturally want to belong and be cared for and to share and give and have purpose and the greatest gift we can give them is love and acceptance. *Many thanks to Lorraine and Barney for the noticeboard sign.*



SERMON- Daniel Farnsworth

When I was much younger, and first speaking in church, I came in for a bit of criticism. I was told I tended to pace back and forth while speaking, so I had to be lectured – stand right behind the lectern! Don't move! The habit of walking back and forth took a while to break, but it looks like today I'll have to dust it off again. After all, not only do we have no lectern today, but the gospel story we just heard was about walking together. So perhaps we can walk together with this reading for a little while today.

This is a story after the Resurrection. Reading the gospels we know that Jesus is alive again, but the disciples themselves don't know it yet. The women have told them, but the male disciples did not believe them. Let that be a lesson to listen to everyone, regardless of sex! But whatever the reason, the disciples at the start of this story don't know about or believe in the Resurrection yet.

So we meet them on the way, at the start of a journey. I notice that we never hear *why* the disciples were going to Emmaus. Why this town? We don't know. We can guess, however, that after the Crucifixion, they might not have been in the best of spirits. Perhaps they thought to get out of Jerusalem and flee, fearing that they might meet the same grim fate as their leader. Likewise we are not told how they felt. The text says only that they were talking about everything that had happened. I would guess that it wasn't a very optimistic conversation. This was, after all, not a very safe time or place to be a follower of Jesus. The Romans had just killed him, and all their hopes seemed to have failed, and there was a good chance that the Romans or the high priests might have all of them killed as well.

In the midst of what was probably a very dark time, full of fear and disappointment, they met a stranger on the road. They don't recognise him, but the stranger asks them to tell their story. They do this, despite the danger – saying openly that they had hoped for Jesus to redeem Israel! Quite a risk! But the stranger coaxes this hope from them and goes on to have a discussion with them about the scriptures.

I wonder if that was a moment of healing, for these two disciples on the road to Emmaus. To have a frank conversation about the disturbing events that had just happened – about their hopes, their fears, their dreams and anxieties. Sharing a story can feel very good, can't it? Whether it's grief or hope, when we hold something together, it becomes easier to bear. What was once my hope or your story becomes *our* hope and *our* story. It must have made a strong impression on the disciples, because they begged the stranger to stay with them.

At last he goes in with them, breaks and blesses bread as he did in a certain supper, and only then do they realise they were speaking with Jesus the whole time. And then they get up and go straight back to Jerusalem, back into the lion's den.

So what can this story tell us? I wonder two questions – how did they fail to recognise Jesus at first, and then how did they recognise him again? Perhaps the resurrected Jesus didn't look exactly the same as he did in life. But why would Jesus choose to appear differently? Why not just immediately tell them who he was?

Perhaps he wanted to teach them something in this encounter. Perhaps he wanted to remind them that he would not always be with them in the flesh, so they would need to look for his presence elsewhere – to watch for him in unfamiliar faces, to listen for him in unfamiliar voices. It says that he interpreted the scriptures for them, and it's easy to believe an interpretation of scripture from someone you know and trust, someone you already believe is authoritative. But to listen and understand the same thing from the voice of a stranger? Maybe that takes practice.

Indeed, when we hear a message, we don't just hear the message itself – we also hear the messenger. The messenger can change everything about how a message is received. An interpretation of scripture given to us by a respectable professor or (I'm on thin ice here!) a minister might seem very credible, but if we heard that same interpretation from a man waving a sign on a street corner, we might not believe it. We can be quick to judge things like status or respectability, closing our ears to voices from unexpected quadrants of society. Perhaps we do need to train ourselves to look and listen for surprising truth, for what God might be trying to say to us, even if it comes from a direction we didn't expect.

The story concludes with a kind of Eucharist – perhaps the first Eucharist in history, after the Last Supper itself. Sometimes, depending on our church background, we talk about the Eucharist as being the moment when we meet God, when Jesus comes to us in bread and wine. But in the Emmaus story, the function of this Eucharist is to reveal to the disciples that Jesus has been with them *all along*. In the breaking of the bread, Jesus says to them: "I was with you this whole time. I was with you in the form of a stranger."

Where is Jesus today? Where do we see or hear him? In scripture, perhaps. In bread and wine, maybe. In art, well, perhaps that too. But also – in the faces and voices of strangers. Maybe even in the faces and voices of *each other*. In faces and voices we do not expect. Let's take our communion this morning as an invitation to look for where Jesus has been with us this whole time.

SONG: TIS 474 HERE IN THIS PLACE NEW LIGHT IS STREAMING

(Gather us in) Marty Haugen

<https://youtu.be/lbNXqjwh8is>

**COMMUNION- Rev Pete
(Including the Lord's Prayer)**

BENEDICTION- Rev Peter

As you leave here, look for the face of Christ in all you meet and respond in love and generosity.

Seek to be that expression of grace and welcome that Christ is to you.

And may the Spirit enliven and give you peace, our heavenly parent's acceptance give you courage and Christ's presence send you out in mission to show compassion for all you meet.

AOV2 – 57 MAY WE SEE CHRIST'S LOVING FACE (Icon of Grace) – sing the refrain twice.

This is a commissioning as we go into the world!

A sound sample of this song can be found: <https://www.sixmaddens.org/?p=2028>

Pastoral Care Tips – Rev Tina

As we get older it gets harder to do some things. We tire easily and it takes more out of us, and we need to pace ourselves. We need to find a balance between doing and being.

Many of us have heard the saying, dying well. We also need to be living well. All of us have a vibrant faith and as we age, we tend to make sense of our lives, and knit together a tapestry of memories. We also struggle with limitations. There are some days when we cannot do as much as we want to or the things we used to do so well, so quickly. We can choose to tackle an aging body by assessing what we can and cannot do and that's ok. It's life. We can give thanks to God for what our body has allowed us to do and the places it has taken us. Our body is a gift from God. It's our soul's house. All of us desire to be useful and contribute and we do the best we can with what we have. We can pray, phone someone, send a card, give a gift, or smile or be there for a loved one.

I've been reading a book by Joan Chittister called: *The Gift of Years – Growing Old Gracefully*.

She writes about limitations: "The truth is we are only as limited as we want to be." When we define ourselves only by our imitations, we fail to see to what greater things those limitations are calling us for. She refers to Maggie Kuhn, born in 1905, who founded the Gray Panthers movement, aged 65, she fought for legislation to provide support for elderly

and break down barriers of ageism and she encouraged elderly to speak out against ageism. Maggie transcended both age and physical boundaries to be a strong, thinking, visionary person the world badly needed. She became everyone's favourite grandma.

We do not define ourselves by our limitations. We define ourselves by our love. Love for God and others as ourselves. No matter how old we are, we can still choose to love.

