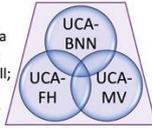




Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



Sunday 14 August 2022

Hymn: Be still for the Presence of the Lord – tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-yBLNgQkvY&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=5>

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.

Call to Worship

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses

Let us set aside past sins and all that weighs us down

Let us look to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith

Let us run the race set before us with perseverance and courage

Prayers

Lord our God, you help us run the race with perseverance,
You help us to overcome challenges and obstacles
to let go of what prevents us from bearing fruit as God's vineyard
to choose life and leave behind what no longer works for us

We give thanks for your grace and love

Jesus our Lord

You came to bring us the fire of God's love and Spirit and promised to put God's Spirit in our hearts
You are the pioneer and perfecter of our faith and because of you, we know the way and can run the race with
perseverance and courage

We give thanks for your grace and love

Holy Spirit,

You dwell in our hearts, guiding and inspiring us to live lives where we bear fruit for God and one another

We give thanks for your grace and love

Holy Spirit

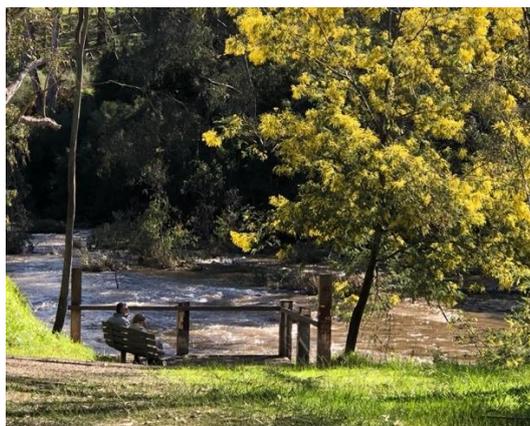
Come upon us and bless us. Fill our hearts with the fire of God's Spirit and give us love, hope and courage
for the journey with Jesus and one another

Come Holy Spirit. Come upon us and bless us

Prayer of Confession

Lord, if we have made choices that prevent us from bearing fruit, help us live according to your ways and forgive us
Help us bless one another and live out our call to be the people of God on the way, faithfully following Jesus

Hear then Christ's words of grace to us
"Your sins are forgiven"
THANKS BE TO GOD



YouTube Hymn 192 Christ is the World's Redeemer
<https://youtu.be/YLBdJ5FzmgE>

Readings NRSV

Isaiah 5:1-7

5 Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. **2** He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watch-tower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. **3** And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. **4** What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? **5** And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. **6** I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. **7** For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting; he expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!

Hebrews 11:29-12:2

29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned. **30** By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days. **31** By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient,^[a] because she had received the spies in peace. **32** And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— **33** who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, **34** quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. **35** Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. **36** Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. **37** They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two,^[b] they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented— **38** of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. **39** Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, **40** since God had provided something better so that they would not, without us, be made perfect. **12** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely,^[c] and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, **2** looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of^[d] the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Luke 12:49-56

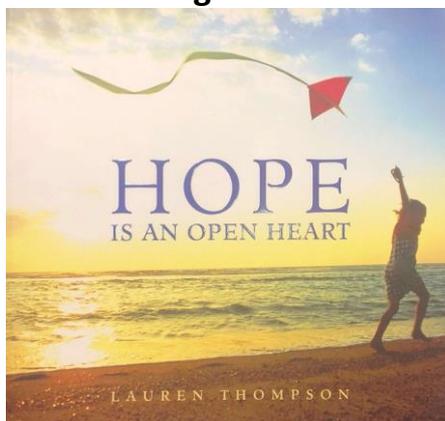
⁴⁹ 'I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! ⁵¹ Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! ⁵² From now on, five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; ⁵³ they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.' ⁵⁴ He also said to the crowds, 'When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, "It is going to rain"; and so it happens. ⁵⁵ And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, "There will be scorching heat"; and it happens. ⁵⁶ You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

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YouTube Hymn 594 Fight the Good Fight

<https://youtu.be/2Pc1QeOwooU>

Young at Heart



This Sunday's children's book

Questions for pondering

What gives hope and helps you run the race with perseverance and courage?
 Are there times in your life where you have been strengthened by the journey?
 How has focusing on Jesus helped you through a challenging journey?

Hymn 609 May the mind of Christ my Saviour

<https://youtu.be/gE5fOXSymBc>

Sermon – Rev Tina

Running the race with perseverance – Rev Tina

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



This is a photo of a steep hill. It reminds me of the challenges of running the race with perseverance and how, when we face life's challenges, our faith prevents us from feeling overwhelmed by events and circumstances. Our faithfulness to God helps us constantly return to God like a homing pigeon where God helps us stay on course, like a little ship in a big sea.

Our community also helps us feel like we are not alone and that we are all in it together. The beauty of community is belonging, being loved, accepted, sharing and caring, hospitality and worshipping God together, as we faithfully follow Jesus,

where we keep our eyes on Him, focusing on Him, so we don't sink into fears and anxiety, like Peter did when he wanted to be like Jesus, walking on water and took his eyes off Jesus.

There is a compass. In the past sailors and desert dwellers had a compass and the stars to guide them. We have been promised the Holy Spirit, the still small voice of God's spirit in our hearts, guiding our steps through life. That is our compass. We need to seek solitude and silence in prayer if we want to hear that voice. We need to seek a quiet place daily, to pray, so we are sustained for the journey and guided.

Many of us know about the signposts of life and have experienced joys and sorrows and have become seasoned pilgrims. We know about endings and beginnings and the times in between. We know about bridges and paths, mountains and valleys, plateaus, and cliffs. Life is a glorious and amazing adventure, and we get it and get there, by the grace of God and along the way the best part of it is sharing the journey with others.

We are surrounded by all we need to inform our spirituality of journeying and it is our faithfulness to God and to one another that helps us persevere and run the race with hope and courage. We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, those who are with us now and those who have gone before us, whose legacy has provided all we have, people and land, buildings, bible, table, pews, screens, heating, and our heritage.

Perhaps today's good news is an invitation to leave a legacy for those who come after us. A legacy that will sustain future generations and offer our church a future witness in the community.

Hebrews invites us to set aside the sins of yesterday and whatever weighs on our hearts and to reorientate our hearts to Jesus. That means not focusing on fears and anxiety which throw us into a sea of chaos and negative thinking. That means remembering who we are and continuing to focus on Jesus.

Jesus was the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, and we are invited to become like him and follow in his footsteps. He suffered and persevered, for us, for the sake of the joy set before him. He passed through suffering and endured the shame of the cross and journeyed beyond death to resurrection and eternal life. We are not Jesus. Our lives are different. Yet, there are patterns in our lives that connect with the life of Jesus. We pass through moments of suffering, shame, loss, rejection, tomb-like places, times of rebirth and resurrection of our lives, times when there are endings and deaths, times of joy and celebration and sadness, sickness and pain, times of limitation, failure and success, and triumph and achievement, times in the garden of gethsemane and times at weddings or times when we teach or share our wisdom, enjoy community meals and sharing and caring for one another.

Jesus has offered us a map for the journey, so that we know the way. The invitation is to let go of whatever is weighing us down, that doesn't work for us anymore, so we can continue the journey. Jesus provided a way of life and foundations for us to live by. We look to him as we pass through the seasons and cycles, endings, transitions, and new beginnings of life.

There may be times when we don't bear fruit as God's vineyard and experience division. There are challenges along the way. Passing through these challenges and these hardships helps us grow stronger in our faith and more determined to run the race. Our faithfulness and loving one another as Jesus taught us, will get us through the journey of life, as we persevere and run the race with hope and courage.

Jesus brings fire, fire in our belly, where we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness to our faith, where we live and embody our faith, where we as the people of God become more like Jesus and live according to his teachings and bear fruit together as his church. When we focus on Jesus our hearts and lives are grounded in God's plan for the world.

Jesus redeems us from the uncertainty and anxiety of the world where we are more open to the stirrings of the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts. Because of Jesus we can make a stand for the way of life he has set before us.

When I think about the cloud of witnesses and running the race with perseverance, I think of two women who died in the past week, Judith Durham, and Olivia Newton John. Both identified as Christians and despite experiencing challenges in life due to health issues, both found blessings and contributed in major ways to their community. They

both ran the race with perseverance. And I have received stories from Nance Cresswell and Cherril Randles for our book, *Memories and Recollections*, about how they have both faithfully run the race with perseverance.

We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, who offer encouragement for the journey. Let us keep on journeying with faith and courage, supporting and encouraging one another by sharing our stories about our journey of faith and being there for one another.

The Lord be with you

A moment for quiet Reflection



Offering Prayer

(about offering up ourselves and giving thanks to God for all we have)

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 – Rev Tina

Lord, we pray for world peace
For an end to the suffering caused by war
Lord Hear our prayer

Lord, we pray for our home, this planet
We pray for those who have lost their homelands because of climate change
We lament the destruction of land, rivers, and mass extinction of animals and pollution of our world
We lament the loss of lives due to storms, floods, fires and droughts.
We pray for all those experiencing a lack of food and water due to climate change
Lord, we pray for the children and young people of our world who face an uncertain future, because of climate change.
We pray for an international convention that makes it a crime to destroy our planet intentionally or neglectfully through pollution.
Lord Hear our prayer

Lord, we pray for leaders who are life-giving for all people and who govern justly
Leaders who consider the rights of all peoples in this world
Lord Hear our prayer

Lord, we pray for indigenous peoples throughout the world who have had their homeland and children taken from them, many of whom lead lives of disconnection and despair
Lord Hear our prayer

Lord, we pray for our country and innovative new ways of living that honour and value our homeland
Lord Hear our prayer

We pray for all churches throughout the world and this nation and for our local churches
 We pray for our cluster churches and for all members, as we journey together towards becoming
 one church in Christ
Lord Hear our prayer

Lord, we pray for our loved ones, for those with health issues within our congregation and who are grieving and
 finding it difficult. We pray for our own needs.

Lord Hear our prayer

The Lord's Prayer

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

Hymn 478 I bind unto myself today

<https://youtu.be/yH4ToVxtn9A>

Dismissal from UIW

Go forth into the world in peace
 Be of good courage
 Hold fast to that which is good
 Render no one evil for evil
 Strengthen the faint-hearted
 Support the weak
 Help the afflicted
 Honour all people
 Love and serve the Lord
 Rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit
Amen

Hymn 779 May the Feet of God- tMt video

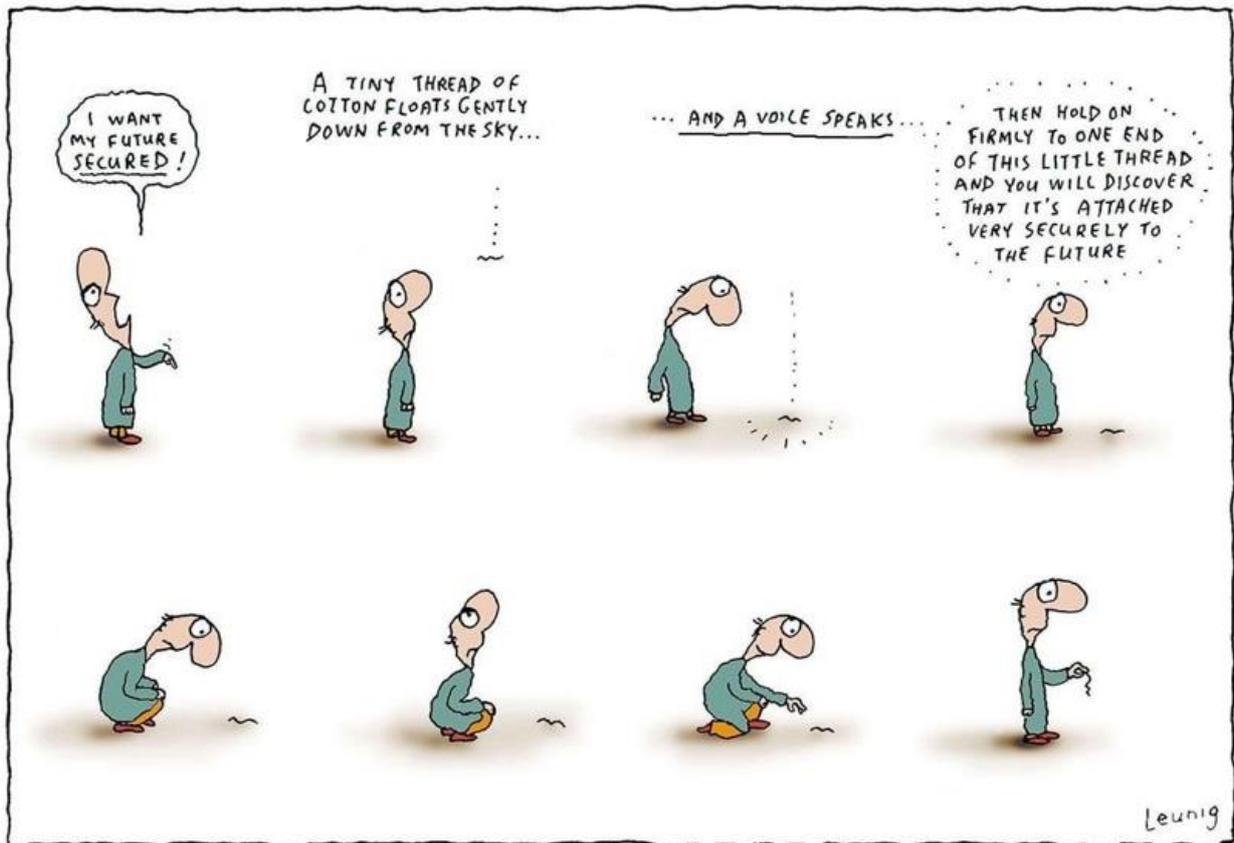
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhiG-Vj8CGU&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=40>

Pastoral Care Tips – Rev Tina

I've been reading Joan Chittister's book: *Scarred by struggle, transformed by hope*. (Extracts used with permission)

Joan writes about the loss of certainty we face in the world, where nothing seems certain or fixed anymore, such as "theology, culture, institutions, relationships, family, or sense of self." She "grew up with absolutes and categories and was told her destiny was in her hands." But over time she has seen absolutes fade, rules change, and her image of God become bigger. Perhaps, in many ways, we have faced similar changes. God is no longer seen as a white Anglo Saxon male. We now live in a multicultural and multi-faith global world.

Joan wrote about how easily things become obsolete and are discarded, updated, and replaced, where life is in flux or transition. The world, universe and our lives seem fragile, and sometimes it seems like we live in "virtual reality" where we can watch the suffering of the world on our television or computer screens. Joan laments these changes. Perhaps some of us also lament them.



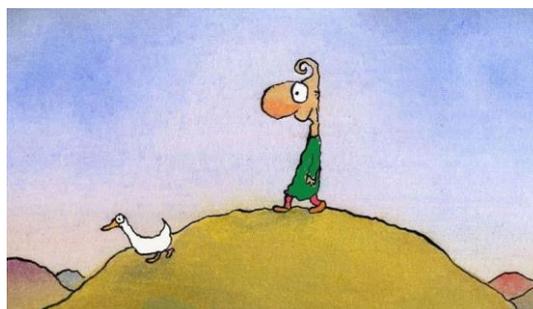
Leunig – used with permission

Joan speaks of people clinging to the past and others who will discard it, without suggesting anything to replace it and of how many of us may be feeling a “sense of uprootedness, lack of meaning, and confusion”. Joan asks: *What will carry us through this period of social and personal disorientation?*

She acknowledges our growing awareness of unlimited possibility and that there are life-giving changes and miracles where love happens, relationships develop, we get the job, our differences melt away, and we become all we are meant to be.

Perhaps the challenge is to journey through uncertain times and challenges and emerge on the other side, undefeated and strengthened. That is not easy to do alone. If you feel you are struggling with some of these issues or are finding life a struggle, don't stand there like the man in Leunig's cartoon, all on his own holding onto a bit of string. Reach out to others and ask for support.

There are so many people willing to listen and be there for you and offer you practical support if you need it. Contact those responsible for offering pastoral care in your congregation, your visitor or group coordinator or pastoral partner or the Prayer chain or one of the ministers. Lean into God, as one of the members of our cluster has written in their story for our book: *Memories and Recollections*. Don't go it alone or suffer in silence. There is always someone there for you. God always provides someone to walk alongside you whenever you are facing struggles and challenges and feeling alone.



Leunig – used with permission