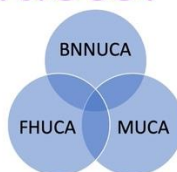




Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



Worship Sunday 15th August 2021
Wisdom is a listening heart

Introit – Be Still for the Presence of the Lord

*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.*

Welcome to our Worship
May you be Blessed.

Acknowledgment – Alex Adam

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 – Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.

² Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

³ If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

⁵ I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

⁶ my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.

⁷ O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.

⁸ It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Opening Prayer – Rev Pete

In all our living, may we be freed to see things afresh,
to be more fully alive, and have the courage to keep faith in the future of humanity.
~ Rex A.E. Hunt

Hymn – Comfort Comfort All my People – Helen Jackson

Prayer of Confession – Rev Pete

O Lord, our hearts are heavy with the sufferings of the ages,
with the crusades and the holocausts of a thousand thousand years.
The blood of the victims is still warm, the cries of anguish still fill the night.
To you we uplift our outspread hands.

We thirst for you in a thirsty land.

O Lord, who loves us as a father, who cares for us as a mother,
who came to share our life as a brother, we confess before you our failure to live as your children,
brothers and sisters bound together in love. To you we lift our outspread hands.

We thirst for you in a thirsty land.

We have squandered the gift of life, the good life of some is built on the pain of many; the pleasure of a few on the agony of millions. To you we lift our outstretched hands.

We thirst for you in a thirsty land.

We worship death in our quest to possess ever more things;
we worship death in our hankering after our own security,
our own survival, our own peace, as if life were divisible,
as if Christ had not died for all of us. To you we lift our outstretched hands.

We thirst for you in a thirsty land.

O Lord, forgive our life-denying pursuit of life,
and teach us anew what it means to be your children.

To you we lift our outstretched hands.

We are thirsty in a thirsty land.

— World Council of Churches

in The Complete Book of Christian Prayer

Readings

1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14.

Reader, Julie Hawkey - Forest Hill Uniting

¹⁰ Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David. ¹¹ The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. ¹² So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established.

³ Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. ⁴ The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵ At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask what I should give you.” ⁶ And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷ And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸ And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹ Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?”

¹⁰ It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹ God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹² I now do according to your word. Indeed, I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. ¹³ I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honour all your life; no other king shall compare with you. ¹⁴ If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life.”

John 6:51-58

Gospel – Reader Anne Smith, Blackburn North/Nunawading

⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

⁵² The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” ⁵³ So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; ⁵⁵ for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.”

**Sermon – Rev Tina
Wisdom is a listening heart**



This is a photo of an elderly woman reading to an elderly man and it's obvious she's blind. I keep on coming back to this photo. It could be a husband and wife who have been together for a lifetime. It could be a sister and brother. It could be a lady from a church visiting a friend from her church. She's reading a book that's in Braille. I've often wondered what she's reading. It could be a bible or a devotional or a novel. I don't know. What I'm drawn to is her love for the person she's with as she reads to them. I wonder about her wisdom. Does it come from long years of loving God, others, and herself? Does it come from weathering the storms of life and suffering? Or does wisdom come from simple joys of being with others. Maybe all of this.

I wonder what it's like being blind. Does it give a person a listening heart?

One of the legends about St Columba of Iona Island, Scotland, was he used to pray on a small green hill, which is now known as the hill of angels. He always told the other monks not to follow him but one day one of them did and they saw Columba praying and talking with angels. Columba spent a lot of time praying and acting out of prayer which made his ministry a blessing for others, many of whom came to believe in Jesus because of his example. He was a man with a listening heart. He listened to God and to others and to his own heart.

When I stayed on Iona I went to pray on this hill, to see what would happen. I listened to God with my heart, and I didn't see any angels. But when I looked down at the grass in front of me, I saw a large pink stone shaped like a heart. The stone spoke to me as if God was speaking to me and reminding me of my theology. "God is Love" from 1 John. Love that is compassionate, unconditional, non-judging and accepting, forgiving, and understanding, patient and wanting the best for all of us.

Columba was like King Solomon who prayed for days until God spoke to him in a dream, asking him: *What do you want?* Solomon asked God for wisdom, humbly saying I am but a child. How can I care for my people? Solomon was a young man. God gave him the gift of wisdom and every other blessing.

All of us yearn for wisdom and most of us gain it the hard way. Some of us say, 'I wish I'd had wisdom when I was young.' But, is that good? We learn wisdom through relationships, by trying out new things, going to new places, making mistakes, overcoming challenging times, through compassionate acts of love and most of all we are gifted wisdom by God.

When I was ordained on my birthday, I asked for the gift of wisdom without understanding what it was. I'm not a saint or king or queen. I'm an ordinary person. But I do know we need wisdom.

I've discovered wisdom is not about intelligence or education or our intellectual capacity. In Old Testament times the ancient Jewish people believed wisdom was of the spirit and was located in our hearts.

What Solomon was asking for was a listening heart, so he could know what was good and bad, right and lifegiving – in his relationship with God and others and himself. Perhaps he hoped a listening heart would guide him like a light in the darkness and help him journey through life as a king.

But, we are not kings or queens. Yet, we are like them, for we have our own kingdoms where we are responsible for our loved ones who we guide through life and care for. We are role models for them, for those who are younger than

us. We hope to grow in wisdom as we age and leave a legacy for the next generation. Like Sarah and Abraham our families are like stars in the sky. We want to leave them hope, life and love. We want them to grow in faith.

Most of try to speak to God every day when we pray, hoping we will get an answer to our prayers, especially through this long period of lockdowns which can weary and frustrate us and diminish our lives - if we let it. Lockdowns cause stress and fear and it's not good for us. When we listen with our hearts to God and take care of ourselves and are compassionate with ourselves, it helps us reach out to others with compassion and love. It helps us be more able to share our love and wisdom. We do not lose heart when we listen to God and others and ourselves.

Jesus commands us to love God with all our being and others as ourselves. That means loving ourselves so we can love others. We find life and spiritual food in believing in Jesus who is our bread. Focusing on the problem and allowing fear and anxiety to overtake us drains us of energy and hope. Focusing on the solution, on God, and continuing to pray and talk with God with a listening heart will sustain us. By believing in Christ, we are fed and find life.

God invites all of us to hold fast to hope. God is with us in all times. Through prayer God invites us all to reach out to God and one another and stay united in Christ, where we are one in Christ who invites us to love one another as Christ loves us. This is our wisdom. Our gift from God that gives us a listening heart.

The Lord be with you

Moment of Quiet Reflection
Hymn 569 – Guide me o thy Great Redeemer

Offering Prayer – Rev Pete

We give thanks that we may give of ourselves to the work of this community of churches. While we may still meet in separate buildings, we are committed to being one whole community. In giving our gifts of stewardship in the community we are entrusting our councils and our ministries into the wisdom of Christ.

We give thanks that we may give of ourselves to the work of this

Prayers People – Tim Joyce, Mountview

Almighty God - Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth.
 Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust.
 Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace.
 Let peace fill our heart. Let peace fill our world.

Almighty God we pray for your church. For the Whitehorse cluster of churches, that each of our congregations may effectively reach out and witness to those in our communities. We pray that we will be ready to confront the challenges that face us, and the changes that lie ahead.

We pray for the ministry team of Tina, Peter and Pete. Guide them as they lead us. Grant them (and us) strength, clarity, wisdom and a sense of your plan for us.

We pray also Lord for other churches. Ecumenical: St Edward's Anglican, Blackburn South. UCA: Greensborough (Living Faith Church); that they too may serve you and their community with faith, compassion and courage. We pray that you will bless their witness and their ministry. And we pray for Methodist Ladies College, for their students and staff. We pray that you will be a presence in that school and that your love will be known to all who study and work within it.

And we pray for staff and students in all schools as they grapple with the uncertainties and demands of online learning. Grant calm, clarity and peace to all in these uncertain and stressful times

Merciful Lord, we pray for the world. Grant us, Lord God, a vision of your world as your love would have it:
 a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor;
 a world where the riches of creation are shared, and everyone can enjoy them;
 a world where different races and cultures live in harmony and mutual respect;
 a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.

We pray for the vulnerable and the marginalised, for the homeless and the poor and for those who work for justice. We pray for the continued efforts across the world to contain Covid 19 and for safe, swift and just access to vaccinations. Comfort those who suffer and give us all a hunger for justice and peace.

We pray for your World

We pray this morning for Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger.

We pray for those impoverished who lack basic needs and rights, that these will be met. We pray for desperate children and others who turn to crime or begging or become enslaved; for an effective response to the frequent droughts and hunger in this area, for more stable political rule in these countries to stem violence and provide for all.

God, our Father, we bless you for the gift of life that you grant us, that strength of faith, so fragile and so powerful, which is nourished by the assurance of your love. We pray to you, Lord, for the sustenance of life for the people of these five countries. Stir up the strength and courage of all those who are engaged in lifting these countries out of poverty.

Merciful Lord, we pray for those in special need at this time. For the sick, the lonely, the grieving. We pray for all who are known to us who are in need of your comfort and love. We entrust these people to your care Risen Christ. Stand with us, grant us peace - that we might serve you in the world. Through Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord, Amen.

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 for ever. Amen.

Communion

You may choose to participate on Zoom or use the Communion at Home resource

These are the responses for the Zoom Communion Service

The eternal God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift our hearts to God.

Let us give thanks to God who is Wisdom and Love.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

**Through Christ,
life rises from despair.**

In Christ, all things are made new.

**Because of Christ,
your Spirit remains with us.**

**Holy, holy, holy God,
wisdom, strength and hope, heaven and earth are full of your glory;
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the One who comes in the name of our God.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.**

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

**Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ
in the power of the Spirit of Love,
all glory be to you, O God,
Source of All Being,
Eternal Wisdom and Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be. Amen.**

The gifts of God for the people of God.
**May we who share these gifts
be found in Christ
and Christ in us.**

The body of Christ keep us in eternal life
Amen
The blood of Christ keep us in eternal life
Amen

Prayer after Communion

from *Uniting In Worship*

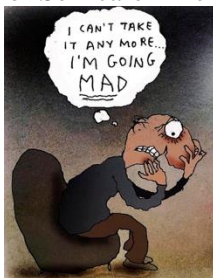
Benediction – Rev Pete

As we leave this sacred time of worship, may we be filled with the courage required to face difficult decisions that will lead us to God's righteousness. May we eat each meal with the expectation that it is preparing us for the life that God is calling us towards.

Hymn – Shalom to you now – Helen Jackson

https://youtu.be/liH_HdkWs74

Tips for Self-care – Rev Tina



The media is full of gloomy stuff like Leunig's latest cartoon. He hit the nail on the head. People reacted badly to the latest lockdown. Rob Jackson told me the other day Lifeline had the highest number of callers in its history last Friday. So, what's the cure?

Perhaps prayer, ministering as the people of God, being creative, sharing, gardening, cooking, getting eight hours sleep, reaching out to others and caring for them and allowing them to care for us, walking the dog, looking for beauty, watching funny shows on TV, reading, trying to learn something new every day, ending the day with prayer and listening to inspiring music. This and more can sustain us through this time of lockdowns which has been going on for over eighteen months. Long term stress caused by lockdowns is not good for the body. What are your self-care tips? Contact me and let me know what they are, if you're happy to share them with others. We're in this together and we will get through this time if we stick together and care for one another.

You may like this hymn – You Raise me Up – BYU Vocal Point (Josh Groban A cappella Cover)

<https://youtu.be/rcLl0A-IXIc>

Or this prayerful meditation on Galatians 5:22-23 from UCA Transforming Worship

<https://youtu.be/-JynEu3whZk>

Prayer

Lord, we come to you for life,
 we speak with you
 We listen with our heart
 Sustain us during these challenging times
 Help us stay united as one people in Christ.
 Help us reach out and care for one another. Help us not be frightened by the news.
 Help us to get enough sleep, enough love, care, and laughter, help us pray Lord.
 Help us talk with you and listen to you with our hearts.
 Give us courage to hold things lightly and lean into you. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

(A tip for using the links in blue - use Control and mouse click together to open the link)

