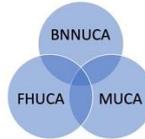




**Whitehorse
Uniting
Cluster**

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



Sunday 26th September 2021

Song 614 O God of Love, O King of Peace (SATB) Patti Drennan The Lorenz Corporation

<https://youtu.be/5Oak-g2ofzc>

Welcome

May the worship be a blessing to you



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 -Rev Tina, Responses Lynne Rosenthal

The kingdom of God has come and broken into our lives

May the ways of God fill our hearts

Those who give another a cup of water are Salt of the earth

Those who walk Christ's pathways of peace are Salt of the earth

Let us give thanks to the Lord who is at work in our world, shaping all of creation.

May we live with compassion and be Salt of the Earth for one another

Prayers of Adoration and Invocation– Rev Tina and Responses Lynne Rosenthal

Lord we give thanks to you for purifying our hearts with your love

For the gifts of forgiveness and wisdom

For your mercy and grace which are greater than judgment

Your Kingdom Come Lord

Jesus Christ our Saviour

Your teachings are life and light for us

Through you we learn how to love

Through you we learn to help the little ones
 Even giving a cup of water to the thirsty
 is enough for you O Lord
 you help us choose life and reject sin
 you Lord set us an example
 through you we are at peace with one another
 and have salt within ourselves
Your Kingdom Come Lord

Come Holy Spirit
 Salt us with fire
 Come upon us today
 May we be shaped according to God's will
 May we follow Christ on the way of peace
Your Kingdom Come Lord

Prayer of Confession – Rev Tina, Responses Lynne Rosenthal

Lord, if we have not loved you with our whole being and others as ourselves, forgive us
 If we have placed obstacles in front of others, forgive us
 If we have done things which have caused us to stumble, forgive us
 Transform our hearts and lives

**Lord, help us to continue to live with compassion, integrity and peace
 Help us be Salt of the Earth**

The Lord our God is loving and forgiving
 The Lord shapes us and blesses us
 We are a forgiven people
 A beloved people

Thanks be to God

**Hymn: Come Down O Love divine (Tune: Down Ampney -4vv) with lyrics for
 congregations. Chet Valley Churches**

<https://youtu.be/edK3Vv7Qwo4>

Reading from Mark 9:38-50 Version - NIV - Tim Joyce

³⁸ “Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.” ³⁹ “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁴⁰ for whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

⁴² “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. [⁴⁴] [^a] ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. [⁴⁶] [^b] ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where ‘the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ [^c] ⁴⁹ Everyone will be salted with fire.

50 “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves and be at peace with each other.”

Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version® NIV® Copyright © 1973 1978 1984 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™
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Responses to Reading from members of Congregation

Meditation – Rev Peter

From tree to tree

A tree
When all began
Promises much
Knowledge on the path
Divinity

Stumble
Fall
Hard road
Detractors
Distractions
Misconstrue
Misunderstand
(demonic)
Stumble

New beginning
Salted fire
Journey of hope
Steps of pain
Humble
Insignificant
Small healing
Strange way
Sharing
Deliberate

With the divine
A tree gives
All fulfilled
Life

Sermon – Rev Pete

Demons: When Jesus mentions demons does he have the same image as those of us raised by Christendom? The answer is definitive maybe, but unlikely. The demonic spiritual power imagery was developed in the Jewish mystical tradition of Kabbalah. But even then they are not the same as ‘beings’ from another spiritual dimension that battles with God. They are considered, and I think this is a wonderfully helpful image, “the results of misspent life energy”. Demon is also used to generally mean a foreign god. This is not equating the demon as being God like, rather it is a distraction from the one Yahweh who is in and through all things.¹ If we read the opening line of our reading with this in mind, then someone was rebuking foreign gods. There was a history of Jewish communities being influenced to put idols or altars to foreign gods into synagogues and other holy places. If someone is throwing out foreign gods or demons, as it says, then consider what are the foreign gods or demons we could throw out. Could we consider capitalist greed to be a foreign god who undermines creation, destroys community and commodifies people? If we do, then I believe an exorcism is in order!

Ched Myers, in his book *Binding the Strongman*, points out that casting out demons was essentially righteous works of justice and compassion. He points out that the disciples are creating a narrative for themselves that only they are doing this properly. Are there any Christians today that believe that they are the only ones who

are doing Christianity properly? Is it really justice if it has the Baptist Union's stamp on it and not the Logo of the Uniting Church?

Whoever treats you with righteousness because you bear the name of Christ will not be punished. When Mark says 'Christ', what does he mean? The Christ or Messiah, in Hebrew is the Meschiach, which is translated into Greek as Christos, which is translated into English as Christ, is one who ushers in the new beginning after the end-times. So, the Christ for the Jewish community is an eschatological expectation. That is, it is not here yet, but it is God's future impacting on life now, calling us to live justly, to live with compassion for both humanity and the creation. The Messiah will announce God's reign, or the eschaton, in a number of ways, but the most common understanding is with a new Eden experience. All people will return to a deeply dependant relationship with God, and creation will be restored. The book of Genesis starts with a Tree in a Garden, the book of Revelation ends with a tree in a Garden.

Jesus follows this up by talking about stumbling. First it is a stumbling block. The word Satan carries the image of a stumbling block. When Jesus says "get behind me Satan" to Peter, it carries the image of, "Don't cause me to stumble in my response to God". Stumbling block, therefore makes sense.

But when has your hand caused you to stumble? Is there more about this word stumble that we should be aware of? Stumbling block is the translation of the Greek word skandalisē. The scandal here is not some moral sexual failure as the church in which I grew up taught me, rather, it is corruption on the pathway to the kingdom of God.

So if your hand, foot or eye causes you to scandalise yourself or your community, cut it off. Cutting off the hand was a common punishment for theft or fraud, cutting off the foot was a punishment for robbery or an escaping slave, plucking out the eye was a punishment for sexual misconduct or adultery. These are very public announcements about the type of person you are dealing with. Each of these punishable actions undermine the community.

This amputation response from Jesus in this passage, comes after disciples have questioned someone else doing righteous healing. The disciples are in essence creating idols of their own movement, creating stumbling blocks or scandals by building up their own status on the name of Jesus (as they do later on in Chapter 10 with their egotistical concerns about "Who will sit at your right hand?")

How then do the disciples avoid this temptation to scandal, to create stumbling blocks, to sever themselves, the temptation to build their own reputations, to serve themselves with salt?

Salt is not just something that the Jewish people of Jesus' time put on their chips in order to add some flavour. Every burnt offering, every meal with God, was to be flavoured with salt. Salt is the key ingredient in show-bread, that is the bread that sits on the altar of God in the temple. Salt was also rubbed on newborn children to protect them from evil and also as a ritual cleansing. It was a key ingredient of incense too. Remember that the temple area was peppered (haha, what a pun!) with incense pots. And the smoke, much like First Peoples smoking ceremony, moved around people to purify and protect them. Salt is therefore not just a flavouring condiment, it is a sign of intentional life with God.

Therefore, the comment, "Salt is good, but if it has lost its saltiness," is likely to mean Ritual is good, but if it is removed from intentional life with God then it is empty.

As disciples of Jesus the Christ, we are to avoid the temptation of scandal and self-idolatry. Rather, we are to recognise that God is God, and live with Salt, to have intentional life with God. This requires constant self-evaluation, communal connectedness, the deep living that encompasses everything within us, and without us. Be Salt.

YouTube Hymn – O God, you search me tMt video
https://youtu.be/wvI-sX_e78

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 – John Gerrand

Loving God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we bring to you now our prayers for others. As we consider the wonderful world in which you have placed us to live, we pray particularly today for the people of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Peru.

We give thanks for:

- the distinctive rhythms, music, dance, food and natural medicine in this area
- the beauty of the region, forests, mountains, rivers, lakes, and ocean coastlines, and especially indigenous peoples' relationship with, and care for, the natural environment
- churches who witness and work both ecumenically and with those of other faiths to build relationships of trust and commitment amid ongoing injustice and oppression
- the diversity of languages and cultures flourishing in the region despite disruptions that have occurred through colonization, and political and economic turmoil.

We pray for:

- Christians to have the courage, imagination and energy to build bridges of peace and understanding against conflict and division, and to pursue justice for the poor, marginalized and dispossessed
- an end of corruption in all levels of the society, including economic exploitation which impoverishes and hinders economic growth from benefitting all.
- immigrants and refugees seeking a new home, and those who accompany and support them
- coca farmers to find sustainable incomes from other crops, for an end to drug trafficking, and effective assistance for those who are addicted.

We pray, too, for those in countries all over the world who are battling the effects of the COVID-19 virus. Support and protect the thousands of front-line medical workers, we pray. Guide those in authority as they have to balance the perceived rights of individuals with the expectations of the community as a whole to minimise damage caused by the virus.

In our **ecumenical** prayer cycle we remember today your people worshipping and serving at New Hope Baptist Church, Blackburn North. May they know your presence with them as they seek to show your love to others in their neighbourhood. We ask your blessing on the personal development and support programs offered by the church, including those focussed on children and teenagers, and on the Chinese and Persian communities.

Within the **Uniting Church** we pray today for the worship and work of the Kew East, Hawthorn West and Camberwell Korean congregations. As your people work for you through these congregations and outreach groups we seek for them your guidance and a vision of what can be achieved working together and with you and in your name.

We remember our Presbytery Ministers in prayer as well. Support and encourage them as they in their turn support and encourage our local ministers. As the structure and operation of the church adapts at the local level, give the Presbytery Ministers the insight and courage they will need to lead the spiritual and pastoral work of the church.

Lord, we seek your blessing on our people at Whitehorse Cluster, on our worship and our work together. We ask your blessing on each member of our cluster ministry team as they lead us in worship, service and growth at the parishes within the cluster. May this be a time of encouragement and growth for us all.

We pray today for comfort and healing for those close to us who are unwell or who need your guidance and strength, and we remember and pray for them now in silence

We bring these prayers in our Saviour's name, praying the words that he 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 for ever. Amen.

Candle Prayers



Hymn 658 I the Lord of Sea and Sky (Here I am Lord) tMt video

<https://youtu.be/2oK9xByJpyg>

The Peace

Say the peace with someone with you or reach out with your heart to all of us

Christ, King of Tenderness
 Christ, King of Tenderness
 Bind us with a bond that cannot be broken
 Bind us with a bond of love that cannot be broken

My brothers and sisters
 The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
And, also with You

Celtic Daily Prayer Book one. The Northumbria Community Trust 2015 Published by Collins



Blessing – Rev Pete

The Lord Bless you and keep you
 The Lord make his face to shine upon you
 And be gracious to you
 The Lord lift up his countenance upon you
 And give you peace. Amen

Uniting in Worship. The Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia 2005

Sending out – Rev Peter

Go as People of peace
 Stewards and healers of creation
 Consolers of the afflicted
 And midwives of Justice
 In the name of Christ. Amen

Uniting in Worship. The Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia 2005

Shalom to You Now tMt video

https://youtu.be/liH_HdkWs74

Tips for Self- Care – Rev Tina

If you are fully vaccinated, you can have a picnic with family or friends.



*Petty's Orchard is lovely this time of year
So is Warrantdyte, which has a good bakery*

These are two YouTube Songs about Hope

Andrea Bocelli, Amazing Grace – Music for Hope. Live from the Duomo di Milano
During the lockdowns throughout the world during 2020

<https://youtu.be/bpXwOSHTwsY>

One day at a time Sweet Jesus – Lynda Randle
Gaither Music TV 2012

<https://youtu.be/JhUvFqOY00I>



For prayer

When I checked the WHO Corona Update on Thursday the latest figures of deaths from the pandemic were shocking, with a total of almost 5 million. After seeing Andrea Bocelli sing, and the figures, I can accept our lockdowns have been well worth it. However, we have lost about 1100 people. Please pray for the world and all the families who have lost loved ones.

From my devotional

This morning (Wednesday) I read about St Cuthbert on Inner Farne (Lindisfarne) off the coast of England near the Scottish Border. Some of the words connected with what we are experiencing as we journey through this pandemic. St Cuthbert chose to leave the comfort of his community and live in a tiny stone hut, so he could be alone with God. This poem reflects on his experience of solitude. There are a lot of wild geese in this place and other birdlife and it's beautiful. And noisy.



The ruins of Cuthbert's stone hut

St Cuthbert on Inner Farne *by Cynthia Fuller*

© 1978–2015 Bloodaxe Books Ltd

How the small boat rode the swell
tossed like flotsam
steadied by prayer.

a cloud of curious fulmars
circling calling

He left the shared bread
the community
of compline.

for the kittiwake colony
the turmoil of terns
choosing solitude among the sea birds
the salt lash of the storm
inhospitable hermitage

sea cresting and crashing
sending spray swirling

No silence in the buffeting wind
but the silence within
stillness gathered
divine contemplation
among puffins and eiders

How his spirit grew strong
icy shadows his abbey
the night sky his dome.

The security of living within a community, fed and supported, loved and prayed for, is what we are missing, as we remain within our homes. We cannot gather for “live” worship, yet we can connect on Zoom. How we live is in sharp contrast to how Cuthbert lived, yet our experience of silence, solitude, and time alone with God is like his experience. It has made us strong in spirit, like Cuthbert. Our faith has grown too. His house was subject to all of nature’s storms and tempests and tides and strong howling winds, and we have experienced a little of that too, and an earthquake. As Cuthbert returned to his community, we will also return. Believe this. God is with us and will not fail us.