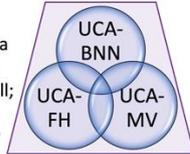




## Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2022**  
Seasons of Creation Materials  
from VICTAS

### Introit 703 As the Deer Pants for the Water

<https://youtu.be/peZudXt9faU>

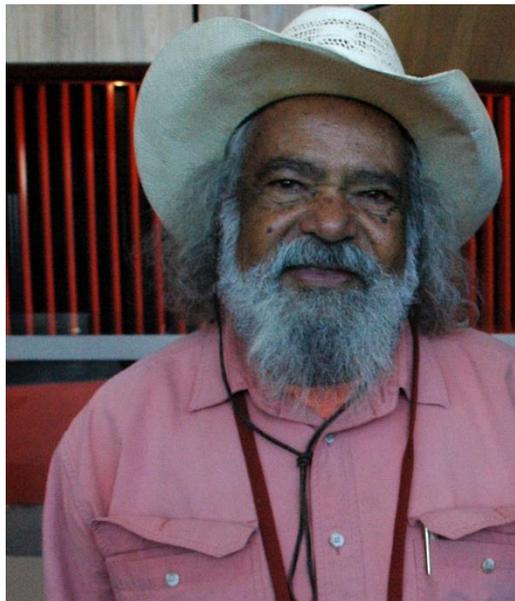
Robyn Mark Citrail 2011

#### Welcome

May the worship be a blessing

#### Acknowledgement

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.



*Photo – T. Lyndon*

*Perhaps you can hold a flower, fragrant leaf or rosemary stem as a symbol of creation during worship today.*

#### Call to Worship

In the name of God, who creates planets,  
the name of Jesus Christ, born on planet Earth,  
and the name of the Spirit who envelopes our planet. Amen.

**Holy! Holy! Holy!**

**Earth is filled with God's presence.**

Christ, we come into your presence, today, to worship in this sanctuary called Earth,

**Holy! Holy! Holy!**

**Earth is filled with your presence.**

## Prayers

God, our Creator, as we reflect on the mystery of our fragile planet, we celebrate the wonders of Earth as our home. Help us to discern how we have polluted our planet and to empathise with the groaning of creation beneath us. Teach us to sense the presence of God pulsing through Earth as a living green blue sanctuary. Teach us to love Earth as our home. In the name of Christ, the Word of God, who is the creative impulse in all creation. Amen.

## Confession

As I hold this flower up, let us remember and confess we have become alienated from Earth and viewed this planet as disposable, a source of endless resources, a mere stopping place on route to heaven.

**We are sorry.**

**We have polluted Earth's waters with toxins, we have turned our greed into global warming.**

**We have helped cause arctic regions to melt.**

**We have loved progress more than the planet. We are sorry. We are sorry.**

We are sorry.

**We are sorry. We are sorry.**

## Absolution

Christ hears your confession and forgives your sins against Earth.

**Christ, teach us to love Earth as our home and the planet as a precious sanctuary.**

I speak for Christ: I invite you to celebrate Earth as your home and to revere this planet as God's sanctuary.

**Shalom! Shalom! Earth is our home!**



**Hymn: 156 Morning has Broken 2012**

**Performed by Orla Fallon**

**Composed by Eleanor Farjeon md 1801**

<https://youtu.be/h5D3LEjGF8A>

## Readings

### Genesis 1:1-25

**1** In the beginning when God created<sup>[a]</sup> the heavens and the earth, **2** the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God<sup>[b]</sup> swept over the face of the waters. **3** Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. **4** And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

**6** And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' **7** So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. **8** God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup> And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup> Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup> And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, <sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. <sup>16</sup> God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup> God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, <sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.' <sup>21</sup> So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' <sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so. <sup>25</sup> God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

### **Romans 8:22-27**

<sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; <sup>23</sup> and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in<sup>[a]</sup> hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes<sup>[b]</sup> for what is seen? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes<sup>[c]</sup> with sighs too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> And God,<sup>[d]</sup> who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit<sup>[e]</sup> intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.<sup>[f]</sup>

### **John 1:1-14**

**1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being **4** in him was life,<sup>[a]</sup> and the life was the light of all people. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

**6** There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. **8** He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. **9** The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.<sup>[b]</sup>

**10** He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. **11** He came to what was his own,<sup>[c]</sup> and his own people did not accept him. **12** But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, **13** who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

**14** And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son,<sup>[d]</sup> full of grace and truth.

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## Young at Heart



Have you ever owned a globe of the earth?

It's such an amazing thing to have and show to children and share stories. To point out Paris or Rome or central Australia.

When we look at a globe it reminds us how interconnected we are with one another and how important peace is or how devastating climate change or destructive pollution is for all of us.

A globe of the world reminds us how our world is small, and fragile. It reminds us God trusts us to care for the world and one another.

### Hymn 137 For the Beauty of the Earth

From the album: Be Thou my Vision

Sacred Music by John Rutter and the Cambridge Singers, city of London Sinfonia 2018

<https://youtu.be/1bDoMflYErE>

### Sermon

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



*Photos –T. Lyndon*

Doors open and close over a lifetime. They open suddenly and we experience a turning point or opportunity or epiphany or something entirely new in our life, that we've always hoped for or needed.

The creation story opens our eyes to God's Word creating the universe, the cosmos, light, sky, stars, waters, creatures, and us in God's image. God loves all of creation. It is good and we dwell within creation.

I have heard a forest of trees is connected underground by intertwined and interconnected roots. Perhaps this symbolises how humanity is interrelated, interconnected and we are interdependent with one another.

After falling off a mountain and somehow being saved, I lay there for a while on a ledge 5300m above sea level. I felt drawn into God's presence somehow, as if God was cosmic and beyond my comprehension. It was as if my awareness of God expanded, and this expansion of consciousness has grown a love of science in me and a new spirituality.

I invite you to Google the *Pillars of Creation*, photos taken by NASA and the Hubble telescope. The gas and dust are said to be in the process of creating new stars which are called a cosmic signpost. They are so beautiful. A wonder of creation. It is said dark matter holds everything together somehow and we only glimpse less than 15% of what can be seen, and the rest is dark matter and dark energy, which is not visible to our eyes. There is so much we do not know or understand. The writers of the stories of creation around 5 BCE wrote stories to encourage exiles. Through science we try to understand creation. It is like faith seeking understanding.

The psalmist stood under the stary sky so long ago and looked up and said these words:

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; <sup>4</sup> what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals<sup>[a]</sup> that you care for them? (Psalm 8)*

Have you ever felt like this? Looking up at the sky can leave us feeling drawn up into heaven, feeling wonder and awe at God's creation.

In the letters to Romans, Paul reminded a divided and suffering community that creation is unfinished. It is groaning like a woman in labour about to give birth. Paul reminds us God is the midwife of our souls. Perhaps we are born from stars. It is said energy cannot be destroyed. What if we have some of our ancient ancestor's energy or energy from plants or stars in us? Paul speaks of the Spirit within us interceding with sighs too deep for words, where we are known by God, who is still creating us.

I've been reading Matthew Foxe's book: *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*. He speaks of a cosmos, that is whole and united. Of a cosmic Christ who brings into creation unity and solidarity. Instead of chaos we have a cosmos. We have a cosmic Christ who redeems us from chaos to cohesion by way of unity and hope. He reminds us we are anointed, divine, and full of beauty and grace, where we are called to radiate God's divine presence and bear the cosmic Christ's blessings to the world, where we reveal the true nature of God.

As we do this, we are reminded everything in creation is in flux, changing, evolving, within time and timeless, and we are part of it all.

In John's prologue we come to know how the Word became enfleshed in the cosmic Christ, who dwells amongst us. Trying to understand all this isn't easy. It's a mystery.

When I consider creation, I think of every little beetle, butterfly, bird, flower, star, or the pillars of creation and dark matter, our earth, every molecule of oxygen, and how each one of us is part of the cosmos, which is a mystery, a force of energy, and unknown.

It seems the more we know the less we know. Perhaps that's when we come back to the place we began and know it for the first time. We come to understand the interconnectedness of all creation and stand wordless, in God's presence.

### **Hymn 132 Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty**

From the hymns Project. Words by Reginald Weber Music John R Dykes Arranged by Phil Nitz

2015 Universal music Brentwood Benson Publishing

<https://youtu.be/JwuDSw-9cUQ>

### **Offering Prayer**

God, our Creator, through your love you have given us these gifts to share. Accept our offerings as an expression of our deep thanks and our concern for those in need, including our fellow creatures on planet Earth.

**With all creation, we bless our Creator.**

## Prayers of the People – Geoffrey Willis

Let us pray.

In the World Council of Churches prayer cycle we remember the people and churches of the Central American nations of **Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Panama**. These countries continue to experience gang violence and drug trafficking. Lord, we pray for an end to these evil acts. May church leaders and others be empowered to continue the struggle for justice, human rights, dignity and reconciliation. We pray that governments will work towards a more just distribution of wealth that enables the millions who have been excluded to have access to a dignified life. May Christians have the courage to live out the liberating gospel. We pray too, dear Lord, for children and youth who are traumatized by violence and have fled to other lands.

Dear Lord, we pray this prayer from a Methodist regional meeting in Panama. May it be our prayer too:

Quote:

*Loving God, I offer myself to you.*

*May my mind think of you, and my eyes see the needs of others.*

*May my ears hear the cries of the world and my voice speak of you.*

*May my hands work for your reign and my feet walk on your path.*

*May my life be used in your service and my heart love you more than anything else.*

*May the joy of the Lord be my strength to serve him all the days of my life.*

End quote.

[Opening worship of the regional meeting of the Methodist Church in Latin America and the Caribbean, 11 May 2002, Panama and published on the WCC website [www.oikoumene.org](http://www.oikoumene.org)]

We pray, dear Lord, for our troubled world, especially for the situation in the **Ukraine**. May this conflict be swiftly resolved and may international pressure on Russia allow a quick resolution. May displaced persons be able to return to their homeland in peace.

In our ecumenical prayer cycle we pray for the leaders and people of **All Saints' Anglican Church in Mitcham**. Dear Lord, please bless their vicar, the Rev Greg Wong, as he leads the 9:30 am Sunday and the 11:00 am Wednesday worship services. We pray for their All Sorts Op Shop which is open each week day. Dear Lord, please bless their Mitcham Community Meal which is provided every Sunday at 6:00 pm.

In our prayers for Uniting Churches in our Presbytery, we pray today for the **Mernda and Plenty Valley** congregations. May their ministry and service to their communities be empowered by gifts of the Spirit. Our prayers today include the **Synod Moderator**, the Rev David Fotheringham. Lord, be with David as he leads the Synod and represents the Uniting Church to the media. May he be supported in all that he undertakes.

Finally, Lord, we pray for **ourselves** as congregations with the desire to work together. We specially remember the Hawkey family as they mourn the death of their son Jonathan. May they find comfort in their grief. We pray too for all those who are undergoing medical treatment. May medical science provide the relief which they require.

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.*



photos – T. Lyndon

### **Hymn 135 All things Bright and Beautiful**

From the album: Be Thou my Vision

Sacred Music by John Rutter and the Cambridge Singers, city of London Sinfonia 2018

[https://youtu.be/ShpRCvU\\_bxM](https://youtu.be/ShpRCvU_bxM)

### **Sending out**

Christ calls you to be his disciples, to serve him with love and compassion, to serve Earth by caring for creation.

Hold again the fragrant symbol in your hands and go forth to serve.

**We will remember our planet home! We will groan with all creation!**

**We will celebrate with Earth!**

Will you care for creation?

**We will care for creation! We will nurture our planet!**

**We will celebrate life!**

### **Blessing**

May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all,  
fill you with the knowledge of God's presence in Earth and the pulsing of Christ within you.

Go in peace!

Serving Christ and loving Earth!

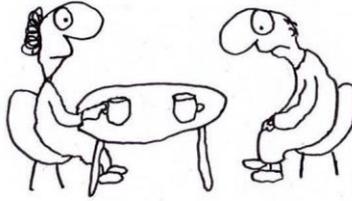
**We go in peace, serving Christ and loving Earth.**

### **Hymn 755 You Shall Go Out with Joy**

(The trees of the Fields) 2020 Chet Valley Churches

<https://youtu.be/ivfUKd6AFXw>

## Pastoral Care tips – Rev Tina



*Leunig (Used with Permission)*

It's not fair! Many of us have heard this from those who are suffering.

Rabbi Kushner in his book: *When bad things happen to Good People*, speaks of the randomness of suffering, especially due to natural disasters. Tell that to a CFA fireman or people in a country town where a fire is raging towards them, and a sudden wind change takes it in the opposite direction, and they are saved. I've spoken to them. A CFA firefighter said: "*When your number is up, it is up.*" The lady in the Post Office of the town felt awe at the power of nature and divine intervention.

Rabbi Kushner spoke of the need of ancients to create miracle stories about God's intervention, stories such as God parting the Red Sea to allow the Israelites to escape from the Egyptians or Daniel in the lion's den not being eaten by a lion.

I have my own miracle story after falling off a mountain at 5300m above sea level, where I was seconds away from being carried over the ledge to certain death and after becoming aware of people praying for me, put my foot out and it hit the only rock sticking up at the edge of that ledge and it brought me to an abrupt halt, where I didn't go over. I too felt awe at divine intervention.

But what about others who have fallen off mountains and have died? Not everyone is saved. Not everyone experiences nature changing its mind. Why are some people healed and others aren't? That's what makes people say: *It's not fair. Why were they spared and not me? Why did they die and not you? Why did I get Covid and not you?*

Rabbi Kushner says there is no pattern or reason for this randomness. The Rabbi spoke of pain being creative in childbirth and climbing mountains or soul destroying after loss, injury or during illness.

But he said natural disasters and illness are not about God's will. Insurance companies may call some events an "Act of God" but he believes an "Act of God" is when entire communities rally to help those affected by a natural disaster.

I would say an act of God is when someone feels compelled during their prayer time to phone or visit another who is doing it tough and go and have a cuppa with them and simply listen. Love is an "Act of God".