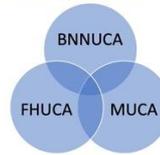




Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



Sunday 3rd October 2021



Song – Be Still for the Presence of the Lord tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-yBLNgQkvY&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLlsLD2rC&index=4>

Welcome – Rev's Peter, Pete and Tina

Acknowledgement of country– Rev Peter

We acknowledge the traditional owners of this land. For most of us it is the Wurundjeri people. We acknowledge the care poured into this land. We also acknowledge the pain and dislocation caused by colonialism and that this land was never ceded. In our acknowledgement, we commit to hearing the story of first peoples of lamenting loss of celebrating wisdom and seeking a future of treaty and reconciliation.

Call to Worship – Rev Pete

God who meets us in mystery be with us. God who confuses us with calls to march into a future with righteous fire, while inviting us to lay next to deep waters. God who both comforts and confronts, be among your people today.

Prayers of Adoration, Invocation and Confession – Maryann Rivett

Our God,

The world is more magical, less predictable, more autonomous, less controllable, more varied, less simple, more infinite, less knowable, more wonderfully troubling than we could have imagined being able to tolerate when we were young.

More surprising, able to operate without us
adaptive, resistant, robust, fragile, complex
and into this environment, we are.

We live, we grow, we interact, we flounder, we survive, we cope, we struggle, we are. We are yours.

We are yours, and we are not alone; as those with the capacity to love,
we reflect your image to the world.
We bring our cares and concerns, our joys and sorrows, our celebrations, and our doubts.
We give thanks for the things that have fitted in to the pattern of life we enjoy.

Lead us into the thanks and praise for the things that don't fit our pattern but fit yours.
Guide our prayers away from the selfish things to the things that are of the Spirit.
Guide us to prayers that are generous, that are gifts, that are life-giving,
that are humble and aware.

The world is more magical and mysterious than we can imagine,
so we limit ourselves to our field of vision.
Enlarge our imaginations, roll back the limits to enable us to pray effectively.

We give thanks for your church community here in this place, where we can grow in faith in a loving
environment. Bless your churches in this district and wherever your people meet.
For the places where you are not recognised,
we pray that your realm would come, and your will be done.
Bless our efforts to be your disciples and bless us as we offer ourselves as gifts to the world.

The writer, from Hartwell Church of Christ, Melbourne, Australia, references the quote on page 25 of "Falling Upward" by Richard Rohr as the inspiration behind the prayer.

Song – Tell out my Soul tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdeCoLdgHXo&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLsLD2rC&index=37>

Readings – Rev Pete

Job 1:1, 2:1-10

1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.

2. On another day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. 2 And the Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it." 3 Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

4 "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. 5 But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face." 6 The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life." 7 So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. 8 Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. 9 His wife said to him, "Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!" 10 He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Mark 10:2-16 – David Rowe

2 Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" 3 "What did Moses command you?" he replied. 4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." 5 "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. 6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11 He answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.”

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” 16 And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version ® NIV® Copyright © 1973 1978 1984 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Responses to Reading from members of the Congregation – Rev Pete

Meditation – Rev Tina



Job and the Butterfly – © T. Lyndon 2020

It's been a challenging week for many. I'm mindful that this month we have readings from Job and at the same time COVID cases may be high. So, I've written this meditation in response to what we are facing, where I've looked for signs of hope.

Make yourself comfortable for this short meditation.

I invite you to place your hands on your tummy and breathe naturally, notice how you breathe. The rising and falling of your abdomen.

Breathe out slowly as if you're sighing with contentment then allow your lungs to fill naturally.
Try this again, breathing out as if you're sighing then allowing your lungs to fill naturally.
It's good to relax

Imagine the life of a butterfly how it's transformed over time,
how it emerges from the darkness of a cocoon into the light.

Consider Job, a good man who suffered deeply, who at one stage, was unable to find God in the darkness, yet persevered in his faith.

One day, when it was just too much, he complained to God and God came to him in a mighty whirlwind saying "Who are you?"

Ponder for a moment on the past eighteen months.
We have faced dark moments too, everyone complains at some time, we can understand Job.

Ponder about your journey

Who are you?
What has given you strength?

God revealed his mighty power over creation to Job.
God is greater than this pandemic. This is the right time to hold fast to your faith.

Job's response to God was one of wonder and humility
Job emerged from his cocoon a changed man, restored, blessed.
We too will emerge from this time changed, restored, and blessed.

Believe
Breathe out any heaviness of heart then breathe in God's Spirit
Feel strengthened in God's presence

Give thanks for your blessings.
Thank you, Lord.

YouTube Song – Gerry and the Pacemakers - You'll Never Walk Alone
(Official Video) From Gerry and the Pacemakers
https://youtu.be/OV5_LQArLa0

Sermon – Rev Peter

Be still and know

Once upon a time, in a land not too far away, lived a king. This king, like most kingdoms, had a court with many officials. The best and the brightest were well paid. And the king's favourite was a man named Jobert. Jobert was the favourite for good reason. Everything he did seemed to be successful. He was loyal, warm, fair and a person of integrity to boot. Everyone thought highly of Jobert. Everyone except Darian. Darian thought Jobert was just too good to be true! He was suspicious of him but then that was his job to be suspicious. Darian was suspicious of everyone. He was the court's minister for the interior – the head of counterintelligence (spy hunter in other words).

One day the king was waxing lyrical about another of Jobert's successes just as Darian entered the court. Darian couldn't contain himself any longer and whispered under his breath to his assistant, "Surely Jobert's success is due to royal patronage? I'm sure if he didn't have so much backing, he wouldn't do so well. In fact, I am not sure in such a case he could even be trusted! Surely, he only speaks so highly of the king simply because he pays him so much!"

Darian must have spoken louder than he intended for the king heard him! The king stopped what he was saying. All went quiet as the king turned and looked at Darian. The king couldn't let such a challenge go unanswered. He knew that such questions only served to nag away in people's minds until they cause real damage. The king responded to Darian, "So you think so do you? Pray tell, what would you suggest?"

Darian was taken aback but quickly regained his composure. He settled himself into his preferred role. He thrived on challenges and challenging people, pushing them to their limits. He jumped at the opportunity. "If your glorious majesty would permit, I believe I can show that every man has his limits, even Jobert! Given the right circumstances, even he can turn against you." The king was not convinced but still with all he knew he agreed to Darian's challenge.

What do you notice in my story? Sounds like a fairy tale or a myth doesn't it. Very similar to the opening of the story of Job too. That's because it is meant to be both those things.

Sometimes when we read Bible stories, we suspend our normal recognition of patterns in the stories we see. We are so used to hearing them a particular way and interpreting the fine details we forget the character of the story. In doing so we miss some key points.

Myths are not lies. In fact, they are stories told to elicit and explain important truths. They may or may not be based on historical elements, but a truth is at its heart. And like many ancient stories, told and retold, they grow and pull in different elements for different reasons over time.

Job is thought by some scholars to be one of the oldest books of the 1st Testament. Some think it could have been written up to 3000 years ago. Many though put its origins at around 500 – 700 BCE. That was a time of exiles, invasions, political upheaval and significant suffering for the Israelite people.

If you read the book as a whole, you quickly pick up it addresses the question of theodicy and suffering: theodicy is the problem of how to reconcile a just God with a world containing evil. As the 20th Century Jewish Rabbi Harold Kushner posed in his book by the same name, “Why bad things happen to good people?” It is a question just as relevant today as in all times.

COVID, deadly diseases, illness, storms, earthquakes, tsunamis, war, volcanic eruptions, car and industrial accidents, to name but a few. Such are as much a problem today as for previous generations. And simplistic answers just don't cut it.

A relative several years ago was diagnosed with a form of leukaemia. Her church community pushed her to pray harder for God to heal her. Others suggested she must have done something wrong. While others claimed God was testing her. Sound familiar? These solutions are all there in the story of Job. Over the coming weeks, check it out.

One of the delights of this ancient story is its willingness to avoid off-pat answers. Spoiler alert: mystery is embraced; silence is encouraged; listening deeper is engaged. Moreover, the myriad of words in the story keeps coming back to the simplicity of openness. In tough times, we grab hold of easy solutions. A simplicity of openness is anything but easy though.

While there is a lot more to our reading from Mark's Gospel than this (see Rev Pete's exploration in this weekend's Sway), I would suggest Jesus is challenging the disciples (and us) to be less rigid and more open. In response to the Pharisees' attempt to obtain a black or white answer, thereby putting Jesus on the spot, Jesus refuses to play ball. Instead, he invites a journey into a deeper exploration, a journey into the heart of God.

He explores the question of what it is that God seeks for humanity and creation. He suggests unity matters to God. This connects to Jesus' repeated teaching around what is called the Greatest Commandments.

Is it not ironical that with both stories, later commentators have sought to bring harsher rules and interpretations? A new legalism is imposed when mystery would be embraced, silence encouraged and listening deeper engaged. Shallow reading.

We are in an era of uncertainty. COVID provides an unprecedented challenge. A dearth of political integrity creates anxiety. The churches' decline makes us ill at ease.

So, with Job, the Psalmist and Jesus, can I say, be still, listen for the heart of God and journey in mystery.

Hymn – TIS 453 - We limit not the truth of God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhvRzSPqmQU>

Offering Prayer

God who blesses us with abundance, may we be satisfied with enough. May our enough allow for the redistribution of wealth and power to those who have been disenfranchised, left hungry and vulnerable.

May our enough, mean the hungry can eat, the naked can be clothed, the sick can be cared for and the imprisoned restored to life. We commit our gifts into your mystery.

Prayers of the People – Heather Barnes

Heavenly Father, as Your People we bring our prayers to You this morning. We pray for all those, who following the example of Jesus, search and work for peace. Increase their strength and fill them with your Grace.

In the World Prayer Cycle today we are remembering the South American Republics of Columbia, Ecuador and Venezuela. Each of these countries have had long, troubled and violent histories and we pray for stability and fairness in their economies; we particularly ask for the indigenous peoples of each of these three countries who often bear the brunt of poverty amid the growing economic disparity.

Lord, there are so many other concerns for Your World at present and we ask for wisdom and courage for our leaders, at every level of Government. May they truly try to act fairly and for all. We hear that some are now receiving a third COVID Vaccine, when so many worldwide have not received one! Dear Lord, May we each in our small way do what we can to help others, particularly as many are finding their patience and tolerance are running thin as this Pandemic has been with us for so long.

We remember our neighbouring Church of St. Luke's Anglican in Vermont and the Uniting Church

Community of Kinglake West. Bless them all as they seek to show Your Love in their localities. We also ask for all those involved in the Presbytery Tertiary Ministries Group and for our Ministry team here in Whitehorse.

We bring before You the Outreach Activities of the Whitehorse Cluster, and in particular, the recently opened Crisis Centre for Older Women. Dear Lord, we bring before you all those who are grieving, recovering from illness or surgery or who are awaiting operations and treatments. May they know the comfort of Your peace. Loving God, We give thanks for Your constant presence in our lives. You know us, understand us and accompany us all the time. We pray together the prayer You taught us.

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

Candle Prayers – Rev Tina

Hymn 569 Guide me O thy great Redeemer tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJfd7UWfUA&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLlsLD2rC&index=1>

Announcements

Blessing – Rev Peter

Adapted from ©2000 Nathan Nettleton www.laughingbird.net with permission

Go now and welcome the signs of God's kingdom
 with the joyous simplicity of children.
 Walk boldly in God's strength.
 And may God journey with you in graciousness.
 May Christ Jesus welcome you as his brothers and sisters,
 and may the Holy Spirit give you courage in time of suffering
 and strengthen you in integrity.
***We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
 In the name of Christ. Amen***

Sending out – Rev Pete

You are nourished by God in this time together. As we leave this space, walk deeply into the mystery of God to be the hands and feet of Christ.

Song – For you Deep Stillness tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeP01DBKGdo&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLlsLD2rC&index=25>

Pastoral Care Tips – Rev Tina

It's been a tough week with news of people we love passing away and high numbers of cases of COVID. It's a good time to listen to music or find a story that inspires you or reach out to your loved ones for comfort or pray or garden or walk. Whatever works best for you, and you find lifegiving.

A Story to inspire you

Andrea Bocelli talks about his strong faith in God
EWTN News in Depth
https://youtu.be/oN_FVhfZEPw

Music to soothe your soul

Andrea Bocelli – The Lord’s Prayer, Live from the Kodak Theatre USA 2009
With the Mormon Tabernacle Choir
<https://youtu.be/u8jlmjg4UY>

A River Pilgrimage

The Yarra River begins its journey at Mt Baw Baw. It winds its way through the Yarra Valley flowing through the outer suburbs into suburbs local to us into the heart of our city.



In the same way our life flows with ups and downs, twists and turns
blind corners and waterfalls, bridges and billabongs.



At times the river is quiet and peaceful like the times when we drift along
like that warm fuzzy feeling we have as we fall asleep at night, trusting in life.

Sometimes the river rushes by, its current strong like when life pulls us along
where we have no control over events happening around us, such as this pandemic.



We can feel flooded by our emotions by our fears,
worries, anger, boredom, loneliness.
But then we turn a corner and find a refuge, a
place to shelter where feelings have time to settle.

We may reach out to our loved ones for comfort
and company, for joy and sharing
for encouragement and love and come to know we
are not alone, there is someone who cares,
helping us to journey through this, we may even
cross the bridge to the other side of the river.



There is always someone there to keep us
company, helping us to journey onwards,
reminding us we belong to the community of God.

If we ever reach a waterfall we may find ourselves
being carried along in a canoe
where we stay afloat together with a friend or we
may find a way around it which takes time
and in time we discover all is well, we are ok in
God and with one another.



When we reach the wide-open sea it's like a river
always heading home.
we come to realise there is something greater than
us that we can depend upon
with far away horizons and sandy beaches.

© T. Lyndon 2020

The Sleep Prayer

It's time to settle into the warmth of our beds
and close our eyes.
It's time to allow the warmth of sleep to come.
It is safe to surrender into peace
and sleep in trust.
We give thanks for the day, for its blessings
as we close our eyes
as we hand over our life to the Lord.

© T. Lyndon 2020

