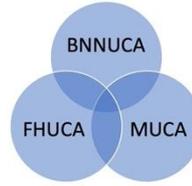




Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



Sunday 10th October 2021

**Introit: Be Still for the Presence of the Lord –
Upminster Baptist Church Live**

Be Still – David Evans. Vocal & String Tom Rogers 9Rogersmusic@live.co.uk

<https://youtu.be/c8oTxmYOMfU>

**Introit: Be Still for the Presence of the Lord –
Northern Baptist Association**

<https://youtu.be/ZugvUQ4m9oU>

Welcome

May the Worship be a blessing for you

Acknowledgement of Country

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 Peter

My God, our God, where are you?

We seek but struggle to find.

My God, our God, who are you?

We struggle but reach our limits.

My God, our God, we need you?

Come as both the One we long to find and who longs to find us.

Opening Prayer - Rev Peter

One who hears and is always present, even in times of absence
gather us to yourself and hold us in love

Make us mindful of your bountiful Spirit that surrounds us

Open us to receiving your graciousness in this day

so that we might live generously and freely as a blessing to your creation

**YouTube Song – O Lord hear my prayer – Taize - Jacques Berthier.
(Maureen Teresa Ward)**

<https://youtu.be/f51n-yb11dY>

Prayers of Confession – Rev Peter

God of our hopes and fears, we yearn for you.

When we are overwhelmed with fear, we cry

***Why, my God, have you forsaken me? Why, my God,
have you forsaken me?***

When the suffering which we experience in other people's lives makes us want to turn away from you and stop believing in you, we cry

***Why, my God, have you forsaken me? Why, my God,
have you forsaken me?***

God of our hopes and fears, we yearn for you. When we cannot bear to face the suffering in our world or acknowledge our sad feelings about it,

forgive us.

When we seek quick solutions to problems around us rather than allowing ourselves to feel the pain and seek true healing,

forgive us.

When we accept glib answers and easy excuses,

***forgive us. Fill our hearts with desire for the fullness of life
that only you can bring. Amen.***

Assurance of pardon

God's love is more profound than any of our fears, anxieties or struggles. From the letter to the Hebrews comes this wonderful encouragement: "Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." So know that, whatever may be going on in your life, you can boldly turn to God, whose grace and mercy goes deeper than our despair.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Readings

Job 23:1 – 9, 16 – 17 - Margaret Cosstick

Then Job answered: ²"Today also my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy despite my groaning. ³Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his dwelling! ⁴I would lay my case before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. ⁵I would learn what he would answer me, and understand what he would say to me. ⁶Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; but he would give heed to me. ⁷There an upright person could reason with him, and I should be acquitted forever by my judge. ⁸"If I go forward, he is not there; or backward, I cannot perceive him; ⁹on the left he hides, and I cannot behold him; I turn to the right, but I cannot see him. ¹⁶God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me; ¹⁷If only I could vanish in darkness, and thick darkness would cover my face!

Psalm 22:1 – 2

¹My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? ²O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night but find no rest.

Hebrews 4:15 – 16 - Judy Laslett

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Mark 10:17 – 31

¹⁷ As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother.'" ²⁰ He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." ²¹ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." ²² When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

²³ Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴ And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus

said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

²⁶ They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

²⁸ Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” ²⁹ Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, ³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

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Responses to Readings by members of the congregation

Moment of quiet Meditation space



Sermon – Rev Tina

Who then can be saved?

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

Many of us have felt rejected at some time in our life. Parents, first loves, partners, children, friends, God. We may even have had felt totally alone and abandoned. Job in his suffering groans and his heart feels faint. He feels lost, in the midst of darkness, and is terrified. It's so dark he feels like he could vanish into it. He calls out: *Where are you God?*

The psalmist also calls out to God from the darkness, all day and all night, finding no rest for his soul. He feels totally alone, forsaken and abandoned by all those who he knows and by God.

Jesus is on a journey with his disciples and a man runs up to him and out of respect falls on his knees before Jesus. The man asks: *Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?* Jesus responds, wanting to draw the man's attention towards God: *Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.* Jesus asks the man: Have you kept the commandments and names some of them. Notice what is missing. The commandments about loving God and putting God first.

The man says he has kept the commandments since his youth. Jesus looks at him with love. He knows the man is thirsty for God's spirit and the man's heart is telling him all the supports in his life, his wealth and power are not enough. Something is missing. He asks the man for a radical decision. One that goes against the man's faith, place in society and family, for Jews believed wealth was a sign of God's blessing. Perhaps the man has a sense of entitlement, pride and self-congratulation. Jesus says to the man: *Sell everything and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then follow me.* Giving money to the poor was expected of Jews, but not all of it.

Treasure in heaven? This is the key to understanding why Jesus wants the man to give up his wealth. It is more important to put our trust in God and be dependent on God and interdependent with others. Eternal life is about treasure in heaven. But the man was a prisoner of his wealth, status and position. He may have thought he measured up or was entitled.

But the man feels shocked. He cannot do it! He cannot give it all away and leave all behind to follow Jesus. He went away grieving, choosing to hold fast to his earthly wealth, rejecting the treasures of heaven. Perhaps he even may have felt rejected.

Jesus told his disciples: *How hard it is for those with wealth to enter the kingdom of heaven.* It reminds me of a trek in Nepal in the Annapurna region and a poster I saw in a teahouse. *Material wealth is spiritual bankruptcy.*

I don't think this is what Jesus is saying.

The disciples felt perplexed by what they witnessed.



Jesus teaches them, using a stark contrast with the biggest animal in Palestine and the smallest hole: *Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.*



Gavin Blakemore -used with permission

The disciples ask: *Who then can be saved?* Jesus tells them, what's impossible for mortals is possible for God. Peter responds: *Look we have left everything to follow you!* He almost sounds almost self-righteous. The disciples have done everything Jesus has asked. Does that mean they get into the kingdom of God?

Jesus' response seems strange after what he said to the wealthy man. He speaks of leaving all to follow him and then receiving a hundredfold back. But there's a twist, the present age comes with persecutions. Then he speaks of the age to come.

What is going on?

In the present age there will be persecution, with Peter crucified upside down, Mark, Paul and James beheaded, and Jesus, crucified. But, in the age to come God's promises will be fulfilled. All will be restored, and the world will be transformed into a new world. This was the thinking at the

time. It's about future hopes and promises. God's promises for all of us. Jesus cuts through these hopes and says: *It will not be as you expect. The last will be first and the first will be last.*

This raises the question: Who will be in and who will be out of the kingdom?

A camel passing through the eye of a needle helps us understand how impossible it is for us to enter the kingdom of heaven where we depend upon our own efforts, achievements and wealth. Perhaps the invitation is to receive the kingdom and eternal life as a gift from God. Perhaps the invitation to 'follow me' is about surrender to God and acceptance of God's claim over our lives. Perhaps it's about radical obedience to Jesus.

We like to think we have our life planned out and control over it. Jesus' invitation to the wealthy man is to reorientate his heart and life, so he can follow him. On the surface Jesus' invitation to all of us demands a wholehearted response and removal of obstacles that prevent us from following Jesus. Going deeper it means Jesus' call is radical and demands our hearts and in the letting go and surrender to God, comes the promised peace, beyond all understanding. It means trusting God with our life. It means understanding discipleship isn't about giving up our life. It's about receiving life. It's about commitment, faithfulness and acceptance and trust and most of all, love.

Who then can be saved?

Jesus gave us the greatest commandment to love God with all our being and others as ourselves. Perhaps this is a starting point. God is love and there is no mystery in love, only expansion. Expansion of our hearts.

Yet, entry into the kingdom of God and receiving eternal life, is unconditional. The invitation is to do things God's way, not our own. God's way is not about rejection. We heard about how Jesus suffered and is with us in our suffering. And because of his suffering we can approach God with boldness and know deep in our hearts we are enough and loved and through grace we are accepted unconditionally into the kingdom of God, and we receive eternal life as a gift. What is impossible for us is possible for God.

I'll finish with a story.

I heard the story of an Anglican Priest. He was a gangster who hurt many people and mistreated his wife. One day a priest came up to him and tried to give him a bible. He hit him over the head with it. But the priest kept on coming to see him and praying for him. One day everything went wrong for the gangster, and he was so overwhelmed he fell to his knees and prayed to God. Something shifted in his heart, and he was transformed and left feeling like a crab without a shell. He sought out the priest who prayed for him and over time became a priest himself, ministering to other gangsters, homeless, prostitutes, drug addicts, and many others. What a radical reversal.

The Lord be with you

Song – As the deer pants (all verses) – tMt video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8gv_q4vOiY&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=27

**YouTube Version – As the Deer longs for running streams – Bob Hurd
(John Rand 2017)**

https://youtu.be/_mk3uG50Ozo

**Prayers of the People - Waiting for you – The Many – Takeaway Show
(The Plural Guild)**

<https://youtu.be/RndTVIsAuQA>

Prayers of the People - Michael Plumridge, Mountview

Let us pray;

Lord in whom we trust; the One from whom salvation comes, the One who loves us: please hear our prayers this morning.

Lord this morning we pray for the Central American countries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Panama. We give you thanks for the natural beauty in this unique part of the world: for the rugged coastlines

on both the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean; for volcanoes, rainforests, waterfalls and deep, wide rivers. We thank you for Quetzals and Spider Monkeys.

Lord, we thank you too for the cultural and spiritual contributions made by the indigenous peoples who belong to these lands. We ask that their connection to the land might be acknowledged and respected. We ask for your strength and guidance for church leaders and others who continue to struggle for justice, human rights and dignity, and who work for reconciliation. We pray for children and youth who are traumatized by violence and for all who flee to other lands. God of peace we pray that those who use violence as a means to an end might turn away from all corrupt practices and live with others in peace. We pray for an end to gang violence and drug trafficking. God of justice we ask for a more just distribution of wealth so that the millions who have been excluded might have access to a dignified life. Lord uphold Christians to have the courage to live out the liberating gospel.

In other prayers for the world, we pray for the people of Afghanistan now under Taliban rule. We pray for all who are afraid for their lives and all whose lives will change for the worse – especially women. Lord we ask that Australia may show compassion and mercy and find ways to alleviate their hardship. God of love we ask for your presence in a suffering world.

Locally, we pray for the people of St Philip's Catholic, Blackburn North; we also pray for the Uniting Churches at Lilydale and Montrose. We pray for all who worship in these locations and ask that you bless them in these troubled times. We also pray for the Queens College Chaplaincy – we ask you to bless this ministry as it serves the students of Queens College. Be with them at this time as they are under restrictions due to lockdown.

We pray for our own church, Mountview, and for the congregations of Blackburn North/Nunawading and Forest Hill. We thank you for those whose efforts are keeping us linked at this time. Bless the homes and families of our ministers we pray. We give you thanks for the work of the Whitehorse Regional Council.

Lord, may we walk in your light and be guided by your Spirit,
Help us see the needs and hear the cries of a hurting world.

When strength fails, grant us the wisdom to turn again to you.

We pray this and all our prayers in the name of Jesus, amen.

Candle Prayers – Rev Tina

Communion – Rev Pete

Mark 10 17 -31 challenges the rich man to give up the kingdom of wealth that validates him so that he can become dependent on the generosity of community and the goodness of Yahweh. The disciples challenge Jesus about if the rich and socially respected cannot enter the kingdom of heaven then who can?

Jesus, in a deeply Jesus' way, tells them that there is no class system in the kingdom of God. Your financial status gives you no weight in the kingdom of God.

A political reading of this text then tells us that whatever your status, put upon you by our worldly communities is not welcome in God's kingdom, this community of Christ. As a result, men, women, non-binary, transgender and all of the labels and values placed upon those who we share God's table with are all equally welcome. Men do not get more communion bread than women, the heterosexual and the homosexual share wine together. The billionaire and the poverty stricken share the same bread. The power to welcome into the Kingdom of God, and therefore the table of God belongs only to God.

Communion is the most radical, revolutionary action that the Church takes. It is bread that passes through the hands of the community with all the scars and stories of brokenness. It is wine that celebrates the life that is found in the community of Christ that passes the lips regardless of lipstick, language or the ability to speak or sing. This is our communion.

When Jesus broke bread he shared it with all who gathered at the table, even Judas who betrayed, even the disciples who ran away in fear, even Peter who continually got it wrong. Jesus broke bread with those who dared to share his table.

Please break your bread.

Please say out loud:

We break bread with all those who dare to break bread with Christ.

When Jesus poured out wine, it was the celebration of new life, restored and profoundly transformed because it ignored the social values that left people dislocated and isolated. Jesus poured wine of celebration because real life, new life, eternal life refuses to be limited by systems and structures that alienate and victimize. God calls us to eternal life and Christ pours himself into this cup of transformative celebration.

Please, as you take your cup, say these words out loud:

***We drink from this cup,
with all who dare to believe that true life is found in God.***

Please take a moment of silence and then raise your voice in the prayer that challenges us to live in humility with God.

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***

Song – TIS 647 - Comfort, comfort tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1x7V9N583Q&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLsLD2rC&index=33>

Announcements

Offering Prayer – Rev Peter

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.

Blessing and Sending Out – Rev Tina

Let us leave this place knowing that in both sorrow and joy we are not alone. And may the blessing of God: life-giving Creator, suffering Saviour and ever-present Spirit, be with us now and always. Amen.

Song: TIS 779 May the feet of God – Robin Mann & Dorothy Mann

<https://youtu.be/aQyX4O9kSke>

Self-care tips – Rev Tina



I attended the WCC pastors' breakfast on Thursday morning and the topic for reflection was different styles of prayer. We heard that for some, prayer and a walk was how they preferred to begin their day and if they missed this time the day didn't feel right. For others, they prefer to have a time of prayer at night. We are all different in how we relate to God. The facilitator of the

discussion drew from the styles found in Gary Thomas' book *Sacred Pathways*, nine ways to connect with God, 2020, Zondervan. These are some of the 'ways' he identifies: Loving God outdoors, loving God in silence and simplicity, loving God through worship, loving God with the mind We are all made differently. We all relate to God in different ways and pray differently.

Which style do you think you are? Perhaps you favour several styles.

I favour the ascetic style for prayer, loving God in silence and simplicity, and several of the other styles for living out my faith.

This came from my prayer.

Prayer

God is love

There is no mystery in love

Only expansion

One Minute Meditation

I invite you to be still for a moment
to enter into the silence of God

Breathe out like a long sigh
then allow your lungs to fill naturally
repeat this

Empty yourself into God
receive God's love

Stay in this moment for as long as you're able
be still
rest in God's peace

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Thanks to Lorraine and Barney