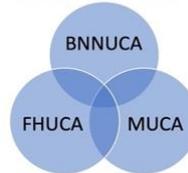




The Uniting Church in Australia  
 Congregations of: Blackburn  
 North / Nunawading; Forest Hill;  
 and Mountview (Mitcham);  
 in a shared ministry together



**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

**Introit – Be Still for the Presence of the Lord  
 Upminster Baptist Church 2020**

<https://youtu.be/c8oTxmYOMfU>

**Welcome – Rev Tina, Rev Peter, Rev Pete**

**Acknowledgement – Rev Pete**

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 Tina – responses Lynne Rosenthal**

Jesus Came

**Not to be served, but to serve**

Jesus called

**Called us to follow his example**

Jesus showed

**Showed us how we can love others through service**

**Prayer of Adoration – Elaine Hewson – responses Lynne Rosenthal**

Majestic God

We find you in the whirlwind, we find you in the silence  
 You Lord, laid the foundations of the universe and this world

You made the morning stars

Clouds come bringing storms and rain watering your creation

You give us wisdom, provide for our spiritual needs

We praise you Lord

For you are great

You stretch out the heavens above us, you ride upon the clouds

You send messages to us on the wind

You cover the earth with water and the mountains with ice.

Lord you are wonderful and mighty

**We give you our thanks and praise**

Lord Jesus  
 Through your life, death and resurrection we know you  
 In your baptism, in your willingness to drink from the cup of suffering  
 we have been set free  
 You have given us the gifts of forgiveness and eternal life  
**We give you our thanks and praise**

Holy Spirit  
 leading us, helping us to love and know God in creation and one another,  
 helping us to follow Jesus, to lay down our life for others  
 in how we give our time, use our gifts, and share our resources to benefit others.  
 Praise to you O Holy Spirit  
 We give you our thanks



**Prayer of invocation – Rev Peter**

Holy Spirit  
 Come upon us today  
 Open our hearts and minds to the gospel, give us courage to embrace it  
 To make the gospel our own and live it out with love for God and others.  
 Amen

**Prayer of Confession – Rev Peter**

Lord we come before you now with all that is on our heart  
 With all that troubles us, with all that is an obstacle between us and you  
 Forgive us Lord and give us grace to forgive others  
 Change our hearts O Lord and help us make a fresh start, a new beginning  
 In this moment of silence Lord  
 We come before you asking for forgiveness

*Silence*

**Absolution – Rev Tina**

Jesus gave his life as a ransom for many  
 He took our place on the cross and gave his life for us to set us free from bondage to sin  
 We are a forgiven people and are set free because of Jesus' faithfulness to God and to us  
 Alleluia, Alleluia, let us praise him  
 Let us give thanks to him



## Meditation – Rev Peter

**Creation invites us beyond** *inspired by Ps 104 and Job 38*

Locked down  
Path rough  
Uncertainties prevail

Struggle  
Life enclosed  
Spirit withdraws

Yet

Beauty  
Our eyes drink it in  
The ancient writers declared your greatness

Mystery  
Delight in life  
The ancient writers declared your greatness

Wonderment  
Creation in splendour  
The ancient writers declared your greatness

## Reading – Bob Laslett

### Mark 10:35-45 - NIV

<sup>35</sup> Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.” <sup>36</sup> “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. <sup>37</sup> They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.” <sup>38</sup> “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” <sup>39</sup> “We can,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

<sup>41</sup> When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. <sup>42</sup> Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

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 Scripture – by members of the Congregation – Rev Tina

**Hymn: Kneels at the Feet of His friends (Jesu, Jesu)** tMt video  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tyNO9QVVK4&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=20>

### Sermon – Rev Pete

What happened so far:

Last week we looked at Jesus' response to the rich man who approached him assuming that eternal life could be inherited, just like his earthly wealth. Following his exchange with Jesus he walks away bewildered about having to give up his wealth.

The disciples, in typical disciple fashion miss the point of Jesus' call to submissive reliance on God and community and wonder that if someone who was seen as blessed by God with wealth misses out on the kingdom of God, then who can get in? Jesus has to slowly walk them through a transformative understanding of blessing meaning belonging to God and community, to be reliant on, participating with and serving all people as a collective household. This classless system was naturally a shock to them. The disciples had seemingly hoped that their friendship with Jesus would give them heavenly capital. This is self-righteousness wrapped up in religious language.

#### Context.

In our reading today the Zebedee boys come to Jesus with the same misguided arrogance of the rich man. Zebedee was a fisherman and James and John had left what may have been a successful business in order to follow Jesus. Perhaps they had seen Jesus' reaction to the rich man earlier and recognised that they had indeed given up their homes, their father's business and future wealth and had followed Jesus. The narrative could suggest that because of what they had left behind they could be expected to be compensated with heavenly power.

At least they recognised that Jesus was not going to pass on any worldly political power. However, their messianic visioning was still captured in the visioning of a liberating Judge passing judgement on all beneath them. The attraction then was to politically position themselves in expectation of this coming new community. Think Deputy Prime Minister and Attorney General, but better. Deputy Messiahs.

It is important to note that Jesus does not say no. Just as he did not say no to the Rich Man earlier in the chapter, instead he offers them an alternative system of understanding the implications of their request.

In his exchange with the rich man, Jesus claimed he had no capacity to grant eternal life, that only God could do that as part of a covenantal relationship of dependence. However, in this case Jesus does offer James and John an opportunity to enter into the messianic mission. But can they drink of this cup? Are they able to?

When Jesus talks about the cup, there are a number of images within Judaism that we would do well to consider. One is the Cup of Elijah. This is the last cup poured at the Passover meal, the cup used in what is now our communion meal, remember it was at the end of the meal that Jesus took the cup. This Passover meal is an annual reminder that God liberates the oppressed, destroys kingdoms of violence and disrupts abusive systems of power. Read your Exodus again and transpose those great themes of liberation across our modern day. The Exodus theme that demands that Black Lives Matter, that we are surrounded by Moses figures confronting the Pharaohs who benefit from the status quo of climate inaction and that a great mass of people are moving in a new direction. That is Passover, God moves. Elijah is the prophetic, messianic figure that disappeared up to heaven at the end of his earthly ministry. He healed people, parted water like Moses and confronted earthly, exploitative power. Elijah is understood to be the one who announces the arrival of the Messiah. Traditionally this cup of Elijah is left untouched until the next morning. That gives Elijah a chance to be resurrected and fulfill his messianic pronouncement.

Are you prepared to drink the cup of Prophet Elijah? To confront oppressive powers, to announce a new way?

Another cup in the context of Judaism is the Kiddush. This is the cup of wine that is blessed at the beginning of Shabbat, the final day of the week before the day of rest. Shabbat runs over the Sabbath and includes three meals. It is the constant weekly reminder to the Jewish community to stop and remember that God is God. That God liberates from Egypt and slavery, that God will not be idle while Israel is oppressed, or hungry, corrupted, or compromised. Every week, this constant reminder of submission to this liberating God is begun with the Kiddush. What would it mean for James and John to drink from this uncompromising cup? Refusing to recognise Caesar as divine, and rejecting Roman authority and corruption? Refusing to bow before violent empire? Are you prepared to drink from the Kiddush?

There are several Cup images that scholars point to, but they can all be summed up in the climactic meal at the last supper. This Elijah/Christ cup contains a life that is poured out for community. This great servant sacrifice of Jesus that is his life, his whole life, not the bit that is extinguished by death, but everything that he is, every healing, every relationship, every part of who he is in God, in relationship and in community is found in this cup.

Are we prepared to drink from a cup that requires us to give all of who we are into the lives of those around us?

Can you be baptised as I am baptised?

The Baptism of Jesus is a cleansing ritual called Tevilah. This is a full immersion experience that is used to frame significant events such as marriage. The immersion occurs in a Mikveh. It must be deep enough for full immersion and must be filled, at least in part, by a natural water source. For example an outdoor batch filled by rain. Tevilah can also take place in the ocean or a river. There are a number of theological gifts in the Tevilah. Firstly, it is God who provides the water, not human made structures. This means there is no human system that can limit access to the water. Because it is water from God, the full immersion and subsequent rising from the waters holds great connection to being created by God. It means that the person has been cleansed of all impurities, spiritual and physical. In this moment, I am a new creation. There is also in Jewish theology the idea that this emerging from the waters is a new birth experience. Jesus did not invent the term 'Born-Again'. It was already used in Judaism.

Women are immersed every month after their menstruation and before a marriage ceremony to ensure they enter this new union and child bearing with a renewed ritual purity. It is also customary for men to be immersed before Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is about repenting of self-righteousness, for failing to commit to the desires of Yahweh. The blessing of Yom Kippur is life re-established in the desires of God.

At the very beginning of Mark, Jesus is baptised by John as the one who will baptise with fire. Fire is what is used to aggressively cleanse sacrifices. Jesus's Baptism is therefore one that embeds him more deeply into his Jewishness - he becomes Israel. He becomes all that God desires of Israel. To embody God, he becomes the light to all nations, he welcomes, heals, ignores social and political structures. That is why he fearlessly confronts corruption and exploitative wealth, why he can heal the Roman Centurion's lover, break bread with sinners and be in relationship with those outside of the social power structures. That is why those who benefit from exploitative social structures are so afraid of him.

When Jesus talks about "my Baptism", I believe it is this radical birth into God that he is talking about. Yom Kippur living.

How might we read this reading into life today?

Our daily challenge is to embody the Gospel. To live Yom Kippur life, recognising our privilege, recognising where we benefit from the exploitation of others, repenting of those times when privilege became entitlement, then pouring ourselves into the life of creation through the sacrifice of neighbour love.

## Hymn – 134 Praise my Soul the King of Heaven tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dl-7VVK0CB4&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=38>

### Prayers of the People – Geoffrey Willis

Dear Lord, we pray for our world, for local churches and for those whom we love. We are conscious that you want us to be stewards of your creation and we pray that we might be more caring in our treatment of this planet. Lord, please guide our politicians in their decision making on emission standards and sustainability.

Our prayers in the World Council of Churches prayer cycle today focus on the Central American countries of **Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico**. In recent years there has been a huge number of migrants from Honduras and Guatemala crossing into Mexico. The homelands of farmers or farm labourers have been badly affected by climate change such that traditional agriculture is failing and water is becoming scarce across the region. Lord, we pray that their situation may be met with compassion and that aid agencies will be able to assist. We pray too that stable, freely elected governments will be committed to the peace and wellbeing of all. May those in leadership help to stem corruption, drug trafficking, and violence, and bring to justice those who profit from such activities. May improved economic life and trade policies be established so that people will not be exploited and can pursue livelihoods in these countries rather than migrating elsewhere for work. We pray for church leaders who have spoken out and acted on behalf of the poor and marginalized. Bless their bravery and empower their witness as they encourage their people.

In our local ecumenical prayer cycle we pray today for the leaders and people of **St Timothy's Catholic Church and School in Forest Hill**. We especially pray for their Parish Priest, the Rev Gerard Johnson, who was appointed in August of this year. We pray that his leadership will be blessed. We pray too for School Principal Anne Maree Jones. May she and her staff provide good role models for those in their care. May the students receive a good grounding to fit them as future citizens.

In our Presbytery, we pray for the leaders and people of the **Manningham Uniting Church**. This church is one of the first in the Presbytery to become a cluster, combining churches in Doncaster, Templestowe and Box Hill North. We pray for the arrangements which will see their Ministry Hub and Community Centre established on the Templestowe site and due to be opened soon. Dear Lord, please bless their ministry team comprising: Minister of the Word the Rev Swee Ann Koh; Missional Community Development Worker Emma Hanna; and Aged Care Mission Coordinator Megan Coote. We pray for wise decisions as leaders and members consolidate these changed accommodation arrangements and bless their online ministry as they, like most churches, provide worship resources during the pandemic.

Today, Lord, we pray for the **chaplaincy ministry of the Royal Australian Airforce**. May those who serve as chaplains bring comfort and assurance to those men and women who serve in the air force.

Lord we pray for our country and our local community as we suffer the effects of **lockdown** during the COVID-19 pandemic. We pray for wisdom in decision making. As plans are being made for some public event trials, we pray, Lord, that arrangements will be those which protect people from transmission of the COVID virus and its variants. We particularly pray that admission requirements to events will be just and not cause division in our communities. Lord we pray for people and their families whose livelihood has been threatened by the close of businesses; for parents who have had to organise home schooling; for those on the front line, doctors, nurses, aged care workers, transport drivers, police and emergency services personnel; for those who operate quarantine facilities, often with inadequate training; for those administering COVID tests and delivering vaccinations. Lord, bless each of these folk as they work to make our communities safe.

Dear Lord, we pray for our **Cluster** of Congregations. Be with and empower our ministry team as they work out how best to serve our three churches. May we each be open to new ways of faithfulness and service as we grow together.

Lord, we pray for those of our **members** who need your comfort and healing. May those in special accommodation, in permanent care, in hospital or rehabilitation be aware of your love and be supported by their families' care and concern. May those experiencing pain or who find sleep difficult be aware of your comfort. May those awaiting medical results put their trust in you, O Lord. May those who mourn the death of loved ones be conscious of your loving presence.

We pray all these things in the name of Jesus our Lord in the words which 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 forever. Amen.*

### **Candle Prayers – Rev Tina**

**Servant Song- Brother, Sister Let me Serve you (mkariobangi 2014)**

<https://youtu.be/hlNoxoOocZs>

### **Notices**

#### **Blessing – Rev Peter**

May you serve God with courage and love  
May you follow Jesus and live according to his ways  
May the Spirit empower you to love others as yourself  
May the father, Son and Holy Spirit bless you  
Now and forever, amen.

#### **Sending out – Rev Tina**

Go in Peace to love and serve the Lord  
In the name of Christ, amen

#### **Hymn - You shall go out with Joy tMt video**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsxetUob-bs&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=23>

### **Self-care tips -Rev Tina**



## A Reflection

Job 38:1-7, 34-41, 1 Kings 19:11-13

Life is filled with contrasts and we tend to think in a dualistic way  
light and dark, good and bad, happy and sad.

Job questions God and God responds.  
Out of a whirlwind God asks Job questions  
Where were you?  
Surely you know.  
Can you?  
Who provides?

God offers no answers for they must come from deep within Job's heart

Job is a bold man, he doesn't hide his suffering, he is very public about it  
sitting on a dung heap scraping away at his sores.

Elijah is afraid. He hides from those who are plotting to kill him, he hides in a cave.  
The Lord commands him to stand on the mountain for He is about to pass by.  
Elijah stands at the entrance to the cave. A great and powerful wind comes down.  
It tears the mountains apart, it shatters the rocks but God was not in the wind.  
An earthquake came and God was not in the earthquake.  
A bushfire came and God was not in the bushfire.

Then comes a gentle whisper - Elijah knows it's God.  
With reverence and awe he pulls his cloak over his face.  
Elijah then dares to leave his hiding place. Then God asks him a question  
What are you doing here Elijah?

We respond in many ways to suffering and pain.  
Some of us are open about our suffering, we let people know about our pain  
we accept their compassion and care.  
Others are more private, preferring to be alone, to take refuge in solitude,  
preferring time and quiet and space.

God comes to all of us.  
In the midst of turmoil and crisis when everything seems messy  
God comes to us in our solitude when we are taking time out to heal  
God sits with us in the dark places holding us with love when we hurt  
while we make sense of it all  
God takes our worries and anxieties from us replacing them with peace and comfort.

We are not alone. God is with us.  
God finds a way to communicate to us, to bring healing to us,  
to send companions to us to comfort us,  
companions who know the journey back from darkness into light  
who lead us back into the light.  
God comes to us in diverse ways, ways we can never imagine