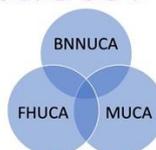




Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



All Saints Day Service 31st October 2021

‘Come as you are’ Monica Butler

MP4 Taizé people 2010

<https://youtu.be/16RywnFAJpY>

Welcome – Rev Pete, Rev Tina

Acknowledgment – Bob Laslett

On this All Saints Day, we acknowledge all who have gone before us, especially 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 and opening prayer – Rev Pete

(adapted from and inspired by Psalm 24 and Isaiah 25:6 – 9 using Nathan Nettleton’s
paraphrase, ©2000 Nathan Nettleton www.LaughingBird.net)

The whole planet belongs to you, LORD —
the earth and everything that lies in it,
grows from it, or walks on it.

***You raised the land above the seas,
and secured its foundations in the depths.***

Who will be granted a permit
to come into your sacred presence, O God?

Every people on earth will be invited to be with you.

And in your wonderful presence

The pall of death is torn away.

For you have swallowed up death once and for all.

And with all of creation we praise and worship you.

Seeking the face (Psalm 24)

<https://youtu.be/8AgdeZ0tzG8> -

sing along with Richard as he teaches this song

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What is All Saints Day? Rev Tina

(adapted from an article by Alex Crain, www.christianity.com)

Who is a saint? The Bible teaches that *you are* – not just some special people who have died.

All Saints Day, also known as All Hallows' Day, or Halloween, is a Christian celebration in honour of all the saints from Christian history. In Western Christianity, it is observed on November 1st. The Eastern Orthodox Church and associated Eastern Catholic churches observe All Saints Day on the first Sunday following Pentecost.

The Christian festival of All Saints Day comes from a conviction that there is a spiritual connection between those who have died and those still living. For us, All Saints Day expresses our appreciation to God for the lives of God's saints, remembering those who were well-known and not. Sometimes, individuals throughout Christian history are celebrated, such as Peter the Apostle and Charles Wesley, as well as people who have personally guided one to faith in Jesus, such as one's relative or friend.

Today we remember those who are close to us, our loved ones who have gone before us, who have done their best to share their faith and build up the faith of our three communities through living their faith in words and deeds that witness to Christ's love amongst us. The focus today is on remembering them. We also affirm the faith of our church and Jesus' promise of eternal life to us.



Candle Prayers – Rev Tina

Today we remember those who have passed away over the past two years
I would like to spend some time naming those who have passed away from each congregation
I will light candles for those named
I invite you to spend a moment prayerfully remembering each person I name

Forest Hill Uniting

Margaret Chadwick	Paul Voumard
Joan Horton	Lilly di Baise
Rita Holland	Max Parrish
Kath Williams	Judy Hard
Gloria Thomas	David Laird
Arthur Tynan	Graham Coward
Mary Steer	

Mountview Uniting

Margaret Edgington	Lorraine Hill
Ross Perkins	Geoffrey Goodall
Noel Dunn	Bev Lacey
Barbara Reid	Joyce Sutton
Joyce Suto	Judy Ralston
And past members: Margaret Mott and Bruce Robertson	

Blackburn North Nunawading Uniting

Doreen Wilson	Lesley Ricketson
Leonie Martenstyn	Graeme Fox
Francie Atkin	David Davies

Laurel Mackechnie
Graeme Scoble
Margaret Cavill
Brian Cresswell

Ian Barker
Val Chatwin
Helen O'Rourke
Melva Allardice

Craft group ladies-

Margaret Edgington
Elaine Niven

Margaret Ball
Sandra Keddie

I invite you to pause now for a moment and remember someone who has helped build your faith, who has passed away, quietly giving thanks to God for the blessing that person has been to you...

Our stories remind us of those who continue to bless generation after generation with God's grace and love. As you listen to today's readings, I invite you to write down your questions or thoughts in response to the readings on a piece of paper.

Readings

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9 NRSV – Elaine Hewson

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them.

²In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, ³and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. ⁴For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. ⁵Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; ⁶like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.

⁷In the time of their visitation they will shine forth, and will run like sparks through the stubble. ⁸They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them forever. ⁹Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones, and he watches over his elect.

John 11:32-44 NRSV – Judy Laslett

³² When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus began to weep. ³⁶ So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

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Responses to Scriptures – by members of the Congregation - Rev Pete

Hymn: For all the Saints – Jacob Lupfer

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

Sermon - Rev Tina

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



The Raising of Lazarus by Van Gogh

Lazarus was one of Jesus' close friends. When we try to understand this story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, we need to take it in within its context, just like all of us need to be understood within our context. Jesus knew his friend was gravely ill and delayed going to his bedside, by two days. He was absent at a time when his friend was dying and needed him.

Some of us may have regrets about not going to someone's bedside when they were dying. I know I have regrets. My granny, Hazel Hartley, died when she was 99.9 years old, at Millwood. My granny's story is she lived at home until she was about 98. My aunt cared for her. Then she had a fall and bruised her breast and developed cancer in her breast and doctors removed her breast when she was 98. Before they removed it, they put in a pacemaker. I went to visit and there she was sitting up in bed doing her physio, moving her arm up and down. She looked at me and said: *You've got to use what you've got and get on with it.* I will remember my granny's wise words as I age and get used to limitations.

My grandmother couldn't go home after the operation. She moved into a hostel. I remember visiting her. After a cuppa and a chat, she took off full speed with her walker, down to the shops. She went into Millwood for the last year of her life and her room looked out onto a courtyard. She used to keep canaries and enjoyed their singing. One day when I was visiting, she saw a bird on the windowsill and admired it and enjoyed its singing. She was always striving to stay positive. One day she told me she wasn't going to bother waiting for the telegram from the Queen. She said: *If they try and bathe me, I'm checking out.* My grandmother was a very private person and would have been horrified if they even tried to bathe her.

One day I went to visit her, when she was recovering from pneumonia, and she drifted off to sleep mid-conversation. Her breathing seemed laboured, and I panicked. I thought: *O my goodness, she is dying and the whole family isn't here. What will I do?* Then a staff member wheeled in the tea trolley, with tea and fresh scones and my granny sat bolt upright and said: *Teatime!* My granny loved a cuppa and scones. A couple of months later my mother phoned to say my granny was dying. I thought it was a false alarm and I took my time, and she did die before I arrived. When I arrived, her bedspread was covered with flowers, and she looked very peaceful. The staff were very kind, but I regretted delaying my visit and not being able to say goodbye.

Since that time, I've learnt a positive attitude and acceptance of limitations are important for healthy aging. Despite limitations we use what we have and never foreclose on our narrative. We have a purpose and value at every age. And we all live with regrets. Many of us have delayed doing something or have not been there for someone and have regretted it. Regrets and self-compassion are part of gaining wisdom as we age.

Now Jesus delayed going to his friend Lazarus' beside. The gospel says he felt deeply disturbed after he arrived. It's said twice. Lazarus' sister Mary rebuked Jesus for delaying his arrival: *Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.* Mary believed Jesus could have healed her brother, if he had arrived in time.

The story of Lazarus is filled with grief, pain, delays, absence, anger and regrets. It reminds us of the messiness of death when we cannot control anything. We cannot stop death from happening. We are powerless and often feel helpless. No wonder Jesus wept openly. Jesus kept on weeping. Jewish family or friends or neighbours, we don't know their relationship with Lazarus. The Jews said: See how he loved him! Jesus loved his friend Lazarus. His

absence was felt deeply by others. Perhaps Jesus had regrets. We don't know. Some of the Jewish people present rebuked him, remembering how he healed a blind man and asked why he couldn't heal his friend.

When we lose a loved one, we may ask: *Where are you, Jesus?* We may feel the absence of Jesus and feel alone in our grief.

Now Jesus is present at the tomb of Lazarus. He asks Martha to remove the stone at the entrance to a cave that was the tomb of Lazarus. Practical Martha reminds Jesus Lazarus has been dead for four days and his body stinks. Jesus tells Martha to believe, and she will see the glory of God. The stone door of the tomb is removed, and Jesus' calls out to God, his father, in prayer, saying twice I know you always hear me. What I say is for the crowd's sake, so they know you sent me. *Lazarus Come out!* And Lazarus came out of his tomb.

What do we make of this? John's gospel isn't about whether we believe or not. It recognises our faith is on a spectrum, where we are all somewhere along the journey of faith and there are days when our faith is deep and other days when things are looking a little shaky. Nothing is black and white or one thing or another. The invitation is for us to be open to God, where believing in Jesus is a beginning. What we have here is revelation of God. Imagine Martha and Mary's response. What was it like for Lazarus? Did he remember what he encountered when he was dead? We are left with more questions than answers.

I know from my own near-death experience about the deep peace and surrender that those who die encounter. How precious life is and how each day is a bonus, each moment an opportunity to serve God and appreciate my loved ones and all I have been given by God. I've seen that deep peace in others' faces as they are dying or after they've died.. Heaven must be pretty good if people look so peaceful. We need not fear death. It's the pain and suffering and illness and aging that's tough and each of us can make a difference for others in how we offer them love, support and comfort. It's like we share the load together.

Johns' gospel is like a long poem of love. God's love for Jesus and Jesus' love for God. God's love for us and Jesus' love for us and the Spirit of love in us. The Story of Lazarus may have convinced many that God sent Jesus to reveal the glory of God and God's love for us. Like Martha and Mary, this revelation of God challenges us to grow beyond our imaginings.

The Lord be with you.

Hymn: TIS 217 Love Divine tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OE0SFEXFFA&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=44>

Offering Prayer – Rev Pete

Gracious God, you have blessed us with so many good things.
May these gifts from us be used to open doors of welcome for all people, so they, too, may
experience the joy of abundance and unity.
In this time and in the times to come, may these gifts be used to open doors. Amen

Prayers for others and thanks for all who have gone before

(adapted with permission Rev Peter from © B. D. Prewer, www.bruceprewer.com)

Rev Pete with Bob Laslett

God of Jesus and our God, mindful of all those who have gone on ahead of us, teach us, and each twenty-first century disciple of every race and place, to follow their example to the best of our ability:

to feed the poor in body or spirit,

to support and comfort the mourners and the repentant,

to encourage the meek and stand with them in crises,

to affirm those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

to cherish and learn from the merciful,

to be humbled by, and stand with, the peacemakers.

Let us clearly recognise what it means to be called the children of God, and to know we are to be your saints neither by our own inclination nor in our own strength

but simply by the call and the healing holiness of Christ Jesus our Saviour.

And so we pray for Christians in local and federal politics, in commerce and industry, in the disciplines of medicine, law and social work; especially praying for those who are finding it difficult to maintain the love-values of Christ where they work. God of salvation, save your people;

God of the saints and martyrs, surround them with your loving Presence.

We pray for Christians who under difficult and dangerous conditions are trying to show Christ's love by serving with aid agencies in communities and nations, where poverty, disease, corruption and violence hinder their work and threaten their lives. God of salvation, save your people;

God of the saints and martyrs, surround them with your loving Presence.

We pray also for those among us or around us who are enduring tough times; those out of work and the ill, the lonely and the broken hearted and any who suffer domestic abuse, the overworked and the exhausted. O God of salvation, save your people;

God of the saints and martyrs, surround them with your loving Presence.

God our holy and eternal Friend, through you may we see ourselves linked to the love and joy of other Christians around the world today, and look forward in hope to that time when evil, sorrow, pain and death are no more.

Through Christ Jesus our Brother and Saviour. ***Amen***

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 for ever. Amen.

Hymn: TIS 473 Community of Christ – NYCC Sings!

North Yarmouth Congregation 2020

<https://youtu.be/U114i3IOPBU>

Blessing and Commendation – Rev Pete and Bob Laslett

(inspired by Wisdom of Solomon 3)

Go into this week to feed the poor, comfort the grieving, encourage the meek, partner with those who seek to bless, stand for justice with the saints and martyrs and be an expression of the heart of God to all you meet.

And as you go, know your lives are held in God's hands.

Remember the key to understanding the truth is to put your trust in the God.

And those who are faithful will share a life of love with God.

We go in faith to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen

John Bell: We will meet

<https://youtu.be/-y4DpYuncrg>

Original Norwegian Text & English translation

Hans Olav Moerk. Translation adapted by John Bell © 2020

Olav-Moerk WGRS Music John Bell

I am for you – 0001-wmv from Heaven shall not wait

adojoeleven The Iona Wild Goose Worship Group

<https://youtu.be/HLwHy-HFkYo>

Pastoral Care Tips – Rev Tina



A short relaxing meditation

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Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed,
and spend as much time meditating and praying, as you need and desire.

Make sure your body is well supported.

If you're sitting, sit in a comfortable chair which supports your back.
Place your feet firmly on the floor with your hands resting on your knees

Begin by breathing out slowly – like a long sigh then allow your lungs to fill naturally.

Breathing out again - deeply and slowly, allowing your lungs to fill naturally.

Begin to notice your abdomen, rising and falling.

Observe this rising and falling with your mind until you feel at peace.

Allow your breathing to settle, to slow down naturally.

Listen to the sounds around you, the sounds of the wind blowing or a slight breeze through the trees
or the sound of gentle rain upon your rooftop, the humming of a passing car or birds singing.

Breathing slowly, gently, inhaling God's healing peace,
breathing out worries and sadness, allowing yourself to relax,
allowing yourself to rest in the silence of God for as long as you desire.



Reflection on Remembering and Rejoicing

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Bring to mind a loved one, who has passed away, who you are missing, and offer up your aching heart to God, ask for comfort and peace.

Imagine your loved one's smiling face, and how happy they must be at home with God watching over you.

Remember the best times you've had together, the laughter and celebrations, their love for you, their gift of themselves to you.

Celebrate this.

Give thanks to God.

Every single person, no matter how old and how long they live, is loved by God and valued by God.
 Life is not a number, Life is about how much love a person offers up to the world.
 Only love can change the world for the better. Give thanks to God for giving you your loved one.
 Give thanks to your loved one for giving of themselves to you, for loving you.
 Amen.

Prayer for a Pilgrim

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Lord, I don't know where I'm going nor
 do I know how long it will take
 but you Lord are there with me, and for me.
 Your gentleness surprises me
 your love sustains me.
 I trust you Lord
 I will follow you
 all the days of my life.
 Through dark valleys of grief and loneliness
 up high mountains with narrow paths,
 over bridges, in boats and on aircraft,
 I will follow you Lord,
 to the ends of the earth.
 My quest is to know you and love you more deeply,
 My desire is to serve you.
 I yearn to be fully alive in you Lord,
 I will follow you all the days of my life,
 until the autumn and evening of my life comes
 when I finally close my eyes
 then find you Lord, by my side
 you Lord, are my beginning and ending.
 Amen