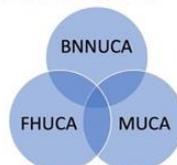




# Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



**Sunday 14 November 2021**

**‘Be Thou My Vision’ - Celtic Worship Ft. Steph Macleod**

<https://youtu.be/XiukM6WHQEQ>

## Welcome

May the Worship bless you



*Aunty Joy at Parliament of World Religions 2009*

## Acknowledgment

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 from Psalm 16

I keep the Lord always before me  
**Because of this my heart is glad**  
You Lord show me the path to life  
**And my soul rejoices in your presence**

## Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Lord our God  
We find our strength in you  
We love you with all our being  
You give us peace and joy  
When we feel low, You raise us up

When we weep, You comfort us  
 In you Lord we take our refuge  
**Lord our God, we give you our thanks and praise**

Jesus our Lord  
 You came to reveal God's love to us  
 You command us to love God with all our being  
 and others as ourselves  
 In your parting words you encouraged us to trust in God  
 and love others as you have loved us.  
 You lord, lead us, are always before us, and our hearts are glad  
 our soul rejoices  
 for you show us the path to life, in you we trust  
**Lord our God, we give you our thanks and praise**

Holy Spirit  
 Bringing God's love into our hearts, changing and transforming us  
 Bringing new insights, calling us forward  
 Giving us courage for the journey  
 Encouraging us when we feel discouraged  
 Filling us with hope, strengthening our faith  
**Lord our God, we give you our thanks and praise**

Come Holy Spirit, bless us today

### **Prayer of Confession**

We come before you, Lord, desiring new life  
 Wanting to leave behind whatever holds us back from following you  
 Lord, we lay before you whatever needs to be transformed in our hearts and lives  
 Help us Lord in our fragility and vulnerability to be your people  
 where we live with love and grace

### **Hymn – 'Holy, Holy, Holy' tMt video**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zfvnl\\_5eKBM&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=26](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zfvnl_5eKBM&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=26)

### **Readings**

#### **1 Samuel 1:4-20**

<sup>4</sup>On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters; <sup>5</sup>but to Hannah he gave a double portion,<sup>[a]</sup> because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. <sup>6</sup>Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. <sup>7</sup>So it went on year by year; as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. <sup>8</sup>Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"

<sup>9</sup>After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the LORD.<sup>[b]</sup> Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. <sup>10</sup>She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly. <sup>11</sup>She made this vow: "O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite<sup>[c]</sup> until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants,<sup>[d]</sup> and no razor shall touch his head."

<sup>12</sup> As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. <sup>13</sup> Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. <sup>14</sup> So Eli said to her, “How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.” <sup>15</sup> But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. <sup>16</sup> Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time.” <sup>17</sup> Then Eli answered, “Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him.” <sup>18</sup> And she said, “Let your servant find favour in your sight.” Then the woman went to her quarters,<sup>[e]</sup> ate and drank with her husband,<sup>[f]</sup> and her countenance was sad no longer.<sup>[g]</sup>

<sup>19</sup> They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. <sup>20</sup> In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, “I have asked him of the LORD.”

### Mark 13:1-8

**13** As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!” <sup>2</sup> Then Jesus asked him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”

<sup>3</sup> When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, <sup>4</sup> “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?” <sup>5</sup> Then Jesus began to say to them, “Beware that no one leads you astray. <sup>6</sup> Many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’<sup>[a]</sup> and they will lead many astray. <sup>7</sup> When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. <sup>8</sup> For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

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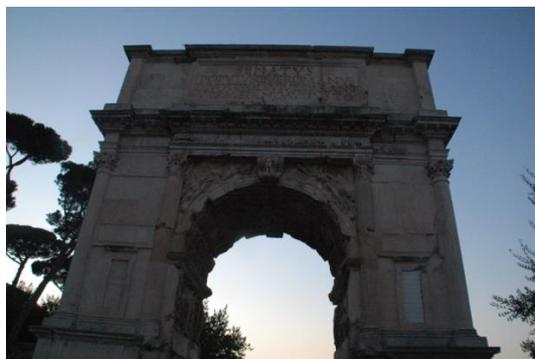
### Hymn – ‘Seek Ye First’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LMQfOp9w8k>

### Sermon – Birthpangs – Rev Tina

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

In today’s gospel Jesus told people the temple would be destroyed and there would be natural disasters, wars, and false leaders, and this would be the beginning of the birthpangs. The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem changed Judaism. The temple was at the heart of people’s faith. It was the place where they thought God dwelled. This is a picture of the Arch of Triumph in Rome, built for the Roman Emperor Titus who destroyed the Temple.



You can see the Roman’s carrying the Temple’s lampstand called a Menorah and priests, bound as prisoners, being taken to Rome.



The destruction of the Temple was tragic. It was central to Jewish faith. I wonder whether its destruction brought about a shift, from God dwelling in the temple to God dwelling in people's hearts. The Shema, the Jewish confession of faith, says:

*Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one. You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, with all your might and with all your soul.*

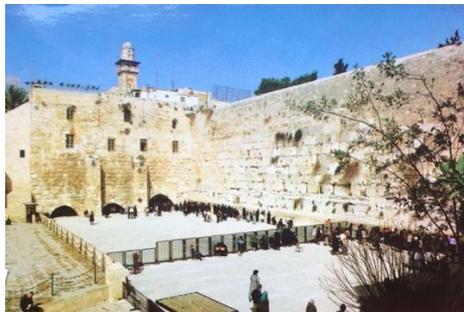
This prayer forms the main part of evening and morning prayers for Jews. We know this prayer through our greatest commandment that Jesus gave us.

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*

This is the greatest commandment. And a second is like it.

*You shall love your neighbour as yourself.*

Today, there is only a wall left where Jewish people come to pray and place small bits of paper with prayers written on them, into the cracks in the walls. Perhaps this tradition began at the time the gospel was written.



After Jesus' death many Christians were persecuted and taken to Rome and killed in the Colosseum



Today there is a cross in the Colosseum that remembers these deaths



When Jesus spoke to the disciples about birthpangs they would have known about them, and many would have witnessed or assisted with the birth of a child. It was a normal everyday experience. Jesus associates birthpangs with the way God was going to bring about new beginnings in God's new world, in his new creation, the world and age to come where justice and peace would flourish and reign. All the people hoped for this as they lived under Roman rule and oppression. It was a revolt against Roman rule that brought about the destruction of the temple.

When Jesus spoke about the destruction of the temple and birthpangs, he knew his disciples would be persecuted and some of them would die. He asked them not to be alarmed. Not to be tempted to panic. To stand firm in their faith and believe in God.

But how does the gospel connect with us today?

One way is to consider how the church is facing challenges today. It seems some churches are going through difficult times where there are many competing forces working against having faith in God. I'm sure you could name many. There are generations of people without a faith in this nation and we are seeing this unfold in our churches and society. Within our cluster we are hoping to find our way into the future, where we embrace new beginnings and as we journey, we may experience birthpangs, as we face change and new horizons.



We heard the story of Hannah. She was barren and people believed she wasn't blessed by God. Only women who gave birth and had sons were blessed. Her husband loved her. His other wife, Peninnah was jealous and tormented Hannah for years. One day Elkanah and Hannah went to a place of prayer called Shiloh. Hannah, highly distressed poured out her heart to God, weeping and calling out to God and making a vow to God, if she had a child, she'd dedicate him to God. Eli, a priest, misjudged her harshly, thinking she was drunk he rebuked her. Instead of going away in shame or taking offence, Hannah spoke out, saying no, I'm deeply troubled. I'm not drunk. I've been pouring out my heart to God. I'm not a worthless woman. Hannah was honest about her pain. What courage and bravery she had, to speak so openly about her suffering. Perhaps

Eli the priest's heart softened, and he had compassion for Hannah. He understood her love for God and faith. He blessed her, saying: *Go in peace, may God grant you what you've prayed for.*

Hannah went to where she was staying and had a meal with her husband and was no longer sad, she was restored. And they prayed next day and worshipped God and went home. God remembered Hannah's prayers and in time she gave birth to a son, called Samuel. Imagine Hannah being pregnant and waiting patiently for the birth of her baby after being barren for so long. Then experiencing the birthpangs, the pain of childbirth. My first child was large and a breach and birthpangs are painful. I kept telling myself this was positive pain. Afterwards, when I was holding my daughter, I forgot all about the pain. I felt joy. Perhaps it's like this for some of us. Endings and beginnings can be painful, yet when we receive what we hoped for we forget about the pain. We celebrate.

As we come together as a cluster of churches it seems as if we are waiting patiently for new birth and there may be a few birthpangs as we move forward into the future. The All-Saints service reminded us of losses of our members. Lockdowns for almost two years slowed things down and prevented us from gathering and now we need to rebuild our connections with one another. We have faced challenges and have persevered with patience and courage. We can have confidence that God is working silently amongst us.

Whenever we feel it's just too much we can reach out to God in prayer – like Hannah did and pour out our troubles to God and one another and share the load together. We can be reassured by our faith and find hope where we believe we have a future and God will bring it about and birth it and we may experience birthpangs. In today's gospel Jesus reassured his disciples. He told them not to be afraid. Let us not be afraid.

### **A Quiet moment in nature listening to frogs – Rev Tina**

<https://youtu.be/YPegDzEDhEk>



### **Hymn – ‘God gives us a future’ tMt video**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64lXkcwZ06M&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdvYNQLsLD2rC&index=15>

### **Offering Prayer – Rev Pete**

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 - Derek Moore

Let us come before God in prayer.

Today we pray for the nations of Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. We share many things in our respective histories, and we pray for the wellbeing of both populations during the current pandemic. Please strengthen and bless all health care workers dealing with COVID.

In both countries Remembrance Day is observed and we pray for those who have lost loved ones in past conflicts. May a future Federal Government in Australia have the courage to change the negative gearing and capital gains concessions given to property investors, so that housing can again be primarily for shelter and not for monetary gain.

In the Ecumenical prayer cycle, we pray for the Independent Churches in Whitehorse and in our Presbytery for North Melbourne's Mark the Evangelist congregation. Lord, please bless these faith communities and be with them in their worship and evolving outreach.

We also pray for wisdom and inspiration for the Synod Associate General Secretary.

Lord, please strengthen us all so that we can endure these difficult times.

You are all invited to join me in the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your Name.  
Your Kingdom come; your will be done.  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us in 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

**'You Raise Me Up' | BYU Vocal Point (Josh Groban A Cappella Cover)**

<https://youtu.be/rcLI0A-lXlc>

### Blessing – Rev Peter

Go – and may your lives give witness to the One who comforts in times of despair, who bears the fruit of justice within us, and who has become our song of grace.

In your struggles and joys, God journeys with you, and never leaves you.

*My heart rejoices in God.*

*Turn to the people near you (in a COVID safe manner) and greet them with:*

*(Use their name if you know it, if not, ask!),  
God journeys with you, and never leaves you.*

**Hymn – 'May the Feet of God walk with you'** tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhiG-Vj8CGU&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLsLD2rC&index=39>

### Pastoral Care Tips – Rev Tina



### Popcorn Prayer (A little prayer that goes a long way)

Lord, we are happy to be free  
 To be together again  
 With our loved ones  
 With our church family  
 With our friends  
 Travelling to visit family and friends  
 Walking where we want  
 Having a coffee in a café with a friend  
 Lord, we are happy to be together again  
 Amen

### A Reflection on living and dying well

The recent All-Saints service reminded me of the importance of living and dying well.

As we age, we become more aware of our mortality. Sometimes I count backwards from when my grandmother died and try to estimate how much time I've got left. It's only natural to wonder about how long we have left and how we hope to live our lives as we age. There are many ways of thinking about death. We can accept it or fear it or consider it a passage to heaven or an escape from illness or disease.

As we age, we look back on memories and review our life from time to time, grateful for the blessings and grieving the losses, trying to stay positive and adapt to limitations. Having attitude. As my gran said: "I've got to use what I've got and get on with it". Nobody likes limitations but they are part of life, and we all are limited in one way or another, no matter what age we are.

Dying is a process. We can choose how we die and manage our life and choices, so that when we find ourselves in the autumn of our life, we may discover it is a time of blossoming and growth. A time of deep-felt gratitude for the good times and acceptance of times that didn't work out so well for us.

Grieving is part of the journey. We will always have grief because loss is part of life. Grief can return at different times, after the loss of a loved one – at Christmas, anniversaries, and birthdays. We miss them. Then it's time to open the albums or computer and look at our collections of photos and remember the joys, the happy times, and be filled with gratitude. There are smiles at times and tears at other times. That is the nature of grief. It can take you by surprise. If there's tears go with them.

All of us are going in the same direction. We will all age and lose loved ones. Some cultures emphasize the communal nature of grief, such as Australian Aboriginals and Maori's. We can learn much from them as a church. We are intimately entwined in God as a community. We believe in Christ who encourages us to love one another as he loved us.

Death and grieving doesn't end at the funeral. When someone loses a loved one, they need to be held and cared for, through prayers, pastoral care, friendship, practical help, and more, for as long as they need. This Christmas be aware of those who have lost a loved one over the past two years or so. Reach out to them – a phone call, a visit, a pamper pack, a text or email, a walk, a card or hug.

