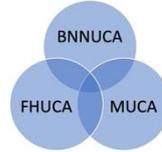




Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



Order of Service 18 July 2021

Welcome

Please use your time within this paper liturgy to create a moment of sacred clarity. When you need to put it down, then do so. If it takes you an extra cup of tea to find your meaning in the midst of it, then take that time. There is no rush, in fact there really is no order, no correct way to approach this liturgy. Please use it in a way that you feel called and compelled.

Preparation:

Find your favourite chair, put your slippers on and make yourself comfortable. Light a candle to remind yourself that you are not alone in this moment, but joined with the whole Church, those you know and those you are yet to meet. Be aware that God is deeply present in this place.

Call to worship:

From far and near, we gather together, called to unity in Christ. Built into one body, we are the dwelling place of God. May God guide our steps and direct our ways, that we may reveal God's love in word and deed.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wurrundjeri people of this area as the traditional owners of this land. We acknowledge that our story has not been one of comfort and compassion, or learning and wisdom. We recognise that, as a people of God's justice, we are called to weave our stories together.

Opening Prayer

Opening Sentences

All: God in us, in human life,

Left Side: *Creating us, in our uniqueness,*

Right Side: Uniting us in our solidarity,

Left Side: *Holding us in our belonging,*

Right Side *Cradling us in our vulnerability,*

All: Seeking us in our searching for justice and peace,

All **Together, God in us, in our humanity.** (*Adapt.FBallantyne/tpp*).

Song

OUR PSALM 23

Written by [Gabriella Velez](#) (ASCAP), [Kevin Dailey](#), [Justin Gray](#) (BMI), [JonCarlos Velez](#) (BMI)
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VERSE 1

When our lives are filled with questions
And our souls are restless, you're our remedy
We will follow you regardless
We will sing your promise, heaven's melody
And it is so sweet
When we're lost, when it's hard
When we're tired and the future's dark
Why should we fear when we know you're near

CHORUS

The Lord is our shepherd, he is always near
Though he leads through the valley of the shadow of death
We will not fear
The Lord is our shepherd, we will persevere
Though he leads through the valley of the shadow of death
We will not fear

BRIDGE

Everybody sing
Hallelujah, you never left us
Hallelujah, you never left us
Hallelujah, you never left us
Oh, we will not fear

VERSE 2

When the world is filled with chaos
And our hopes and dreams feel like a memory
We will rest in your protection
When our faith is tested, you're our covering
Our justice and our peace
We may rise, we may fall
You're our strength through it all
Why should we fear when we know you're near

[Our Psalm 23 | Sharon Irving | Common Hymnal Praise & Protest](#)

Prayer of Illumination

Now let silence gently enfold us.

(Silence)

May the silence which we now share
quieten us, touch our need, refresh our courage,
enlarge our wonder.

(Silence)

In this silence we listen for your word

Reading:

Mark 6:30 - 56

30The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. 31He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. 33Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. 34As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. 35When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; 36send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat." 37But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" 38And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." When they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." 39Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. 40So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. 41Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. 42And all ate and were filled; 43and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. 44Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men. 45Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray. 47When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 48When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea. He intended to pass them by. 49But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; 50for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." 51Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. 53When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. 54When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, 55and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. 56And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

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Amy-Jill Levine; Marc Zvi Brettler. The Jewish Annotated New Testament (p. 83). Oxford University Press. Kindle Edition.

Reflection

In order to develop a deeper understanding of the context of this reading we first need to understand the narrative flow that occurs beforehand.

Jesus, having been rejected in his home town, sent his disciples, in pairs, to go throughout the community to heal and cast out demons. It is handy to remember that demon possession was the framework for many social corruptions like injustice, and ailments from eczema to psychosis. The author has punctuated this sending out, with the beheading of John the Baptist, the spiritual mentor of Jesus, in a Midrashic foretelling of the death of Jesus. This is a reminder that it is the Messianic Mission, the constant realisation of the Kingdom of God, that is central to the Gospel rather than the

individual characters. God will continue to bring revelation and reconciliation regardless of violence and humiliation.

In our reading today we are caught in the mourning for John, the celebration of a successful expansion of ministry, sabbath-like rest and the strangeness of miraculous aquatic strolling.

The hospitality dependant lifestyle that Jesus advocates as the way of his followers is in full evidence as the disciples are invited to retreat into rest. This brings to mind the sabbath image, 6 days of creative productivity and a day of gratitude and non-productivity. The messianic mission is the restoration of creation, undoing the damage created by humanity's seeking of power of god-like status. Consider how this restoration of creation would frame our own living.

The success of the mission now creates a narrative dilemma. The exhausted disciples are now faced with a hungry crowd. This crowd has responded to the ministry and relationships the disciples developed by depending on the hospitality of others. The issue for Jesus and the disciples is that if they turn away from the crowd, then that expectation of hospitality becomes transactional rather than communal, much like Israel's elite or Rome's political and military power. If this transformational teaching is to have integrity, then hospitality must be for all, not just the disciples. The transformation of the community that surrounds the disciples now requires hospitality from Jesus and his exhausted apostles.

There is a wonderfully pertinent image of the wilderness being full of people in need of hospitality. Consider our own society. How many people are wandering in places of sparse nourishment? How many people are wandering in a wilderness seeking for a place to belong? While we can lament our drive towards tribalism and nationalism, at the bottom of this lizard brain response is a desire, a hunger to belong, to have security in such a co-relationship of hospitality that does not require an exchange of capital - financial or otherwise. Can the Church embrace its own Gospel call to hospitality and eat with the hungry in the wilderness?

There is a powerful exchange between Jesus and the disciples, until Jesus says: "You feed them." The call to bring sustainable life into the wilderness. The disciples' response however ... "We have to run a fundraiser in order to build a commercial kitchen, perhaps a lamington drive? Then we will have to consider who among has a food handlers license. Don't forget a cleaning roster! What does the board think about installing a dishwasher? Perhaps we could just use disposable plates? We also need to consider the Vegans." Sound familiar? Our first response is to run a program. Don't get me wrong, feeding the hungry is an important piece of work and a wonderful response.

Ched Meyers points out the disciples have returned from a journey with specific instructions to not take bread or money, yet here they are talking about 200 hundred denarii and having bread and fish to share. So where did that come from? Have they forgotten already!?

That this exchange happens in the wilderness cannot be ignored. The Exodus rules surrounding the gathering of food in the wilderness is that each household can gather enough for the day, anyone who gathers more than they need in order to have power over another will see that food go off. In our reading today, the food has not appeared on the ground directly from God, rather the miracle of this food is that it is passed through the hands of the community and multiplied by the teaching of Jesus. Now there is an abundance that can only exist if the food is intentionally shared.

Move beyond the Exodus image of food, and consider community resources like education, health, power, safety and we are no longer considering a soup kitchen, we are considering an extravagant and communal overthrowing of social inequity and social need! This is not the economy of finance, this is the economy of truly sustainable, selfless, generous community.

I do not have time to dwell on the walking on water sequence, but consider the image of Jonah. The disciples have been spoken to about the Messianic mission, watched the Messianic mission, been

sent as participants on the Messianic mission, returned and are now off to the “Other Side”, the Gentile side. It is a rough journey that they struggle with, while Jesus calmly walks on the water beside them. Is this struggle a standard human response when asked to go to the other side, to those who are not like us? Particularly when what you are bringing is a radical way of being?

Upon landing in Gennesaret, they are recognised, and the healing continues. At this point Jesus is still predominantly among Jews, they recognise him. However, he is not just moving closer to the Gentile communities, he is moving away from the social and political dynamic of Jerusalem - the Temple and seat of political power. As he moves away from the seat of power, he moves among those who are the least supported by the social structure yet most impacted by it. Why? Because a decision in Jerusalem to open the city to the Romans means that all fertile land in Palestine, the Galilee food-bowl, must now forfeit its market-share to feed not only the Jewish elite but also the Roman military.

It is interesting for us as we witness the impact of evangelical Christianity on our politics and its desire to get to the centre of the political power structure, that Jesus’s ministry was, not in the least bit desiring of political power structures. In fact, his ministry undermined these structures reminding them that God was God, not their structures of purity, elitism and power.

If we are to take this reading seriously, we are to be challenged to understand that authenticity comes from vulnerability, that Messianic ministry comes from *sharing* our food with the hungry, not by keeping a servery with regulations between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

As God moves across the waters in the beginning of Genesis; as Jesus walks across the turbulence, the Messianic mission is to re-create life from the chaos. Chaos formed by unjust power structures and the self-centred individualisation of society. It is a call to be a Messianic Radical and it grounds itself in sharing food.

In This Quiet Place

1. In this quiet place, in this quiet place
Help me be still and know... How I can give
And how to forgive
In this quiet place
Help me be still and
Know You.

2. In this quiet place, in this quiet place
Help me be still and know...How to let go
And let love show
In this quiet place
Help me be still and
Know You

Bridge

Like Jesus in the garden
Let me be in this quiet place. Let me see your path for me
Let me trust in Your grace

3. In this quiet place, in this quiet place
Help me be still and know... How to be true
In all I do
In this quiet place
Help me be still and
Know You.

Credit: ‘Quiet Place’ from Rise by The Many, released 3/7/20, freely available for our purpose.

Prayer of Confession

A people with many secrets

You are the God from whom no secret can be hid, and we are a people with many secrets, that we want to tell for the sake of our lives, that we dare not tell because they are deep and painful. But they are our secrets... and they count for much; they are our truth... rooted deep in our lives.

You are the God of all truth,

and now we bid you heed our truth, about which we will not bear false witness...

The truth of grief unresolved,

the truth of pain unacknowledged,

the truth of fear too child-like, the truth of hate, as powerful as it is deep,

the truth of being taken advantage of,

and being used, and manipulated, and slandered.

We trust the great truth of your wondrous love, but we will not sit still for it,

UNTIL you hear us. Our truth-heard by you - will make us free. So be the God of all truth, even ours, we pray in the name of Jesus, who is your best kept secret of hurt.

Amen.

Walter Brueggemann Psalms class/January 14, 1999

Prayers of the People

God, enlarge my heart

that it may be big enough

to receive the greatness of your love.

Stretch my heart

that it may take into it

all those around the world

who, with me, believe in Jesus Christ.

Stretch it

that it may take into it

all those who are not lovely in my eyes,

and whose hands I do not want to touch;

through Jesus Christ, my saviour.

Prayer of an African Christian

Almighty God we pray for your church

For our congregations in the Whitehorse cluster of churches. We pray for Tina, Peter and Pete as they minister to us. We thank you for their ministry. We pray that you will grant them energy, wisdom and clarity.

We pray also, Lord, for other churches and agencies

As part of the ecumenical prayer cycle we pray for St Timothy's Catholic, Forest Hill and we pray for the Uniting Church congregations of: Box Hill (Hanbit Korean), Box Hill (St Andrew's), Box Hill (Wesley). We pray for their worship community, their members and participants, their online ministries and their outreach programs.

We pray for Uniting's Harrison Community Services. Uniting Harrison provides services to support young people, single people and families living throughout the Eastern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne who are experiencing homelessness, are under threat of homelessness and are in need of support services. We pray for their programs, their staff and the people for whom they provide care and support.

Loving God - We pray for the world.

Merciful Lord - We pray for the poor, neglected and marginalised. For indigenous people – that opportunities for justice, reconciliation and mutual understanding and respect will not be lost. For people of colour who have suffered injustice at the hands of the law, who do not share equally in the wealth of their society and who are discriminated against.

For victims of the current pandemic – whether it be from contracting the virus, losing their job or suffering mental health challenges. We pray for united and effective efforts to contain the spread, locally and globally, and for a swift and just rollout of vaccines.

We pray for those who are lonely or vulnerable. We pray that governments and individuals will respond with compassion, generosity and a determination to right wrongs. Enable us to be agents of your love in the world.

Merciful Lord – we pray for those in special need at this time. For the sick the lonely and the grieving. We pray for those in our own community, family, loved ones and friends who are suffering hardship, loss or ill health. Lord – we entrust them to your care and pray that you will surround them with your love.

We pray all these things...

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray ...

Our Father in heaven

Hallowed be your name

your kingdom come

your will be done

on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And 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

Tim Joyce, Mountview, Prayers of the People, 31 May 2021, adapted.

Offertory Prayer

Offering Prayer

(inspired by Matthew 14:15-21)

On my own

what I have to give doesn't amount to much

in the light of all you have given to me and in the face of so much need.

Put together as a congregation,

what we offer you here in love becomes more,

not simply added together, but somehow multiplied in its usefulness.

We ask you to bless our gifts

and with the addition of your blessing,

just as it was with the loaves and fishes,

there is enough for all.

Amen

From the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand website. Copyright requirement not known.

Song

Hope Beyond All Hope
Alana Levandoski

<https://youtu.be/iTSXNZQ-IV0>

"Lovers of the world unite
Bound to Creator's vision, bright
That even these, our darkest nights
Become the light, become the light
Fashion all you can create
That delights the One who incarnates
And links himself to the same fate
As we sleepers who must rise to wake

Our Hope beyond all Hope did come
To call us each and everyone
To the surface of our consciousness
God dwells within and always has

Put our feet back on the ground
Contemplation's heart resound!
We're still pursued by Heaven's Hound
O Lover, seek us till we're found

Our Hope beyond all Hope did come
To call us each and everyone
To the surface of our consciousness
God dwells within and always has

Tomorrow's children seek our hearts
Will they know who they really are?

The center of a thousand stars
And the breathers of the breath of God

Our Hope beyond all Hope did come
To call us each and everyone
To the surface of our consciousness
God dwells within and always has

This is what we sing at Christmas
God dwells within and always has"

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Benediction

As we leave this place, may you be enough. Enough that you share your food, enough that you laugh from your belly, enough that you grieve with all that you are. May you be enough, because enough is all that God is calling you to be.