

Whitehorse Uniting Church
Written Worship
Sunday 23 April 2023
The Road to Emmaus



Introit

YouTube Hymn 724 Hosanna in the Highest
Carl Tuttle (Brien Doran 2017)
https://youtu.be/iG5y_Gd3oZc

Welcome

May the Worship Bless you

Call to Worship

Jesus Christ is Risen!
He is Risen indeed!
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Prayers of Adoration

Loving God
 You speak into our hearts,
 When we doubt and focus on what we cannot do.
 You call us to live with reverence and awe.
 You remind us of your great power over all creation.
 You inspire us and fill us with conviction of your ways.
 You empower us for your mission in the world.
Loving God, we give you our thanks and praise.

Jesus our Lord
 Risen and with us on the journey.
 You speak into our hearts through scripture,
 and leave them burning.
 In the breaking of the bread,
 you open our eyes.
 Through your presence with us,
 we are empowered to respond to God's call and
 embrace God's mission in the world.
 In your name, we act with courage and fortitude,
 to witness to your love in the world.
Loving Jesus, we give you our thanks and praise

Holy Spirit,
 you empower us for God's mission in the world and
 through scripture our hearts burn.
 You pour God's love into our hearts so
 we may love deeply from the heart.
 You witness through us,
 in our faith and love for God and one another.
 When you move in our hearts,
 we listen and are cut to the heart,
 and know God's promise is for us and
 for all who are called by God.
 You inspire us to act and witness for Jesus.
Loving Spirit, we give you our thanks and praise.

Prayer of Invocation

Come Holy Spirit Come
Come Holy Spirit Come

Today as we Worship.
 Today as we meet to discern the way forward,
 for Christ's Church and God's Mission in the world.

Come Holy Spirit Come
Come Holy Spirit Come

Prayer of Confession

Loving God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 we can never truly comprehend who you are,
 yet you move our hearts deeply through scripture, communion, and the witness of others,
 moving us towards repentance where you transform our hearts and lives.
 Your gift of forgiveness sets us free from what binds us and heals us.
 We come before you today asking for your grace, for forgiveness,
 which offers transformation, healing, and restoration.
 Lord, you love and value us and call us to embrace kingdom values.
 We come before you now in this moment of silence, asking for your grace and forgiveness.

Silence

Hear then Christ's words of grace to us.
"Your sins are forgiven".

THANKS BE TO GOD



393 Christ is Alive with Joy we Sing

Pamela Stotter 1944-

(VULPIUS) Swell Vox Easter Sunday 2021 (James Flores 2021)

<https://youtu.be/5E--7p-PUk>

Readings NRSV Updated

Luke 24:13-35

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[a] from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.^[b] ¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" ¹⁹ He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth,^[c] who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.^[d] Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body there they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him." ²⁵ Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah^[e] should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us^[f] while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Fellow Jews^[a] and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.

³⁶ "Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah,^[a] this Jesus whom you crucified."

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers,^[b] what should we do?" ³⁸ Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." ⁴⁰ And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹ So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

1 Peter 1:17-23

¹⁷ If you invoke as Father the one who judges impartially according to each person's work, live in fear during the time of your exile. ¹⁸ You know that you were ransomed from the futile conduct inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. ²⁰ He was destined before the foundation of the world but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. ²¹ Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your trust and hope are in God.

²² Now that you have purified your souls^[a] by your obedience to the truth^[b] so that you have genuine mutual affection, love one another deeply from the heart.^[c] ²³ You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.^[d]

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YouTube Hymn – 613 Lord of all Hopefulness, Lord of all Joy

Erik Reginald Routley 1917-82 & Joyce Placsek 1901-53

(Peter Anderson 2013)

https://youtu.be/9-D_aT8CXyc

Sermon

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



I remember a man who trained for the ministry with me. He was quiet, didn't say much and felt called to be a minister in the outback. I wondered whether his quiet ways would be appreciated by those who lived in places where there was a slower pace of life, with so much open space and wide skies and land. He finished, was ordained and I heard nothing for years. Then one day I heard a story about him baptising one thousand people in a river in central Australia, all at once.

Such a powerful ministry that suits our times. So many of us feel like we are on a main road where there is nowhere to get off and pause our lives and life offers little space to be still and know God and know we are loved and valued by God. This opening of our eyes is not possible when we are constantly on the run.

If we go back to the story of Peter, a Jew, speaking to fellow Jews, speaking their language and to their hearts, it is a different story. He speaks plainly about them crucifying Jesus, in a way where they feel cut to the heart. They ask: *What should we do?* Peter tells them to repent, be baptised so they are forgiven and receive the Spirit. He doesn't condemn them. Peter reminds them the promise is for them and everyone who God calls. It is for each and every one of us. Suddenly they had hope for the future. A new life through redemption, freed from remorse and guilt over their actions. Christ had risen. They wanted to rise up too. Three thousand were baptised.

The Holy Spirit is alive and well and dwells amongst us, working through those who witness according to their time and culture. With Peter it was to offer life to those who had done something terrible. With my colleague it was the quiet call of the gospel to new life through Christ.

Each of us must find our own way to witness. I have witnessed to family, members of my congregation and strangers, who have been baptised. I hope many more will find their way through my gentle witness about how God comforts in tough times and stands for love.

I'm doing a funeral next Friday for a woman who found comfort and support at Centre 81. She had health issues during the last part of her life, and they brought her joy in the midst of suffering with their quiet loving witness to Christ's love for all. Who put their faith into action.

Today's gospel speaks of the core elements of our faith and how to put them into action.

The gospel speaks of knowing Jesus through interpretation of scripture where our hearts burn, and we are moved to witness to our faith experiences through word and deed.

The readings speak of listening to people witness to their faith where we experience conviction and act on it through loving one another, deeply from the heart, which leads to baptism, and confirmation.

The gospel tells us through hospitality and communion our eyes are opened, and we see Jesus in the breaking of the bread and in one another.

We can believe and have confidence that the Spirit will work through us and empower us.

Each one of us is of value and our opinion is important. Just like in the hymn: I am the church; we count whether we are 9 or 99. Our voice counts. All ages have a voice.



On the road to Emmaus Jesus joins two disciples feeling a bit lost without his leadership. They don't understand why he had to suffer and don't know the next step. Jesus spends time with them interpreting the scriptures. When they reach a village they don't want Jesus to leave them, and invite him to stay with them, which he does.



Spend a moment contemplating this picture. What do you see?

Jesus was a guest after being offered hospitality. Then he becomes host and takes bread, blesses, and breaks it. That is the moment when the disciples' eyes are opened. Jesus is praying and looking up. It is clear he is communicating with God or is in God's presence or deep in prayer or all of this and more. One of the men has his hand over his heart. Perhaps his heart is burning. The other man's hands are held out in surprise and awe, perhaps symbolising he sees Jesus and recognises him. Then Jesus disappears and the men

immediately return to Jerusalem to bear witness.

What stands out in today's gospel and readings is how the human heart engages with God.

The hearts of the disciples burn when they hear God's Word interpreted by Jesus.

When Peter witnesses to the Jews what he says is so powerful they are cut to the heart, stunned, humbled, sorrowful, and remorseful. They say: *What can we do?*

Peter's witness has brought about a conversion in their hearts, and they want to change their lives.

Many of you have been baptised. Confirmation is when you make a statement about your faith and confirm it and hands are laid on you so you may receive the Spirit of God to empower you for God's mission in the world. It used to be a rite of passage for teenagers but now it is for all ages. If you feel strongly called to be confirmed contact me and I will prepare you and arrange for your confirmation.

Now Peter bears witness in one of his letters written to the church in Asia Minor, to churches in places such as Galatia and Cappadocia. The letter may have been written on his behalf just before he was executed. He calls for disciples to love one another deeply from the heart reminding them they have been born anew through the living and enduring word of God.



Today we have come together as one community on a new journey, and we are entering a process of discernment for God's will for our church and each one of us is important and needs to contribute. The church has always adapted throughout the ages because of mission emerging from the whole body of Christ. We are called to make a heartfelt response to the gospel and put our faith into action. Believe God empowers you through the Spirit.

As the people of God, it's not always easy to discern which way to go as we follow Christ faithfully. We want to know and have things made definite, but instead it is a walk of trust, with occasional insights. We may like to call these insights signposts along the way.



This is a photo of a path to a lighthouse. There are signposts along it saying in which direction to go so people don't get lost. The lighthouse symbolises Jesus Christ, the light of the World. The path is on Griffith's Island at Port Fairy. If you've walked it, you will know it's a circuit where there are several ways to the lighthouse. Just like there are many ways to Christ.

Today every member of our congregation has a chance to have a voice and contribute. Your leaders on church council will listen to your voices, opinions, hopes, and dreams for this church when they meet next week. That is a leader's role.

The Uniting Church Basis of Union states:

The congregation is the embodiment in one place of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping, witnessing, and serving as a fellowship of the Spirit in Christ. Its members meet regularly to hear God's Word, to celebrate the sacraments, to build one another up in love, to share in the wider responsibilities of the Church, and to serve in the world.

The Church Council consists of the minister and those called to share with the minister in oversight. It is responsible for building up the congregation in faith and love, sustaining its members in hope, and leading them into fuller participation in Christ's mission in the world.

Church Council represents you. What comes from today will be listened to during the Church Council Workshop next Saturday. Speak up. Have your say. Say what's on your heart. God's Spirit moving amongst you will empower you. Be bold and empowered. Church Council needs to know what's on your hearts and how you see the Spirit moving amongst this congregation and calling each one of us forward as we journey together, serving Christ in the world, through witness and mission. The Lord be with you.

YouTube Hymn 687 God Gives Us a Future. tMt video

Elizabeth Smith 1956-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64IXkcwZ06M&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLsLD2rC&index=16>

Offering Prayer

Lord and giver of every good thing we bring to you our lives and gifts for your kingdom all for transformation through your grace and love, made known in Jesus Christ our Savior, amen.

Prayers of the people

Lord may your church witness to your presence amongst us,
 May we know you travel on the road with us.
 We pray that your church walks,
 with the broken hearted, unwanted, and marginalised.
 We pray that we are able to reveal your love and presence to them.
 We pray you are with us today as we discern your mission for this church.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray for all who journey and leave, places of pain and sorrow
 For those whose life is in danger
 For those in transition living in refugee camps
 Especially those whose belongings burnt recently in a camp.
 We pray for pilgrims and seekers of truth.
 For homeless and hungry this winter.
 For those travelling on sea and land.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray that you come to us in our homes and workplaces.
 That we are aware of your presence and our hearts burn.
 We pray for the lonely, forgotten and discarded who do not feel your presence.
 May they come to know it.
 We pray for the broken-hearted
 For those whose hopes have died
 For those limited, sick, and dying and in pain.
 We pray for those who are feeling isolated and alone.
 For those grieving and unable to go to church anymore
 For those entering aged care and leaving their homes
 For all who are doing it tough at the moment
 Make your presence known to them Lord.
 Bring peace and comfort.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

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.

Candle Prayers

Easter Blessing

May the Lord be our strength and might.
 May we see Jesus in one another and know him in our hearts.
 May we be touched by the Lord's presence and surprised by joy.
 May we be blessed by belief in the resurrection of our Lord
 and may the Holy Spirit give us courage and faith for the journey, amen.

Hymn 459 In Christ There is no East nor West
 William Arthur Dunkerley 1852-1941 & Henry Thacker Burleigh 1866-1949
 (Chris Brunelle 2019)
<https://youtu.be/GG8hzY1OoM4>

Pastoral Care Tips



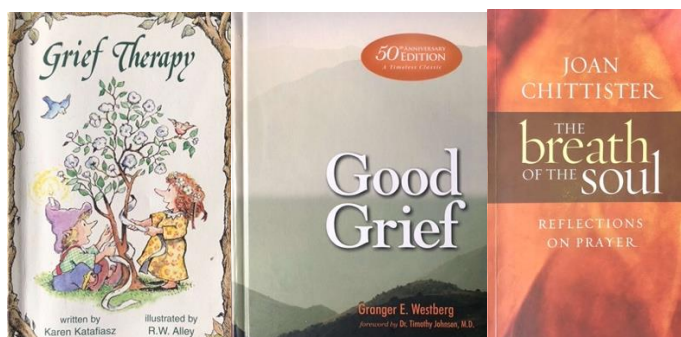
The Grotto – Great Ocean Road

Long Drives in the Country

I recently had some time off to be with family at Port Fairy and Aireys Inlet. It involved long drives. I find city driving stressful because there is no place to pull over and pause on the main roads and it's like life in the city, stressful. But long country drives are often rambling and slow with places to pull over to admire the view, like along the Great Ocean Road or places in small towns to stop for a cuppa and cake or beaches that can be walked along or views over fields and towards mountains. Country drives offer opportunities to pause and ponder or simply stay in a place to rest, far away from the busy city.

Comforting Books

There are times when we grieve in life. We may have lost a loved one, our health, a job, a home, or relationship. We may look for comfort in books. Two books I've often given away or lent are one of the Elf Book Series called, *Grief Therapy*, which has tips for self-care when grieving and the popular book called, *Good Grief* by Granger R. Westberg, which describes the stages of grief which can be in any order and not set in concrete. The final little book offers comfort through prayer to all who read it, no matter what's happening in life.



Joan Chittister describes prayer in the following way in her introduction:

Prayer is the link to a life beyond the mundane. It is the beginning of a relationship with the God who is closer to us than we are to ourselves. Prayer requires that we bring an open heart, a good deal of self-knowledge, constancy in darkness and a willingness to attend to the light, even when all we can see is darkness.

There are scripture passages in Joan's book which bind us to the very heartbeat of God, like what happens to the disciples along the road to Emmaus. I invite you to read this little book as part of your devotional time, if you feel drawn to it.

The soothing power of music

Pianist in tears!! Most moving piano performance. (41M people have watched this)

Nobuyuki Tsujii performs his composition "Elegy for the victims of the Tsunami of March 11, 2011, in Japan" at Carnegie Hall. 2015

<https://www.thepiano.sg/piano/read/blind-pianist-nobuyuki-tsujii-cries-while-playing-elegy-victims-tsunami-march-11-2011-japan>

Remembering my daughter-in-law's father Toshihito who lives in Japan and became a quadriplegic after being washed off rocks at the seaside and who hasn't been able to see family since that time due to Covid restrictions on visiting. Prayers that he is able to be reunited with family. My son and family are visiting at the moment.

There are also some very good YouTube sources of music about happy moments that I get to watch when I'm preparing the worship materials and I found this one during the week.

It's what I call a feel-good YouTube (12M liked it)

4-month-old baby tries to sing to Karen Carpenter Song – Melts hearts

(John Cooksey 2015)

<https://youtu.be/bEeizaWjdXw>