

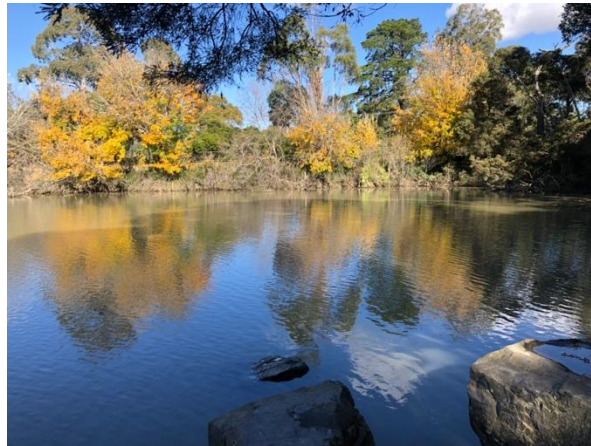
**Whitehorse Uniting Church  
Written Worship  
Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2023  
Ascension Sunday  
Volunteers Dedication Service**



**Introit 768 Praise God**

(Md 1807 2013)

<https://youtu.be/RBz7vuJ2b1A>



*Blackburn Sanctuary – T. Lyndon*

**Acknowledgment**

We acknowledge those who were here before us, the first inhabitants of this place.  
We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today.



**Call to Worship**

We are the body of Christ.

**Witnesses to his love in the world**

He is risen and promises us the Holy Spirit

**To empower us for his mission in God's world.**



## Prayer drawn from Ephesians 1:7-23 (Adapted)

We pray the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give us  
a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know him.

**So that, with the eyes of our hearts enlightened, we may perceive what is the hope to which he has called us,  
what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints,<sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness  
of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.**

God<sup>[a]</sup> put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the  
heavenly places,<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion  
and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.

**And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church,  
<sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.**

We pray and long for the Spirit to continue to empower us for God's mission and ministry in the world.

**We give thanks for all that God has done through us in the power of his Spirit and  
call on God to send his spirit upon us as we continue his mission and ministry in the world.**

On this day we call on God to send the Holy Spirit upon us  
Come Holy Spirit  
**Come Holy Spirit**

**On this day we confess all that's on our hearts asking for forgiveness and transformation**  
*Silence*

Hear then Christ's Words of grace to us.  
*"Your sins are forgiven".*  
**Thanks be to God.**

### Hymn 468: We are your people

The Riverside Church New York 2021

<https://youtu.be/AOLAZCI2A1E>

### Readings NRSV Updated Version

#### Acts 1:1-11

**1** In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach <sup>2</sup>until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. <sup>3</sup>After his suffering<sup>[a]</sup> he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup>While staying<sup>[b]</sup> with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; <sup>5</sup>for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with<sup>[c]</sup> the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

<sup>6</sup>So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup>He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

<sup>9</sup>When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup>While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. <sup>11</sup>They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

### Luke 24:44-53

<sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah<sup>[a]</sup> is<sup>[b]</sup> to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day <sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

<sup>48</sup> You are witnesses<sup>[c]</sup> of these things. <sup>49</sup> And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised, so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

<sup>50</sup> Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>52</sup> And they worshiped him and<sup>[e]</sup> returned to Jerusalem with great joy, <sup>53</sup> and they were continually in the temple<sup>[f]</sup> blessing God.<sup>[g]</sup> New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

### Reflection – Rev Tina



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

I believe God has a sense of humour.

We have this story of the disciples.

They’ve seen Jesus rise up into the clouds and they’re standing there pondering about the meaning of what they’ve just seen.

Suddenly two men in white robes come and stand by them and ask them: Why do you stand there looking up into heaven?

It’s a good question.

Many of us have profound experiences and need to spend time trying to make sense of them.

Perhaps what these two men in white robes are saying is, time to get on with it.

They’ve been told by Jesus to wait for the promised Holy Spirit in Jerusalem.

So off they go to Jerusalem.

The first thing they do is pray and worship God in the temple and rejoice, as they wait on the Holy Spirit.



RCL

This is the foundation of their ministry.

Prayer, worship, rejoicing and being empowered by the Holy Spirit. Then they put their faith into action in practical ways.

My granny used to say: We use what we've got and get on with it.

All of us are gifted and called to minister and this involves being a volunteer.

Being a volunteer is about freely offering to do something. Every one of us contributes to the big picture and all of our contributions make up a ministry that changes people's lives for the better.

We become volunteers in all kinds of places because we care.

I'm a volunteer with VCC as an emergency chaplain and have been on duty after the two Bourke Street incidents where dozens of traumatised people sought comfort and to be listened to or have someone stand with them as they looked at all the flowers and teddies and remembered their experiences, both recent and in the past. Being a volunteer means being willing to reach out to others. It involves a risk. We come as we are and accept others with open hearts and hands.

The beautiful prayer from Ephesians calls on God to open the eyes of our hearts so we may know the hope which God has called us to and we discover this when we volunteer and give of ourselves to others, our time, our care and compassion and our gifts.

Look how people are blessed within our community and the wider community around us who come to the Op Shop, Centre 81, LinC, Kids Hope, and our church and experience being valued, cared for, listened to, and where they find God's light and love in us.



RCL (Adapted)

At some time in our life, we have blessed others as volunteers and have been blessed by volunteers.

Being a volunteer is a powerful transforming ministry that changes lives and blesses both church and the community and our families.

Today we celebrate this ministry.  
We make a deeper commitment to it.  
In the name of Jesus our Lord, amen.

**Hymn 628 – In faith and Hope and Love**  
**Cantus Choro (Al B's music 2014) From the CD Songs and Praises**

<https://youtu.be/Plyz5kg834M>



## **Dedication of all Volunteers, including those involved in outreach (Based on Commissioning of Elders Liturgy Uniting in Worship, Blue Book)**

### **Rev Tina:**

I'd like to invite those involved with our outreach services Centre 81, The Op Shop, Kids Hope and LinC to come forward.

I also invite all members of the congregation to stand if you're comfortable. Members of all ages, including children, who I'm sure have been a volunteer at school or church.

All of us have been a volunteer in the community, church, workplace or homes, some time in our lives and many are volunteers today and will continue to be volunteers.

### **Rev Andrew:**

There are diverse gifts,  
**but it is the same Spirit who gives them.**

There are different ways of serving God:  
**but it is the same Lord who is served.**

God works through people in different ways:  
**but it is the same God, whose purpose is achieved through them all.**

Each one of us is given a gift by the Spirit:  
**and there is no gift without its corresponding service.**

There is one ministry of Christ:  
**and in this ministry, we all share.**

Together we are the body of Christ:  
**and individually members of it.**

### **Let us pray: - Rev Tina**

Almighty God, we thank you that in every age you have chosen members of your church to lead and volunteer, to serve and care for your people.

We thank you that you have called our members to be volunteers at Centre 81, our Op Shop, Kids Hope, LinC and all members of our congregation who volunteer in many places during their lifetimes.

We give thanks for all those you have chosen to have the same mind, which was in Christ Jesus and be faithful disciples, giving example to Christ's flock and witnessing to the truth of the gospel, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We pray that your Holy Spirit will fill and enable each one of us in our faith and life journey. That you will strengthen us to live your way, in serving you and bringing your good news and witness to those in our Congregation, Outreach services of our church, Community, Workplace and beyond. We praise and thank you as we bring our prayers to you, in the name of Jesus our Lord, **Amen.**

## **Renewing the Covenant**

In the Old Covenant, God chose Israel as his people and gave them the gift of the Law.  
 In the New Covenant, he made the gift of his Son Jesus Christ, who fulfils the Law for us.  
 We stand within the New Covenant, and we bear the name of Christ.

God promises us new life in him. We receive this promise and pledge to live not for ourselves but for God.  
 This covenant is renewed each time we meet at the table of the Lord.

Today we meet, as generations before us have met, to renew that which bound them and now binds us to God.

**The ministers continue: Rev's Tina and Andrew**

Beloved in Christ, let us again claim this covenant for ourselves, and take the yoke of Christ upon us.

**All: To take this yoke upon us means that we are content that he appoints us our place and work, and that he himself be our reward.**

**Christ has many services to be done, some are easy, and others are difficult, yet the power to do all these things is given to us by Christ, who strengthens us in all things and will never fail us.**

**Therefore, let us make this covenant with God our own, trusting in the eternal promises and relying on divine grace.**

**THE COVENANT PRAYER – Rev's Tina and Andrew say together.**

Let us pray:

Lord God,  
 in baptism, you brought us into union with Christ who fulfils your gracious covenant  
 and in bread and wine we receive the fruit of his obedience.  
 So, with joy we take upon ourselves the yoke of obedience, and commit us to seek and do your perfect will.

*Silence is kept for a time.*

**The ministers say: Rev's Tina and Andrew**

I am no longer my own, but yours.

All say together.

**I am no longer my own, but yours.**

*Rev's Tina and Andrew, and all members of our congregation hold out our hands or arms and pray,  
 as we say together: (Tina Invites)*

**I am no longer my own, but yours.  
 Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will.  
 Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed for you or laid aside for you.  
 Exalted for you or brought low for you. Let me be full, let me be empty.  
 Let me have all things, let me have nothing.  
 I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.**

**And now, glorious, and blessed God,  
 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours,  
 to the glory and praise of your name. Amen.**

## Hymn 776 Aaronic Blessing

In Hebrew and English

Numbers 6:22-27

<https://youtu.be/x-eHCxMM3PI>

## Presentations from our outreach volunteers.

### Centre 81

John Gerrand and Aileen Youngs speak about the vision and the setting up of Centre 81. Margot Kemke and Helen Carmody will share, then Jenny Cooper will speak about fundraising and Jill will read Noel's thoughts about Centre 81 to conclude.

### The Op Shop

Wendy Correlje

Marg La Fontaine

### LinC

Margaret Swain

### Kid's Hope

Corry Skilbeck

Geoff Walker

## Hymn: Will you Come and Follow me if I but call your name.

John Bell & Grahame Moule

St Andrews Metropolitan Cathedral Glasgow

Hymn Channel 2017

<https://youtu.be/zk6IUaIJ3sk>



### 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 and the Lord's Prayer – Geoffrey Willis

Let us pray.

Loving Lord, we bring to you our concerns for others, starting with the people and churches of the Indian Ocean Islands of Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles. The people of these islands are very conscious of the effects of global warming as ocean levels rise and as hurricanes become more severe and wreak havoc on their communities. We pray, Lord, for wise decisions by their governments in relation to tourism and other economic developments. May they enhance the lives of all the people in these countries. Dear Lord, may Christians be bolder in their public witness for justice and reconciliation, especially in times of political turmoil. May this prayer from Madagascar be our prayer also.

Quote:

*Lord Jesus, the storm is life and life is the storm and there is no escaping it;  
but what matters is that you are in the storm with us, a beacon and a presence that is sure.*

End of quote.

[From Madagascar, [www.cms-uk.org/prayer-month.htm](http://www.cms-uk.org/prayer-month.htm) Used with permission. Quoted from the World Council of Churches website [www.oikoumene.org](http://www.oikoumene.org)]

We also pray, Lord, for an end to the current troubles in the Ukraine, Syria and Sudan. Dear Lord, please grant them peace and the realisation that acts of violence will not achieve anything. May the leaders involved be granted level heads so that stability and justice may prevail.

Dear Lord, we pray for the people of Myanmar and Bangladesh who have been the victims of Cyclone Mocha. May the rescue teams have the resources to do their rescue work with safety and efficiency. We especially pray for the many persecuted Rohingya Muslims who are now displaced from their homes.

In our ecumenical prayer cycle we pray for the leaders and people of the Anglican Church of the Holy Name in Vermont South. Dear Lord, we pray that this congregation will serve their members and the local community as faithful disciples.

Within our Presbytery, we pray for the Kew Uniting Church. This is a newly formed congregation, arising from the amalgamation of three previous congregations (East Kew, Joong Ang (Korean) and West Hawthorn) and a group of people associated with Boroondara Community Outreach. We pray, Lord, that you will bless and empower their ministry team of the Rev James Tang and the Rev Joseph Lee. Separate worship services are provided in English and Korean and on Zoom as a livestream event. Both languages will be used for their combined Pentecost service next week. We pray also, Lord, for their relationship with Boroondara Community Outreach. This outreach service supports people who are socially isolated or living with a mental illness. We pray for sensitivity and love in their relationships with their clients.

We pray too for the chaplains and staff of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. Dear Lord, may they bring comfort and confidence to those in their care.

Finally Lord, we pray for ourselves as a new congregation. We especially pray for our ministers: Tina, Peter and Andrew. Please uphold them with their gifts of ministry. We especially pray for Peter Cannon as he fights the effects of long COVID. We pray for those of our members who are unable to worship with us. May they find that our livestream broadcasts bring them a blessing and comfort. Dear Lord, we pray for the members of our pastoral care teams. Please equip them with compassion and love as they maintain contact with those in their care.

And now let us join together as we say the prayer which Jesus 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.*

### **Blessing**

We go in Peace  
in the love of God  
in the Power of the Spirit  
May the Lord Bless and Guard us  
May the Lord make His face shine upon us and be gracious unto us  
As we bring Christ's love and peace to the world. Amen

### **Hymn 779 May the Feet of God**

Robin and. Dorothy Mann 2015

<https://youtu.be/WfOFIWxGaP8>



## Pastoral Care tips – Rev Tina

Have you ever been unable to sleep?

No matter what you do it just doesn't happen.

You may be worried about something and your worries go around in circles in your mind and there's no stopping them or you made the mistake of having a coffee too late in the afternoon and you're wide awake or you were still sitting at the computer after 10:30 pm and it's mucked up your sleep patterns or you watched TV too late at night and ended up overtired and now, you just can't sleep.

Sounds familiar?

I've also heard from many people who say as they age, they struggle to sleep for more than five or six hours. There's only one problem with this lack of sleep is the feeling of jet lag the next day. You're not your usual self.

So, what's the cure for sleeplessness? I can only speak from personal experience. I get up, have a cup of sleepy time tea, or pray if I'm worried which breaks the patterns of worry, or watch my favourite TV or listen to the App Calm or read a book. Sooner or later I'm tired and usually fall into a deep sleep again. You may have your own way of overcoming sleeplessness. I guess what I'm saying is fighting against it and stressing over it isn't helpful. Going with it and accepting it, is easier.

I found this cartoon by Leunig. The term *dark night of the soul* has referred to spiritual dryness and experiencing the absence of God. It can also be experiencing a difficult and painful period in one's life such as journeying through the treatment for cancer or the breakdown of a relationship. Often sleep is the best cure but emotional pain makes sleep difficult.

Long hot baths, massages, counselling, and support if needed, walks outdoors or a visit to a hot spring or a kind friend who brings a hamper or makes a cuppa and listens, may help.

Leunig's cartoon speaks of struggle and hope.

Perhaps the two go together.

The dark night of the soul is about the absence of God.

Leunig's duck represents God.

It seems like he is surrounded by God with four little ducks.

Perhaps when we struggle, we experience hope and despair,

Comfort and pain, fear, and love.



Leunig – used with permission.