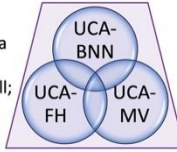




Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



Sunday 29th May 2022

703 As the deer pants – 2020 Traditional Catholic Hymns

https://youtu.be/1Y2_63qfUkg

Welcome

May the worship be a blessing

Acknowledgement

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.

National Reconciliation week

Theme: Be Brave. Make Changes

Begin with brave actions in your daily lives where you live, work, play and socialise

Explore Reconciliation Australia's website <https://nrw.reconciliation.org.au/>

Call to worship

Lord, you pray for us

That we may be one

Lord, you call us

That we may be one

As you and God are one

Lord, you pray for us

That we may be one

Prayers of Adoration – from Joan Chittister, The Breath of the Soul

(used with permission)

Great God, give us a continuing awareness of your voice in our hearts, your will in our minds

Faithful God give us strength to work for the fullness of creation so that your will may be done on earth as in heaven

Loving God, give us a heart as broad as your own
so we may see you in everyone, everywhere and respond with love and service

Music to listen to: One bread One body – John Michael Talbot 2015

<https://youtu.be/nNNOQm6WO54>



Readings

Acts 16:6-40 Paul's call to Macedonia

⁶They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; ⁸so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' ¹⁰When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

¹¹We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, ¹²and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district^[c] of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. ¹³On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.' And she prevailed upon us.

¹⁶One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. ¹⁷While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, 'These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you^[c] a way of salvation.' ¹⁸She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour.

¹⁹But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. ²⁰When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, 'These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews ²¹and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe.' ²²The crowd joined in attacking them and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. ²³After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. ²⁴Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul shouted in a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.' ²⁹The jailer^[c] called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them outside and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' ³¹They answered, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' ³²They spoke the word of the Lord^[c] to him and to all who were in his house. ³³At the same hour of the

night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay.³⁴ He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

³⁵ When morning came, the magistrates sent the police, saying, 'Let those men go.'³⁶ And the jailer reported the message to Paul, saying, 'The magistrates sent word to let you go; therefore come out now and go in peace.'³⁷ But Paul replied, 'They have beaten us in public, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they going to discharge us in secret? Certainly not! Let them come and take us out themselves.'³⁸ The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens;³⁹ so they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city.⁴⁰ After leaving the prison they went to Lydia's home; and when they had seen and encouraged the brothers and sisters^[a] there, they departed.

John 17:20-26 – A Prayer for the Church

²⁰ 'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word,²¹ that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us,^[a] so that the world may believe that you have sent me.²² The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one,²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.²⁴ Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

²⁵ 'Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me.²⁶ I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.'⁷ ©NRSV National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Young at Heart

What does it mean to be one church in Christ?
What does it mean to be one?

Music – Love can turn the world – Bill and Gloria Gaither – Gaither Vocal band and the African Children's choir 2013 Gaither Music TV

<https://youtu.be/unfOWRtg81U>

467 I am the Church – Alice Connor, Mother teaching son 2020, song by Donald Marsh and Richard Avery

<https://youtu.be/HoDqWqexy3E>

Sermon – One in Christ – Rev Tina

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



Today's gospel tells us Jesus prays for us to be one.

It takes faith to be one. Being one is a sign to the world we are one in Christ.

I wonder whether we have wholeheartedly responded to Jesus' prayer to be one community.

It takes faith and faith is the fundamental work of the people of God. It is to believe in Jesus.

I remember my own faith journey. The story of J Edwin Orr impressed me. He decided to ride his bike around the UK and depend upon people's hospitality. He took nothing but some clothes and his bike and did really well for six months until his bike broke down and he couldn't fix it. He sat at the side of the road and prayed. Please God send a limo to take me to the next village. Sure enough, within minutes a limo pulled up in front of him and the owner took him to the next village where he was fed, offered a place to stay and the villagers raised money for a new bike for him. He wrote about it in his book called: Can God. He was a Baptist minister, author and professor. I thought this was a great story for many years.

Then one weekend I was staying down the coast with a friend and had a massage from the owner of the B&B, and she told me to rest afterward, but, I decided to walk along the beach. I got to the bottom of a steep hill and my muscles gave out and I couldn't go any further. I sat down at the side of the road and prayed for God to send someone to help me get back to the B&B. Sure enough, within minutes I heard a voice calling out: I'm over here. I'm over here. It was my neighbour on her way home from visiting her mother in the next town. She gave me a lift back to the B&B. This is one of my favourite stories of answers to prayer. I'm sure you have a favourite story too.

In today's gospel Jesus is praying for us to be one, like he is one with God. I've been reading a book by Dorothy Lee called *Hallowed in truth and love* and she says the gospel speaks of a homecoming, *that love within the fold*, Jesus' church, an abiding love that's about friendship that begins with Jesus and ends with us. I wonder how far we would go for Jesus who Dorothy says, calls us into a "circle of love" where *the closer we are to the divine circle of love, the closer we are to one another, like the spokes of a wheel*. As we draw closer to this circle of love and become part of it, *God's love is reflected in the life of our community in how we relate to one another and the world*.

This brings us to the narrative of Paul's call to Macedonia which he responded to and journeyed to Philippi, a Roman colony, along with Silas and Timothy. After they arrive, they set off looking for a house of prayer and encounter Lydia, a merchant who sold precious purple cloths. After spending time with her, she and her household were baptised. Then they continue, looking for a house of prayer, and a slave girl possessed by a Greek spirit keeps on following them and calling out that they are slaves of God bringing salvation, until Paul gets tired of it and casts out the spirit.

The owners of the slave are not happy at losing their meal ticket and go to the marketplace complaining about the Jews going against Roman culture and a crowd joins them. (Apparently, Jews were not treated well or welcome.) The magistrates, without a trial, have them publicly shamed where they are stripped and beaten with long sticks and then put in prison with their legs in stocks. And what do they do, sing hymns to the prisoners.

Then we have an earthquake, and all the doors of the prison are opened, and they are set free and out of shame and fear, the jailor decides to suicide. They call out they are still there. After this the jailor cares for them and he and his household are baptised.

The magistrates try to get Paul and the others to leave in secret, but they refuse saying they are Romans. Now the magistrates are in trouble and afraid of retribution from the Romans for to bind a Roman citizen was a crime, to flog a Roman an abomination and to slay one got them into serious trouble. So, they come running to the prison to see the men they punished for upsetting Roman culture who are now claiming to be Romans. There is such a lot of irony and humour in many of the bible's stories. Perhaps that's why they have been preserved. Now the magistrates are shamed in this shame honour showdown with Paul.

What a horrible ministry experience. Paul was called to Macedonia and obeyed and look what came of it. The foundation of a church with a wealthy woman and a jailor and their household which would have been everyone including slaves and perhaps the prisoners. He certainly took risks and was brave.

Anyway, they leave the prison and go to Lydia's house, and she cares for them until they are ready to continue the journey

It was an unexpected journey full of surprises and risks. That is how God often moves in our lives. We need to be on the outlook for the unexpected. God often surprises us and calls us to take risks and step out in faith. That is the Christian journey, and we don't do this journey alone. We act with faith as the community of Christ, where we share and care for one another, where we are one in Christ, united in love and faith.

The Lord be with you

Music to listen to; The Prayer – Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qt_OkgSOrkU

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 Saviour, amen

Prayers of the People – Trevor de Run

Let us pray-

Almighty God, as we come to you with our prayers of the people, open our eyes to your glory, open our minds to your truth, open our hearts to your love, and open our wills to your control. Hear us and receive our prayers that we ask in faith.

Merciful God, we pray for your world and in particular today, for the African countries of Angola and Mozambique. Give wisdom to the leaders in the government of these countries and for all those in authority, to work for the good of its peoples. We pray for the just governance of these countries, for greater political stability and justice for its peoples. For the reduction of poverty and for the alleviation of suffering of those who are existing below the poverty line.

Lord, there are so many concerns for all the people throughout the world, and we ask for wisdom as we work towards an understanding between countries, between people of different ethnicity, race, cultures and religions, that your way of love will break down barriers for a reconciliation to a lasting peace in your world. In our own country, we ask for your guidance that the newly elected government will strive to serve all its peoples with justice, compassion and courage.

In the Ecumenical prayer cycle, we pray for the All Saints Anglican Church in Mitcham, and in our presbytery, for the Uniting Churches of Croydon and Croydon North. Give their leaders the wisdom to respond to Your will for them and their respective communities. We offer our prayers for the staff of the Lort Smith Animal Hospital Chaplaincy, as they provide exceptional veterinary services for all pet care.

We pray for our ministry team of Rev. Tina Lyndon and Rev. Peter Cannon and for our Ministry Student, Daniel Farnsworth, as they provide for the congregations of the Whitehorse Cluster of Uniting Churches. We bring our concerns for those who are grieving, distressed, depressed or afraid, that they may be comforted, and their hearts lifted and filled with hope.

Keep us safe in the coming week and be with us in all that we do. Accept our prayers 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 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.

628 In Faith and Hope and Love from Songs and Praises, Cantus Choro.

Directed by Peter Chapman, Organ- Geoffrey Cox & Norman Kaye

<https://youtu.be/Plz5kq834M>

Blessing

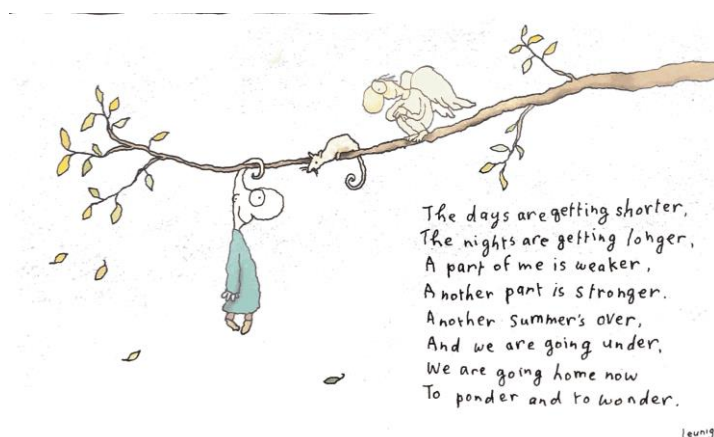
The love of God enfold us, the wisdom of Christ enlighten us,
 and fire of the Spirit inflame us and may the blessing of the holy triune God
 rest upon us and abide within us now and evermore. Amen

755 You shall go out with Joy (in Jerusalem) Bill and Gloria Gaither

Gaither music 2013

<https://youtu.be/cjL27TISwYU>

Pastoral Care tips



Used with permission

Talking about Death – Rev Tina

We need to talk about death. We cannot avoid death. It's a reality, yet people feel uncomfortable talking about death.

As we age and we come closer to God and ready ourselves to go home, it's natural to fear the unknown and death. We need to be able to share our fears and concerns with loved ones. We need to talk about death and die well. I've been in hospitals where loved ones are dying from cancer and family find it just too difficult to talk about death with their loved one. Sometimes this is hard on the person dying and too final for their family. Letting go isn't easy. Giving permission to go isn't easy. Most people want to die at home, but sometimes this isn't possible and it's disappointing.

Some people start the countdown to death from a certain age. But as the CFA firemen and firewomen say, who face danger and the possibility of death in summer: *When your number's up it's up*. We do not know when it's time to go home to God, so we need to do the best we can, to live life fully. Easier said than done when we have a diagnosis of cancer, and all treatment has failed. A friend's wife is dying of pancreatic cancer and hasn't got long. But for those who go into remission and are cancer free, it's a second chance at life and good news and extra time to be with loved ones.

The hardest deaths are of babies and children. I've done a funeral for a ten-day old baby and remember the photo his mum showed me of him looking directly at her, with a strong presence. There was so much love shared during his short life but so much grief afterwards.

Many people lose parents when they are in their early sixties and it's often a time of reassessment of life. Some lose parents as children or young adults and miss out on them being part of their stages of life, marriage, children or career or the celebrations of life events.

We do not live with death in the same way as our ancestors did where life expectancy was forty. It's predicted many of us will live into our nineties. That's an extra fifty years of life. What are we going to do with all that extra time, especially towards the end when our bodies start to creak and groan, and we face being limited? There are so many options today to stay involved and contribute to society and stay in our own home, opportunities that were not there just twenty years ago. We are privileged in our society.

But there comes a time when we are no longer mobile and find physical activities tiring. I've heard some people say they feel useless and a burden and tired of facing each day when their body gives them nothing but constant pain.

It seems like we are slowed down when we age and can make a valuable contribution to others. God doesn't see us as we see ourselves. Two of the most valuable contributions we can gift to others are our stories and our prayers. Sharing stories and prayers needs time. Most people today don't have time to share their stories or pray for others or phone someone and spend an hour listening. People crave wisdom and love people's stories. Some of the most popular shows on TV feature people's stories. I've done many funerals and often the eulogy and the tributes have stories no one knew about. Share your stories while you're alive and bless people with your wisdom. Don't hide your light. You are loved and valued by God and your community of Christ