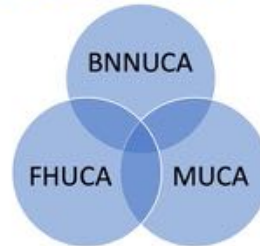




Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



Good Friday Worship

2nd April 2021



Hymn: As The Deer

– Helen Jackson [1:01]

https://youtu.be/d8gv_q4vOiY

Music & Lyrics: Martin Nystrom 1956– ; based on Psalm 42: 1-2;
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Welcome To Our Service

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.

Call To Worship

From 'The Soft Petals of Grace', Thom Shuman, Wild Goose Publications
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Into the shadows of chaos
The Light of the World steps

From the silence of death
The Word of God breaks free

Prayers Of Adoration, Invocation And Confession

Lord our God, always there,
 Steadfast in your love for us.

You are here today, with us on Good Friday
 Sustaining and comforting us on our Easter Journey.
 Calling us to come closer and listen to the good news with our hearts.

**We put our trust in you
 and remember all you have done for us.**

Jesus our Lord,
 You suffered on a cross for us
 You changed the world forever
 You revealed God's love for us
 You chose to die on a lonely cross
 You know deep suffering

We know we can come to you with our suffering and find comfort

**We put our trust in you
 and remember all you have done for us.**

Holy Spirit, filling us with hope and love
 Sustaining us during challenging times
 Teaching us of God's love for us

Helping us understand the cross and Jesus' suffering and death for us.
 Helping us know in our hearts we are loved by Jesus and allowing God's love in us to help us love others.

**We put our trust in you
 and remember all you have done for us.**

Holy Spirit come today,
 and be with us,
 as we remember all Jesus has done for us. Comfort us and give us courage to continue the journey
 looking forward to the resurrection of Jesus and new beginnings.

**Lord our God, we come before you
 with all that troubles our hearts.**

Forgive us and set us free from all sin. Show us the way.
 Help us to forgive others as we are forgiven by you.
 Lord, in this moment of silence we come before you knowing we are forgiven and loved.

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



Hymn: Comfort, Comfort

– Helen Jackson [2:42]

<https://youtu.be/P1x7V9N583Q>

Music & Lyrics: Robin Mann 1949– ; © R. Mann; Permission to stream the music obtained from ONE LICENSE #A-620587 [MUC]

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Scripture Readings

Reader: Colleen Rowe

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Psalm 22

¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

² O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.

³ Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.

⁴ In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.

⁵ To you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

⁶ But I am a worm, and not human;
scorned by others, and despised by the people.

⁷ All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;

⁸ “Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver—
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!”

⁹ Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother’s breast.

¹⁰ On you I was cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.

¹¹ Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.

¹² Many bulls encircle me,
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;

¹³ they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.

¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;

it is melted within my breast;

¹⁵ my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.

¹⁶ For dogs are all around me;
a company of evildoers encircles me.

My hands and feet have shriveled;

¹⁷ I can count all my bones.

They stare and gloat over me;

¹⁸ they divide my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.

¹⁹ But you, O LORD, do not be far away!

O my help, come quickly to my aid!

²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword,
my life from the power of the dog!

²¹ Save me from the mouth of the lion!

From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.

²² I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:

²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him!

All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;

stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

²⁴ For he did not despise or abhor
the affliction of the afflicted;
he did not hide his face from me,
but heard when I cried to him.

²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

²⁶ The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD.
May your hearts live forever!

²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD;
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.

²⁸ For dominion belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.

²⁹ To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
and I shall live for him.

³⁰ Posterity will serve him;

future generations will be told about the Lord,

³¹ and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying that he has done it.

John 18:1 – 19:42

18 ¹ After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. ² Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. ³ So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴ Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" ⁵ They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶ When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground. ⁷ Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go." ⁹ This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me." ¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. ¹¹ Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

Jesus before the High Priest

¹² So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him.

¹³ First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year.

¹⁴ Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

Peter Denies Jesus

¹⁵ Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, ¹⁶ but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. ¹⁷ The woman said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?"

He said, "I am not." ¹⁸ Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

The High Priest Questions Jesus

¹⁹ Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. ²⁰ Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said." ²² When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" ²³ Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" ²⁴ Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Peter Denies Jesus Again

²⁵ Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." ²⁶ One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" ²⁷ Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

Jesus before Pilate

²⁸ Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover.

²⁹ So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" ³⁰ They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." ³¹ Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The Jews replied, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death." ³² (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

³³ Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?"

³⁵ Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." ³⁷ Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.

Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." ³⁸ Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

Jesus Sentenced to Death

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no case against him.

³⁹ But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" ⁴⁰ They shouted in reply, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a bandit.

¹⁹ ¹ Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. ³ They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. ⁴ Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." ⁵ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" ⁶ When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." ⁷ The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

⁸ Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. ⁹ He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?"

¹¹ Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." ¹² From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor.

Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

¹³ When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. ¹⁴ Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" ¹⁵ They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him!

Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." ¹⁶ Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

So they took Jesus; ¹⁷ and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. ¹⁹ Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹ Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'"

²² Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." ²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. ²⁴ So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfil what the scripture says,

"They divided my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots."

²⁵ And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

²⁸ After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty."

²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished."

Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Jesus' Side Is Pierced

³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. ³² Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. ³⁵ (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe.

His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.)

³⁶ These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken."

³⁷ And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

The Burial of Jesus

³⁸ After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus.

Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. ³⁹ Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. ⁴⁰ They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews.

⁴¹ Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid.

⁴² And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.



Hymn: Rock of Ages

– Helen Jackson [2:46]

<https://youtu.be/qDrfj4VcLgs>

Composer: Richard Redhead 1820-1901.

Lyricist: Augustus Montague Toplady 1740–78. Song: Public Domain. Video: © 2021 the Multimedia team. All Rights Reserved.

Sermon

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



All of us are vulnerable at some time in our life and we all suffer and struggle from time to time.

Mental health affects many people in our society.

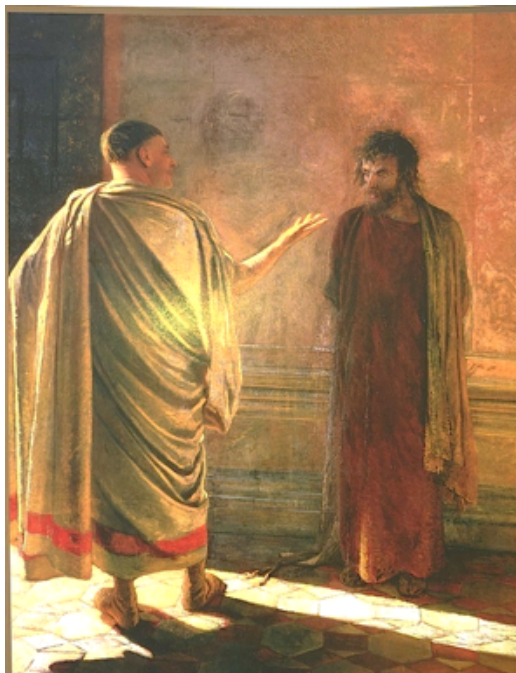
I once had a cuppa with a poet who told me she had bipolar. She said: *“When I’m down I could put my head in the oven and when I’m up I could break up a dog fight and push the dogs apart with my hands. Of course, I wouldn’t put my head in an oven because of my faith in God.”* Another lady, married with two teenagers, had bipolar and kept a journal when in hospital. She asked me to read it. She wanted me to understand and be there with her in the darkness. A lot of what she wrote was self-loathing and helped me understand how she struggled with depression.

Many people have spoken about finding God in the darkness, in the most hopeless situations, when they were frail and despairing. It helped them to know Jesus had been there and suffered.

It gave them hope because if he came through suffering and darkness, into the light, so would they and Jesus would walk with them through the darkness into the light.

John’s gospel gives a stark account of the death of Jesus, with its denial, betrayal and violence.

Yet, throughout the arrest, trial and crucifixion, Jesus maintains his dignity and seems calm. We know he willingly lays down his life in what he says, does and how he dies. We witness his courage and faith in God. How he delivered himself to the soldiers, told Peter not to use violence and had courage when questioned by the high priest and was struck by one of the police.



We hear about how he calmly explains to Pilate about his kingdom, the truth and power. Pilate believed he was innocent. Yet Jesus must have known mob rule reigned, encouraged by the religious authorities and that Pilate was powerless, a pawn of the Jewish authorities, afraid and persuaded by the mob. He would have listened as Pilate taunted the crowd. Pilate had Jesus scourged, tortured, crowned with thorns and put to death, with a sign on the cross saying: King of the Jews.

The gospel doesn't tell us what happened throughout Jesus suffering. We do not know if Jesus called out. Perhaps he stood firm in his faith in God and accepted suffering at the hands of the authorities. He must have been in terrible pain and suffered deeply.

What stands out in the midst of Jesus suffering and darkness is love. Jesus' mother witnessed what happened to Jesus. She was standing beside the cross looking up at her son hanging on it, slowly dying. It must have ripped open her heart and caused her intense pain and suffering. As Jesus is dying, he makes sure his mother will be cared for after he dies. Jesus trusts the beloved disciple who stands beside his cross him to look after his mother. She would have needed care. Try to imagine her grief.



When Jesus says, "*I am thirsty*" a soldier puts a sponge into vinegar and puts it on a branch of Hyssop, which is a type of mint.

Perhaps it's a moment of compassion and care, by the soldier, an attempt to comfort Jesus. Jesus receives this sour wine, then calls out, "*It is finished!*" He bows his head and gives up his spirit.

This is not a moment of defeat, it's a moment of glory and triumph over darkness.

Many people find the Good Friday story of Jesus challenging. It reminds them of their own Good Friday's. Today's gospel and psalm 22 offer us some hope for a way through suffering.

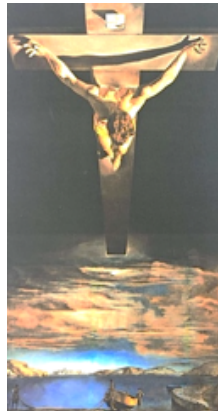
The psalmist feels forsaken and abandoned in their suffering. They are groaning, crying and feeling overwhelmed. They know God has comforted and saved others. They hope God will hear their cries, prayers and groans. They hope God will comfort and save them and God does come to them in their moment of need. God hears them and comforts them and comes and saves them and they are grateful. They are grateful and praise God. They thank God and tell their story to the world.

There are many memoirs about people overcoming adversity and being grateful to God.

The human spirit is courageous and not easily defeated. Christians find hope in God and following Jesus, through the suffering, knowing Jesus enters into our hopelessness and vulnerability to comfort us in the darkness. He is there when we despair. He comes with our loved ones offering comfort and holding us.

Many artists have tried to portray God as being with Jesus when he suffered on the cross.

Salvador Dali's portrait of Christ of St John the Cross in 1951 shows Christ viewed from above. God is looking down on Jesus and is with him. Jesus is looking down at the Sea of Galilee where he will appear after his resurrection. The portrait reveals Jesus' death as not a defeat, but a beginning.



Another artist showed God holding Jesus and supporting and caring for him, as the crucified Christ.



Portraits like this remind us God is there for us when we face bleak moments or suffer or grieve or feel abandoned or overwhelmed by despair. God is there for us and sends others to care for us and hold us as we make our way into the light again.

Domestic Violence is another form of suffering that affects people from many cultures.

I read about Rosemary Kariruki in *The Age Good Weekend* recently.

She had experienced domestic violence in her first marriage and has doubted God.

She came here with nothing and got married and had two children.

Years later her second husband developed early onset of dementia and this made her angry with God, where she asked: Why me? One day God spoke to her through her husband.

He said, *"I don't deserve you, but God has brought you into my life so you can look after me."*

This made Rosemary feel deep calmness. This is the kind of calmness that comes when we pray and ask for God to come and help us when we are suffering. Perhaps this was the kind of calmness Jesus felt during his arrest, trial and crucifixion. A calmness that reassured him God was with him and comforting him. The kind of calmness we feel when God is with us and comforting us.

Rev Tina

Music: 'Processional to Calvary' from "The Crucifixion"

Composer: John Stainer 1840-1901. Music: Public Domain. Organist: Geoffrey Willis.

Prayers Of The People And The Lord's Prayer

Leader: Trevor de Run

Let us pray:

Our gracious, loving, Heavenly Father, as we come to you in prayer today on this Good Friday, we reflect on the supreme sacrifice of your son Jesus Christ, who was crucified on the cross, so as to offer us the gift of eternal life.

Open our hearts this day to the significance of Good Friday and fill us with your everlasting love.

Merciful God, as we come to you in worship on this Good Friday representing the Whitehorse Cluster of Uniting Churches, we offer our prayers for all the front-line workers, who have been working tirelessly over the past year to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Give guidance to those involved with the roll out of the COVID vaccination programme.

We pray for all the families in our three congregations of the Whitehorse Cluster of Churches, as they participate in this worship service. We offer our prayers for the members in our three congregations who are doing it tough, facing grief, illness, cancer, depression, loneliness and mental health issues. Lord, we trust them to your care and that they will be provided for and be comforted with your peace.

Heavenly Father, we pray for the Ministers of our Whitehorse Cluster of Churches, Rev. Tina Lyndon and Rev. Peter Cannon, that they will respond to your will for them, in their service for the three congregations in their care.

Keep us safe during this Easter period and be with us in all 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.**

Candle Prayers

'God So Loved the World' from "The Crucifixion" (played during Candle Prayers)

Composer: John Stainer 1840-1901. Music: Public Domain. Organist: Geoffrey Willis.

Blessing

For all that God can do within us
For all that God can do without us

For all in whom Christ lived before us
For all in whom Christ lives beside us

For all the Spirit wants to bring us
For where the Spirit wants to send us

May we on this Good Friday be blessed in the name of God

The God of Justice and mercy
The God of peace not violence

The God of love not hate
The God who is present with us

and our world in suffering and in pain

The God of Resurrection and life

Forever and ever

AMEN

Dismissal

from Uniting In Worship.

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**Lord Jesus Christ,
 the story of your suffering is written on our hearts,
 and the salvation of the world is on your outstretched hands.**

**Keep your victory always before our eyes,
 your praise on our lips,
 your peace in our lives, amen**

**Music: 'For The Love of Jesus' (also known in hymn 'All for Jesus')
 from "The Crucifixion"**

Composer: John Stainer 1840-1901. Music: Public Domain. Organist: Geoffrey Willis.

Rev Tina, for Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

Collation by Whitehorse Uniting Cluster Media team.

<https://www.mountviewuca.org/whitehorse-uniting-cluster.html>

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