

**Whitehorse Uniting Church**  
**Sunday 18 February 2024**  
**Lent 1 B**



**Hymn: TIS 491 Father welcomes all his children (Processional)**

Author Robin Mann. Arranged and recorded by Mark E Siefert

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koxdiaYpkCA>

**Welcome, Call to worship and Acknowledgement of Country**

As we gather today on the first Sunday of Lent, we take up last week's theme and are invited to take time to listen and notice God's Spirit in, around and working. We remember that Lent is a time of reflection and consideration rather than a time of going without. The disciplines of Lent are about making time and providing energy to refocus on God and notice.

*Our First Nations people know in their heart, their stories and their understanding of life that all things are connected. What we do affects others and the wider creation. We acknowledge their wisdom and custodianship of God's creation. Lent invites us to join with our First Nations peoples to listen to creation, the land on which we meet and the creator of all. On this journey we commit to working together towards reconciliation and healing.*

**Reading: Genesis 9: 8 – 17**

<sup>8</sup>Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, <sup>9</sup>“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you <sup>10</sup>and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>11</sup>I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” <sup>12</sup>God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: <sup>13</sup>I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup>When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, <sup>15</sup>I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. <sup>16</sup>When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” <sup>17</sup>God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

**Prayer of adoration: Rainbow and promises**

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In the damp dark uncertainty,  
in the ominous threat of the storm,  
appears a gentle arc of colours  
the rainbow that remembers the light.

In the silent questions of doubt,  
in the disturbing vertigo of Your seeming absence  
whispers a silent promise  
the covenant of your forever being-here

I praise You, God, for rainbows and promises  
and the courage I find  
in their comforting presence

Amen.

**Hymn: TIS 447 Lord, your almighty word**

Music F de Gardini. Words J. Marriott (alt)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MD3yOyybGE>

## Reading: Mark 1:9 – 15

### The Baptism of Jesus

<sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from the heavens, “You are my Son, the Beloved; <sup>[a]</sup> with you I am well pleased.”

### The Testing of Jesus

<sup>12</sup> And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup> He was in the wilderness forty days, tested by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him.

### The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

<sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news <sup>[b]</sup> of <sup>[c]</sup> God <sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; <sup>[d]</sup> repent, and believe in the good news.” <sup>[e]</sup>

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## Prayer of Confession: That Life Would Teach Us

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God, life – your life – is so freely and abundantly available,  
it pulses in all creation,  
and in every human soul.

***Yet we have allowed ourselves to be seduced by death,  
and have left ourselves and our planet thirsty and lethargic.***

So, where rain forests are destroyed  
to exploit immediate resources for short term profits,  
***we pray that your life would teach us restraint;***  
Where human waste piles up and poisons the earth,  
and the lives of the creatures in it,  
***we pray that your life would teach us wisdom;***  
Where the growth and nurture of children is stunted,  
by poverty and inequality,  
***we pray that your life would teach us generosity and compassion;***  
Where life in all its various expressions is denied and suppressed  
by hatred, self-interest, war and megalomania,  
***we pray that your life would teach us love and humility.***

Teach us, O God, to live – to really live,  
abundantly, freely, generously and humbly,  
that life may be nurtured, multiplied and shared,  
– in all its amazing diversity –  
through us.

***In Christ's name we pray.  
Amen.***

*Silent reflection*

**A word of grace (written by Rev Peter):**

In pausing, listening and seeking after the life of God to be active in our living, we experience God's wonderful grace. Hear then the good news we have received in Jesus, you are welcomed, you are forgiven and you are loved.

***Thanks be to God.***

## **A reflection on Mark 1:9 – 15** *by Rev Peter*

Leading up to St Valentine's Day, the media seek out couples who have been together for a long time and ask them what is the secret of a long, happy relationship. If you asked a dozen couples, I'm sure you would get just as many different answers.

Last week, we noted that to build strong, resilient relationships, we need to make space for the other, listen, notice and learn about them. In doing so, we grow closer together and establish a deep intimacy.

This is as true in our relationship with God as it is with one another. God invites us close to Godself. Last week we were let into an intimate insight with the disciples, Peter, James and John. We heard of God's affirmation of Jesus, the same affirmation we read about in today's reading.

In today's reading from Mark though, only Jesus hears the affirmation and sees the dove of the Spirit descending. We as readers are welcomed into that space with Jesus, to share in that intimate blessing.

As with last week, there is a corresponding invitation or commissioning. Last week on the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples in hearing God's affirmation were told to then listen to Jesus. Such listening conveys not just hearing the words but responding positively to the message. To listen is to act accordingly.

In this week's reading, Jesus is sent immediately into the wilderness, to pray, trust in God and prepare for his coming ministry and mission. We as readers are invited to journey with him into that space, alongside of the wild animals, trusting in God's Spirit and facing the tests and temptations that come our way. We are then called into ministry and service to those we meet.

This is the invitation of Lent. It is to take time to come close to God, seeking to participate in the mission and ministry of God in all aspects of our living. Jesus' baptism was just the beginning for him, just as ours has been for us.

Jesus proceeded to share good news, help those who were struggling and worked to set free the oppressed. This too is our mission. We too have something good to share with others. We too have a relationship with God and God's people that grounds us and frees us to be a blessing to each other. In this community, we too have been blessed with a hope that takes us beyond the struggles of the moment.

**Hymn: TIS 418 She sits like a bird**

**John L Bell and Graham Maule. Victoria Methodist Bristol.**

<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-e&q=youtube+hymn+she+sits+like+a+bird#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:c63de9e5,vid:yPb5gO8ASvM,st:0>

### **Offering Prayer**

*Covenant-keeping God,  
whose promise is rock solid;  
we offer our lives  
and these signs of our daily living  
not simply that bread might fill empty stomachs,  
but that, through the working of your Holy Spirit,  
empty lives may be filled,  
friendless, lonely lives find intimacy,  
depressed lives given hope.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

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## Prayers of the People Lynne Rosenthal

Let us pray.

We come to you now, Lord, in this quiet moment to remember all those who are suffering in conflicts overseas. We pray for those who are injured, homeless, without food and water, not knowing where their family members might be and for those who are working through aid agencies to help them.

We pray that leaders will consider other ways to forge reconciliation, negotiation and trust. May they feel your Spirit in their midst, a yearning to speak up and suggest a new approach, a better way.

Closer to home we pray for families who are struggling to make ends meet. Help us to continue to provide what we can to help, to be your hands and feet in our community and to each other, to be a friendly face, the person who speaks kindly to a stranger.

Lord, we ask for healing for those who are unwell, those who are concerned about surgery which may be ahead or concerned about how they will recover. We humbly ask for your blessing on these people, Lord.

We give thanks for the blessings in our own lives. We give thanks for our ministry team and their gifts at work in our congregation. Bless them, Lord, as they lead and care for us.

Lord, help us to listen for your voice, to be open to your Spirit moving in us. Keep our minds and hearts open to the guidance you offer in our lives if we make time to listen. In all that we do, help us to remember that you are with us always.

We pray together 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 forever. Amen.

### **Hymn: TIS 710 Come Holy Spirit**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K\\_WOFqap0oM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_WOFqap0oM)

**Blessing and commissioning** (*adapted courtesy © B D Prewer, bruceprewer.com/DocB/BLENT1.htm, used by permission*):

Therefore go out from this place cheerfully and boldly, for the God of Christ is on your side and nothing can ultimately defeat those who are encompassed by such an incomparable love.

***It is Christ's grace that is saving us, not our achievements.***

***By faith we accept this grace of God and go on our way with thanksgiving.***

We sing the following blessings to each other. So turn to each other as you sing...

### **Hymn: TIS 778 Shalom tMt video**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH\\_HdkWs74&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=44](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH_HdkWs74&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=44)