

**Whitehorse Uniting Church**  
**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2024**  
**Lent 5 B**



**GATHERING**

*The bell is sounded*

*The Bible and leaders enter during the singing of the following song....*

**HYMN** "AS OUR CONGREGATION GATHERS (*Tune: Ode to Joy 87.87D, TIS 152*)

words: Andrew E Pratt (born 1948), Words © 2000 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, England [copyright@stainer.co.uk](mailto:copyright@stainer.co.uk)

As our congregation gathers  
lift our lives, with love amaze;  
offer some melodious treasure,  
fill our hearts with wondering praise.  
Crashing brass and singing cymbals,  
soaring organ, sound and light;  
fill this space with awe and thunder,  
lift us through the veil of night.

Then a sudden, silent stillness  
holds an echo in the air:  
on a knife edge, balanced, waiting,  
in the silence, you are there.  
Joy beyond imagination,  
love incarnate, hope to hold,  
faith we cannot sound or fathom,  
Gripped in wonder, we behold.

**LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE**

We light the Christ Candle, as a sign the light of the sacred presence shines among us.

**WORDS OF WELCOME** (*attributed: Alex Sangster, worship order of service, Canterbury UCA*):

We are drawn from many countries, many cultures, many cities, and many localities.  
We come with individual stories – so diverse, so different, but so important in coming to terms with who we are and where we are heading.  
Some of us come with a dance in our step and a song of joy and thanksgiving in our hearts. Some of us come dragging leaden feet and bearing heavy hearts.

We come to this place of community and sharing, of openness and connectedness. We come in gratitude and need, celebrating life and longing for a renewed glimpse of its fullness. We seek hope in a world where much seems hopeless. We seek the love without which life is hollow.

We seek dreams and visions that draw us out from where we are, to what we might become, through the creative enlivening Spirit of the everywhere God.

In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, you are welcome – you are accepted.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY/FIRST PEOPLES** *(An act towards reconciliation)*

**All: We acknowledge the First Nations peoples whose relationship with the land is central to their spirituality. We particularly acknowledge the Wurundjeri People of The Kulin Nation, their elders, past, present emerging, and their stewardship of the land upon which we meet throughout the ages. They have never ceded their sovereignty of the land and we commit ourselves to work towards healing and reconciliation.**

### **HYMN TIS 693: COME AS YOU ARE**

*Words: Deidre Browne, By permission  
Spectrum Publications, Melbourne*

'Come as you are:  
That's how I want you.  
Come as you are;  
Feel quite at home,  
Close to my heart,  
Loved and forgiven.  
Come as you are:  
Why stand alone?

'No need to fear,  
Love sets no limits;  
No need to fear,  
Love never ends;  
Don't run away  
Shamed and disheartened,  
Rest in my love,  
Trust me again.

'I came to call sinners,  
Not just the righteous;  
I came to bring peace,  
Not to condemn.  
Each time you fail  
To live by my promise,  
Why do you think  
I'd love you the less?



### **WORDS OF AWARENESS** (author unknown, [Lent5B.17.3.2024 — Rex A E Hunt \(rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com\)](https://www.rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com))

We come together in this hour...  
in a wider search for truth and purpose.  
In this quest, may we greet one another with open hearts and minds;  
inspire each other to consider new questions and seek deeper meaning;  
and cultivate both wisdom and compassion.

Let all who enter this sacred place find comfort and solidarity in this community.

We give thanks for the signs of love and creativity that surround us and bless us in each moment.  
May it be so.

### **REFLECTION: Rev Peter**

*Instead of a traditional sermon or reflection, I would like to invite you to journey with me in a Lectio Divina. We invite you to listen for the ways God might be speaking to you through your senses and imagination. If you are unfamiliar with meditation or feel a bit uncertain about it, I will help guide throughout.*



### **Meditation Instructions:**

- 1) Focus on your breath. If your mind begins to wander, inhale and exhale slowly. Stay mindful of your breathing as a way to bring you back into the present moment.
- 2) When you listen to the scripture reading, hold onto a word or phrase that resonates with you. Consider repeating this word or phrase as a mantra in your head to help you stay focused.
- 3) If you find yourself not knowing what to think, or trying to figure out what the reading means, remember that you are invited to simply be an observer. As you read and reflect, note simple observations about what you read, or ask yourself questions such as, “Why did the writer tell the story with that detail?” or “Why did the writer tell the story in this way?” or “How does this story make me feel?” Perhaps your questions will lead to more questions and more observations and then you’ll be getting somewhere.

*Centre yourself by taking a deep breath and relaxing your body as best you can. Allow your shoulders to lower away from your ears. Let your arms rest in your lap and let your feet be fully supported by the floor. Feel the weight of your body held by the chair. Spend this time in quiet. Open yourself up to God’s voice. **(pause) (1-2 min)***

Now, for those at worship, let us listen to the reading. For those at home, read the reading. Listen for a word or image that comes to mind.

**READ OUR PASSAGE OUT LOUD:**      **John 12:20 – 33**      **Maeve Martinus**

### **Read first time**

<sup>20</sup> Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration <sup>21</sup> paid a visit to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee. They said, “Sir, we want to meet Jesus.” <sup>22</sup> Philip told Andrew about it, and they went together to ask Jesus.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, “Now the time has come for the Son of Man<sup>[a]</sup> to enter into his glory. <sup>24</sup> I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives. <sup>25</sup> Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity. <sup>26</sup> Anyone who wants to serve me must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honour anyone who serves me.

<sup>27</sup> “Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But this is the very reason I came! <sup>28</sup> Father, bring glory to your name.”

Then a voice spoke from heaven, saying, “I have already brought glory to my name, and I will do so again.” <sup>29</sup> When the crowd heard the voice, some thought it was thunder, while others declared an angel had spoken to him.



<sup>30</sup> Then Jesus told them, “The voice was for your benefit, not mine. <sup>31</sup> The time for judging this world has come, when Satan, the ruler of this world, will be cast out. <sup>32</sup> And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.” <sup>33</sup> He said this to indicate how he was going to die.

Holy Bible, *New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of *Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.*, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Take a deep breath in and out. Continue breathing deeply as you listen to the story. In this moment, **simply notice the features of the story: characters, tone of voice, the setting, reactions of those in the story.** (pause) (1-2 min)

#### Read second time

Now listen deeper. **What words or phrases are you most drawn to? What parts of the story did you quickly brush by or overlook?** (pause) (1-2 min)

#### Read third time

And now, use your imagination. **Imagine yourself in this piece. Where would you be and how would you interact with what surrounds you?** Take your time. (1-2 min)



#### **HYMN:** ONE MORE STEP ALONG THE WORLD I GO

Words and music by Sydney Carter, <https://www.hopepublishing.com/find-hymns-hw/hw4713.aspx>, Words © 1971 Stainer & Bell (admin. Hope Publishing Company)

1. One more step along the world I go,  
one more step along the world I go,  
from the old things to the new,  
keep me traveling along with you:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me traveling along with you.

2. Round the corner of the world I turn,  
more and more about the world I learn;  
all the new things that I see,  
you'll be looking at along with me:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me traveling along with you.

3. As I travel through the bad and good,  
keep me traveling the way I should;  
Where I see no way to go  
you'll be telling me the way I know:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me traveling along with you

4. Give me courage when the world is rough,  
keep me loving though the world is tough,  
leap and sing in all I do,  
keep me traveling along with you:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me traveling along with you.

5. You are older than the world can be,  
you are younger than the life in me,  
ever old and ever new,  
keep me traveling along with you:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me traveling along with you.

## **AFFIRMATION**

© S Kramer, Duncan, G. (ed). *Courage to Love. An Anthology of Inclusive Worship Material*. Norwich. The Canterbury Press, 2002, CAL Licence #

In response to the reflection, we will affirm our faith in action.

We will sit as a bell is rung once before we say each affirmation

***(The Bell is rung) Congregation: We believe in a sacred power within and around us.***

Reader 1: A Divine Source that we call by many names and experience in many ways, that empowers and heals, that calls us forth.

***(The Bell is rung) Congregation: We believe in our creativity.***

Reader 2: Making and transforming beauty out of words and notes, images, colours, and pictures

***(The Bell is rung) Congregation: We believe in doing justice and making peace***

Reader 1: Justice that compels and empowers us to risk whatever we must risk to create a climate in which all people can be who they are.

A peace that is based on openness, honesty and compassion.

***(The Bell is rung) Congregation: We believe in hope and love***

Reader 2: We expect change to continue to occur in our world. We rely on our courage to continue to bring about these changes.

We believe in love within and around us that laughs and cries, a healing love that perseveres, challenges and comforts

***(The Bell is rung) Congregation: We believe in diversity and celebrating.***

Reader 1: We affirm traditions, emotions and thoughts, differences and similarities.

We remember and we commemorate. We create rituals.

***(The Bell is rung) Congregation: We believe in life.***

Reader 2: Life that wells up within and flows out of us like a streaming fountain.

And that we have potential.

We affirm we are a sacred part of all creation.

## **HYMN 650: BROTHER, SISTER writer Richard Gillard**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQaOErUUjm8> Chet Valley Churches

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE - (John Gerrard)**



Almighty and loving God, we bring to you our prayers for others. We pray for those who are suffering and dying because their nations are being torn apart by war. May those who declare and perpetuate war see the futility and mutual destructiveness of what they are doing. Keep safe those who risk danger as they bring medical aid, food and other supplies to those suffering as the consequence of wars around the globe.

As we pray for peace for the world, we also pray for real understanding of the needs and aspirations of others in our own country. Make us peacemakers, too, we pray, dear Lord.

We look in awe at your universe as we increasingly understand it, Lord, and see our planet earth as a barely significant part of it. We realise how fragile life on earth is and ask you to empower our modern-day prophets and leaders to restrain our consumption of the necessities of living on the earth as part of your creation. And as consumers ourselves we ask for wisdom and self-restraint in over-using the life-giving elements that your creation provides.

We are seeing more natural disasters as the effects of global warming become more obvious. We pray particularly for people in the Grampians and Beaufort regions of Western Victoria, including the town of Pomonal where 44 homes were burnt in a sudden bushfire in late February.

We live in an increasingly multicultural society in Australia, and so we benefit from the range and richness of the many cultures within our country. Our fellow men and women from different cultures see you, God, in different ways. Make us open to understanding more about you through the people of these cultures we pray. Help us to see opportunities to work with them to help people in need in the community.

As we now come together as members of the Whitehorse Uniting Congregation we ask that you will inspire our thinking and actions so that we use the insights and assets that you have blessed us with to best support the community's needs. Where we have not yet arranged to use the assets we have more efficiently, give us the wisdom and motivation we need to quickly make the necessary decisions.

Bless and support Rev. Tina and Rev. Peter as they guide us and remind us of the truths of our faith and of Christ's commission for us to go out and tell the good news.

For those of our number who are unwell we ask a special blessing of healing and comfort. Be with those facing further treatment and those who are caring for the sick we ask that they feel your supporting presence.

We bring these prayers in our Saviour's name. Amen

### **CANDLE PRAYERS (Rev P) (author unknown, [Lent5B.17.3.2024 — Rex A E Hunt \(rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com\)](#))**

For ourselves, for those named or remembered, and in solidarity with those who have not the freedom to express their concern or celebration for fear of discrimination or condemnation...

In all our joys and in all our concerns, may we be ever mindful of the presentness of the sacred among us, and to see new possibilities of the now.

**Offering Prayer** (*© Francis Macnab, A Fine Wind is Blowing: Psalms of the Bible in Words that blow you away.* Richmond. Spectrum Publications, 2006, CAL Licence # )

Let our gratitude for life be expressed in our generosity.

Let our faith be expressed in good causes.

Let our belief in the future find full expression in our daily attitude of mind.

### **THE 'ABBA' PRAYER:**

© M Furlong, *The St Hilda Community, The New Women Included. A Book of Services and Prayers.* London. SPCK, 1996, CAL Licence #

***God, who cares for us,  
The wonder of whose presence fills us with awe.***

***Let kindness, justice and love shine in our world.  
Let your secrets be known here as they are in heaven.  
Give us the food and the hope we need for today.***

***Forgive us our wrongdoing  
as we forgive the wrongs done to us.  
Protect us from pride and from despair  
and from the fear and hate which can swallow us up.***

***In you is truth, meaning, glory and power,  
while worlds come and go. Amen.***

## **PARTING WORDS** (*author unknown*)

The God we worship is never confined to this place.

So go and travel with the God who is found in ordinary and surprising places.

Let us go from this place, facing and serving the world  
with confidence, generosity and integrity.

**All: Let us live out the heart of religion which is to bring together all that is divided,  
to live in the moment, to love mightily  
and to reverence the mystery, beauty and spirituality of all things and all people.**

## **WORDS OF BLESSING** (author unknown, [Lent5B.17.3.2024 — Rex A E Hunt \(rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHJzD46-qU))

And now may the blessings of life  
be upon us, and upon this congregation.

May the memories we gather here give us hope for the future.  
May the love that we share bring strength and joy to our hearts,  
and the peace of this community be with us until we meet again.

**All: Amen. May it be so.**

## **HYMN OF BLESSING: BIND US TOGETHER, LORD. (SING TWICE)**

(*Scripture in Song vol 1, #185*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHJzD46-qU>

Bind us together Lord  
Bind us together  
With chords that cannot be broken  
Bind us together Lord; Bind us together  
Bind us together in Love.

*Accreditation: thanks to Margaret Cosstick for all photos.*