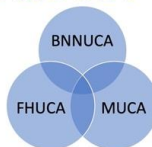




## Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



### Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2021 Blessing of the Pets

#### Welcome

May the worship be a blessing

#### Acknowledgement of Country – Tom Creedon

We acknowledge the First Nations People, the Traditional Owners of this land and their many unique cultures and languages. We respect the knowledge and wisdom of Elders past and present. They have never ceded their sovereignty and we commit to walking with them in their quest for truth, justice and treaties.

*(from Concerned Australians Acknowledgment of Country)*

#### Gathering and Greeting – Rev Peter

The animals of God's creation inhabit the skies, the earth, and the sea.

They share in the fortunes of human existence and have a part in human life.

God, who confers gifts on all living things, has often used the service of animals or made them reminders of the gifts of salvation.

Animals were saved from the flood and afterwards made a part of the covenant with Noah.

(Genesis 9:9–10)

The paschal lamb recalls the Passover sacrifice and the deliverance from slavery in Egypt.

(Exodus 12:3–14)

A giant fish saved Jonah. (Jonah 2:1–10)

Ravens brought bread to Elijah. (1 Kings 17:6)

Animals were included in the repentance of Nineveh. (Jonah 3:7)

Animals share in Christ's redemption of all God's creation. (Romans 8:19 – 22)

We, therefore, ask for God's blessing on these animals.

As we do so, let us praise the Creator and thank God for setting us as stewards over all the creatures of the earth.

#### Hymn – All things bright and beautiful

*John Rutter and the Cambridge Singers, City of London Sinfonia*

[https://youtu.be/ShpRCvU\\_bxM](https://youtu.be/ShpRCvU_bxM)

#### Prayer – Rev Tina

God our creator, you have made a beautiful world filled with wonder and surprises. You have gifted us with the blessing of animals; those in the wild, those on farms and those in our own homes. You have brought into being that which we could not imagine for ourselves.

We thank you for abundant life, the vast tapestry of life which is interwoven. We thank you for the gift of our own animal companions, the joy they bring and the unconditional love and forgiveness which teaches us about you. Amen

### **Prayer of Thanks and Confession – Rev Peter and Tom Creedon**

*We hold the animal we love and place our hand on its body as we give thanks.*

Lord, for all the animals in the whole wide world,

***We thank you, God!***

Lord, for all the fun and friendship we have with animals,

***We thank you, God!***

Lord, for all the times we have hurt or neglected animals,

***We are sorry.***

Lord, for all the times we have used poisons that have killed animals,

***We are sorry.***

Lord, for all the times we have destroyed the homes of animals  
in the forests, oceans or fields,

***We are sorry.***

### **Absolution – Rev Peter and Tom Creedon**

I speak for Christ. For all your sins against the creatures of Earth,

I forgive you and I call upon you to honour and protect all animals. Yes, I speak for Christ.

May the animals of Earth be your companions in life  
and lead you to celebrate your place in the circle of life.

**Amen! Amen! Shalom! Shalom!**

### **Meditative Story -Rev Tina**

I invite you to return your childhood memories of pets and memories of running free in fields of long grass with butterflies and grasshoppers.

Prepare to listen to a story about a child and a bird, a child who lived on a lighthouse with her family. Close your eyes and try to imagine yourself as her sister or brother.

Its night and there's a storm outside, the wind is howling, the rain is hitting against the windowpanes and it's comforting to be inside a solid stone house.

Dad goes outside to check the lighthouse light is working properly. He's gone a long time. Suddenly the back door slams. Dad still has his heavy coat and boots on when he walks into the warm kitchen, with its solid wood-fire oven and Mum makes a fuss about his muddy footprints.

Dad is holding a small black bird and says: *It flew into the lighthouse. I think its wings are damaged.*

Mum gets an old blue blanket and wraps it around the bird and gives it to us.

Tina holds it and looks at it. *Lucy. Let's call her Lucy.*

Lucy looks up at Tina and blinks her eyes.

Tina says: *I think she likes me*

Tina passes Lucy to you, and you say hello. She blinks her eyes again. She likes you too.

Both of you put Lucy in a doll's pram for the night and mum puts a bit of netting over the top.

Mum says to Tina: *Remember what happened with those penguins. I don't want to clean up more bird poop.*  
*Yes mum,* says Tina.

Dad promises to make a cage the next day.

When we wake up in the morning Dad has a fish for Lucy and we spend the day feeding her more fish, cuddling her and carrying her all over the place. Dad builds the cage and explains to us that Lucy is a mutton bird and all her friends are migrating to a far away place.

When her cage is ready, we place her in the cage and every day we feed her fish. And whenever we can we bring her inside and cuddle her. Some days we notice when she's alone in her cage she seems sad and lonely and looks out of her cage towards the horizon.

Weeks go by and her wing gradually heals.

One day we know it's time to set her free and we take her out of her cage.

*Come on Lucy. It's time for you to go and join your family. You can come back next summer.*

We put her on the ground. We wanted her to know we were saying goodbye and setting her free.

Lucy looked up at us and just sat there.

Perhaps she was thinking: *How can I show them I love them?*

Lucy started running along the ground, faster and faster, flapping her wings up and down, until she nearly took off.

Then she plonked back down on the ground on her bottom, with her feet in the air.

We called out: *Try again Lucy.*

Lucy started running again, flapping her wings faster and faster, until she's running very fast. Suddenly, she takes off and flies up into the air. Then she flies down and around us, then up again, then down and around us, letting out a long sorrowful call.

Lucy flies around us again. And again.

We knew she loved us and was saying thank you and goodbye.

We called out: *Goodbye Lucy. We love you.*

Lucy flew down again and around us and let out another long sorrowful call as if she was saying: *I love you.*

Then Lucy flew up into the sky, towards the horizon and she kept on flying until we couldn't see her anymore

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This is a true story. I invite you to ponder on the times you have connected closely with an animal. We are God's creatures, and we need to remain connected with other creatures God has created.

I'd like to share some images with you and invite you to ponder and try to remember some of the places you've been in your lifetime that have left you feeling awe for God's beautiful creation.



*Image by Gavin Blakemore. Used with permission.*



God invites us to be peacemakers and caretakers of God's creation, to hold fast to our memories of beauty in nature and ensure our descendants feel awe for the beauty of God's creation and creatures. Amen

### **Circle of Praise – A Version of Psalm 148– Rev Peter and Tom Creedon**

*Source - Barbara Allen*

All dogs and dingoes, large and small:

***Praise the Lord!***

All rabbits, rats and guinea pigs:

***Praise the Lord!***

All goldfish, guppies and swimming creatures:

***Praise the Lord!***

All kookaburras, magpies, budgies and singing birds:

***Praise the Lord!***

All wombats, koalas and wallabies:

***Praise the Lord!***

All horses, cows and sheep:

***Praise the Lord!***

All lizards, skinks and crawling creatures:

***Praise the Lord!***

Every animal in the sky, the sea and the bush:

***Praise the Lord!***

### **Reading from a sermon of St Francis – Rev Tina**

*‘Peace, birds, peace!’*

*My brother and sister birds, you should greatly praise your Creator and love him always. He gave you feathers to wear, and wings to fly, and whatever you need. God made you noble among his creatures and gave you a home in the purity of the air, so that, though you do not sow nor reap, he nevertheless protects and governs you without your least care.*

### **Song: “If I were a butterfly”**

### **Readings – Jenny Balshaw**

### **Genesis 2:8 – 20**

<sup>8</sup>Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed. <sup>9</sup>The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing

to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup> A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. <sup>11</sup> The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. <sup>12</sup> (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin<sup>[a]</sup> and onyx are also there.) <sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>14</sup> The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. <sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

<sup>18</sup> The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

<sup>19</sup> Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam<sup>[c]</sup> no suitable helper was found. (NIV)

### Isaiah 11:6 – 9

The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.

<sup>7</sup> The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

<sup>8</sup> The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den.

<sup>9</sup> They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain;  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.

### Sermon– Rev Pete

#### Genesis 2:15-20

*<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”*

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In Jewish tradition naming something is not merely the act of giving something a title for identification. Take Joseph in the birth narrative of Jesus for example. When Joseph names Jesus as his child, it does more than just become his name, Jesus and therefore Mary, become the responsibility of Joseph. They are named into his household.

In this Genesis account Adam (or Adem translated as Earth-Creature with a good debate on gender) names the animals. If we carry on this understanding of household responsibility, then each creature named becomes the responsibility of Adam.

The Jewish laws of Kosher eating also reflect the responsibility for animals. One of the laws of Kosher food is that the animal must not have suffered prior to slaughter. In fact, even the slaughter is to have been done in a way that gives dignity and gratitude to the animal. The whole life of the animal is to have been kosher. This law then causes even the eating of a meal to become a deep spiritual event that recognises the journey to the plate.

If we as Christians recognise that our roots are within the Jewish understanding of animal naming, what does it say to us in our modern context of climate change, of habitat destruction and even the planting of our gardens?

As we name and bless our pets, our challenge is to extend that blessing to all creation. Far easier said and prayed for than done. But each meditation and blessing with and for our pets takes us one step closer to that heavenly image of the Garden of Eden.

### **Prayers of Intercession – Sharon Collins**

Matthew 6 25-29 'How God has made creation beautiful: Solomon in all his royal splendour cannot match the brilliance of the creatures of land and sky that God creates and feeds.

Loving God, we bring to you the prayers of the people.

Today we offer up prayers for those involved in animal welfare and conservation work: for the RSPCA, for Earth Watch, World Wildlife Fund, Animals Asia, our local animal shelters.

We pray for those who are working at policy and project levels, and for those tending to the needs of animals. We pray for farmers – that the animals in their care are treated with dignity and respect. Help us to be generous: with money, time, and the offer of hospitality within our homes.

We pray for vets and vet practices: enable your wisdom and compassion to be evident wherever there are sick or dying animals. Enable the animals to sense your presence.

Comfort grieving owners: allow the many warm memories to break the frost of grief.

We make all our prayers in the name of your Son, Jesus, who taught us when we pray to say:

*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.*

### **Prayer of Blessing – Ministers**

*The leader says the following prayer with hands outstretched. The animals where possible are lifted to be seen on the camera of the computers for the blessing.*

You were created by God, and you are loved by God.  
 May you and your human family experience joy and companionship together  
 and continue to be a blessing to each other.  
 In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.’

### **Offering Prayer – Rev Tina**

Lord we give thanks to you for all our blessings  
 With gratitude we offer up all we are and all we have to you  
 With gratitude and love we give thanksgiving to you  
 Lord, we offer these gifts to you for the building up of the people of God,  
 your church, both within our cluster and for the wider church.  
 Lord our God, we give you thanks and praise, amen.

### **Sending Out – Rev Peter and Tom Creedon**

Christ calls you to be his disciples,  
 to serve him with love and compassion,  
 to serve Earth by caring for her creatures.  
 Will you care for creation?  
**We will care for creation!**  
**We will nurture our animals!**  
**We will celebrate the circle of life with them!**

### **Blessing – Rev Tina and Tom Creedon**

May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all, fill you with the knowledge of  
 God’s presence in Earth and the pulsing of Christ within you.  
 Go in peace! Serving Christ and loving all creatures!  
**We go in peace, serving Christ and loving our animal kin**

### **Andre’ Rieu – I will follow him**

*from DVD “Andre Rieu” – Under the stars – Live in Maastricht V*  
*Original song by Peggy March. Then: Song writers Arthur Altman/Franck Pourcel/Jacques Plante/Norman*  
*Gimbel/Paul Mauriat. I will follow him Lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group from Andre’ Rieu*  
<https://youtu.be/ZqN9aS2S3L0>

### **Self-Care tips from Rev Tina**

#### **Enjoy flowers and birds and belonging to God’s beautiful creation**

*I love to listen to the birds welcome the dawn*  
*The kookaburra’s laugh*  
*The large black cockatoos with red or yellow markings sitting in my trees*  
*The wattlebirds eating the blossoms*  
*The tiny plover chick I rescued the other day*  
*Birds are joyful and joy for us*

#### **Isaiah 11:6 – 9**

The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
 the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
 the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
 and a little child shall lead them.  
<sup>7</sup>The cow and the bear shall graze,

their young shall lie down together;  
 and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  
<sup>8</sup>The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
 and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.  
<sup>9</sup>They will not hurt or destroy  
 on all my holy mountain;  
 for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
 as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 11:6-9 is said to be a vision of an ideal world.  
 Ponder on this question: What is your vision of an ideal world?

### **Isaiah 40:1-11 – A reflection (Adapted)**

God is one who both stands strong alongside us and comforts us. Without God beside us it is often hard to keep going. Sometimes it is hard to keep reading about wars and conflicts in the world and to listen to the news about the latest outbreak of Covid-19. Sometimes it's hard when things don't change in the way we ideally like. But having a vision of what sort of world we'd like to see and how we might work towards it is an essential step. We could also apply this to our cluster of churches. Having a vision of what sort of church we'd like to see and how we might work towards it is essential.

*(CTM Advent resources 2014 Household Activities Advent Week 2. Advent and Justice)*

### **A treat for you from YouTube**

Murmuration refers to what happens when thousands of starlings fly in swooping and coordinated patterns through the sky. These are two of my favourites. Hope you enjoy watching them.

**Amazing starlings' murmuration (full HD) -www.keepturningleft.co.uk.**

Filmed by wildlife cameraman and travel journalist Dylan Winter

<https://youtu.be/eakKfY5aHmY>

**Murmuration (Official Video) by Sophie Windsor Clive & Liberty Smith**

<https://youtu.be/iRNqhi2ka9k>

### **For all Ages**

**From the movie SING song – “Don't you worry 'Bout a thing” by Meena as superstar Tori**

**Kelly HD**

from Cartoon clips HD

<https://youtu.be/enuprdVo7GA>