

**Whitehorse Uniting Church**  
**Sunday 1 October 2023**  
**Pentecost 18<sub>A</sub>**



**Introit - Be Still for the Presence of the Lord** tMt video  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-yBLNgQkvY&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=5>

## Welcome

### Acknowledgment

For thousands of years, the indigenous people have walked on this ancient land. These lands were taken from the First Peoples without their consent, treaty, or cooperation. The Spirit of God has long dwelled with the First people of this ancient land. *(From UCA Assembly Worship materials for International Older Persons Sunday)* Now the UCA is asking us to support the YES vote. For me it will be a matter of conscience. I do not support any behavior that treats some people less than others.



Aunty Joy (Image T. Lyndon)

### Acknowledgment

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

The World belongs to God  
**The earth and all its people**  
 Love and justice come together  
**Justice and peace hold hands**

How good and lovely it is  
**To live together in unity**  
 Lord, open our lips  
**And our mouths shall proclaim your praise.**

### Prayers of Adoration

*Prayers from UCA Assembly Worship materials for International Older Persons Sunday*

#### **God our Creator,**

Our thoughts cannot contain you; our words fall short of your vastness. Yet you are our God.

#### **God of all ages, your breath gives us life.**

Your hands shape our being.

Your artistry in creation leaves us gasping in wonder, longing to experience that which is of you.

In each person, there you are, if we could but discern you. Accept us again, O ancient yet ever new God, as we gather to worship and adore you. **Amen.**

Lord, help us to walk in the footsteps of those who have gone before

and know that we are not alone on this journey.  
 We walk in the footsteps of those who are older  
 and know that they go before us.  
 We walk in the footsteps of God  
 For the feet of God have walked this way.  
 The footsteps of God will become for us the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Thanks be to God!

### **Invocation**

Come upon us today Holy Spirit  
**Come Holy Spirit Come**

### **Confession**

Gracious God, we know that there is a time to be born, a time to grow old and a time to die.  
 We know that ageing is a part of life. Yet sometimes we forget.  
 Sometimes we fail to embrace the life of our older people.  
 We confess that we sometimes do not hear the voices of our older people, their needs and concerns.  
 In our busy daily life, sometimes we just don't stop and listen.  
 Forgive us when we close our ears to our older people.  
 We confess that many Indigenous Australians never know old age, or become old before their time, through the struggles in their lives.  
 Forgive us when we fail to notice and act.  
 Loving God, the Giver of Life,  
 bring to us the awareness that our life depends on each other.  
 We are called to uphold each other, especially those who are weak, frail and vulnerable. Fill us with your compassion, love, and grace,  
**Amen.**

I invite you to spend a moment in silence with the Lord, reflecting on what is on your heart, who you need to forgive or be forgiven by and to bring your desire for forgiveness or the grace to forgive to God.

### *Silence*

Hear then Christ's words of grace to us  
*"Your sins are forgiven"*  
**THANKS BE TO GOD**

### **YouTube Hymn 161: Tell out my soul. 2010 (phillipstopford)**

Tell out my soul (in full), BBC Songs of Praise from St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast  
[https://youtu.be/s6ji4y9Q-K0?si=E54ZYnHAsrKg\\_fgV](https://youtu.be/s6ji4y9Q-K0?si=E54ZYnHAsrKg_fgV)

## **Readings**

### **Exodus 17:1-7**

**17** From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup>The people quarrelled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" <sup>3</sup>But the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" <sup>4</sup>So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do for this people? They are almost ready to stone me." <sup>5</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. <sup>6</sup>I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. <sup>7</sup>He called the place Massah<sup>[a]</sup> and Meribah,<sup>[b]</sup> because the Israelites quarrelled and tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

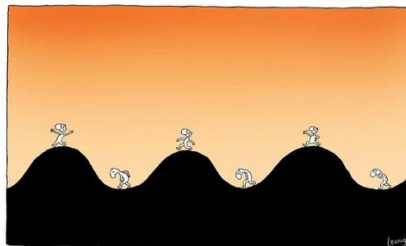
### Philippians 2:1-13

2 If, then, there is any comfort in Christ, any consolation from love, any partnership in the Spirit, any tender affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was<sup>[a]</sup> in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him even more highly and gave him the name that is above every other name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence but much more now in my absence, work on your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

### Matthew 21:23-32

<sup>23</sup> When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” <sup>24</sup> Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. <sup>25</sup> Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why, then, did you not believe him?’ <sup>26</sup> But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for all regard John as a prophet.” <sup>27</sup> So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. <sup>28</sup> “What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ <sup>29</sup> He answered, ‘I will not,’ but later he changed his mind and went. <sup>30</sup> The father<sup>[a]</sup> went to the second and said the same, and he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. <sup>31</sup> Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. <sup>32</sup> For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him, and even after you saw it you did not change your minds and believe him.

### Young At Heart - Being Thirsty – Rev Tina



The people have been complaining and are afraid. They are thirsty and have no water. They blame Moses. So, Moses takes his worries to God and fears the people will stone him

But they are in the middle of a desert, men, women, children, babies, livestock. Things are dire and they are suffering. They ask: Where is God? People demand proof God is with them in their midst. As instructed by God Moses strikes a rock with his staff, the symbol of his authority from God. Sure enough, water comes gushing out of the rock. God is true and faithful to his people and provides for them.

Have you ever felt like the people or Moses? Sometimes we get down right discouraged and rage against God. We can even blame our bosses, leaders, teachers, parents, spouses for our troubles, those in authority, even the family dog. All of us have our moments when we are having a hard time and doubt God is there, with us. We may even feel abandoned by God.

Sometimes we are so thirsty, nothing will satisfy our thirst. We can be: Thirsty for the truth; Thirsty for love; Thirsty for acknowledgement; Thirsty for comfort. There are many kinds of thirst.

Those in the desert were not just thirsty for water, they were thirsty for God. They needed to be reassured of God's presence and care for them because they were doing it tough. And God provided. He worked through Moses. We are here today because we want God to satisfy our thirst and we hunger to be fed spiritually.

We too are being reassured of God's presence. There are signs of life appearing amongst us, so believe God will never fail us. Never leaves us. God Loves us. All of us. God will never fail us.

**599 Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.  
Northern Baptist Association 2012**

[https://youtu.be/Gf11rReeWIs?si=lo\\_SPTGefGmmieqT](https://youtu.be/Gf11rReeWIs?si=lo_SPTGefGmmieqT)

**Reflection - The choices we make. Rev Tina**

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



RCL

Jesus' parable about the man with two sons is intriguing. The first son says, '*Absolutely not!*' Then he changes his mind and goes and helps his father in the vineyard. The other son says, '*Sure I'll go.*' But he doesn't go.

I found this painting of the Father and his two sons. Both sons seem burdened in some way. One son has his hand raised up as if to say no to his father's request. The other looks defeated in some way. I wonder what's going on here and why the two brothers behaved so differently?

One brother said he would go and then he changed his mind and didn't go. Maybe he is the one looking defeated or like he is regretting his choice. I wonder why he didn't act. Perhaps he didn't feel ready. Perhaps he was more concerned about worldly things or worried or had obligations or felt unworthy in some way.

The other brother who said he wouldn't go, the one who may have raised his hand and refused his father's request, was the one who changed his mind, and went. I wonder what changed his mind. Was it a teaching he heard that planted a seed in his heart where it took root and moved him to hunger and thirst for God, where he embraced God's call. Something must have moved his heart to respond.

One acts and the other fails to act. Perhaps many of us have felt the call of God where our hearts are strangely warmed and at first, we are enthusiastic. Then we procrastinate and choose not to act and later on have regretted our inaction. Perhaps some of us have felt the call and done a Jonah and gone far away, as far as possible to avoid having to respond and act.

I can identify with both responses in my life. Calls are scary. They mean change and risk and taking a step of faith and acting without knowing the outcome. They mean accepting the "Follow me" call and leaving parts of our life behind so we can embrace the new and grow. It means pain sometimes and effort and it takes faith and hope and most of all love for God and the willingness to allow God to fill our whole horizon. It means sticking it out when no one believes in you or your call. It means being sent. It means expanding our heart. That's a little of what God's call means to me. It may mean something different to you. We are all unique and equally loved and called by God.

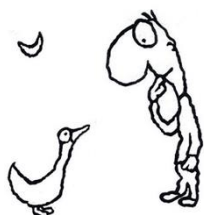
Of course, the point of the parable is to challenge the chief priests. They knew thousands sought out John the Baptist and his authority came from God. They hadn't given Jesus authority to teach in the temple, but they knew he taught with authority. They'd listened and watched the crowds respond to his teachings.

Jesus tells them the parable to challenge them to rethink how they treat people who they think are outside God's grace, when they have not responded to God's call to be loving. Jesus says to them in the only way they can hear him, look, tax collectors and prostitutes are getting into heaven, not you lot. No doubt they were infuriated by this because they believed they were the Holy ones. After all they obeyed the rules and set the rules. What Jesus is saying when he mentions John's baptism of repentance and the thousands who embraced it is that those who are repenting and changing their lives are getting into heaven. The Chief priests have hardened their hearts and are not open to repentance or to God's love and mercy.

The parable that Jesus tells the chief priests draws the crowds and us into the drama of what it means to change our lives and respond to God's call.

So, what's the good news for us in today's gospel?

Perhaps, during our lives, we may have been like both brothers where we've needed to make decisions about how we respond or not respond to the stirrings of the Spirit in our hearts. There may have been times of action and inaction for us or times when we felt deep satisfaction about responding or times when we regretted inaction. That's life and very human.



Leunig – used with permission.

This is cartoon by Leunig. The duck symbolises God for Leunig. It looks like he's pondering while the duck his looking at him with love and waiting for him to have a lightbulb moment.

I wonder if by being here today we may be seeking what's in our hearts. We know we find spiritual food, are fed by the Word, comforted by prayer and are in communion with Christ and one another.

All of this so we can go out into the world and respond to God's call to put our faith into action in God's immense vineyard.

We know we grow more and more into Christ when we are spiritually fed and act on our faith.

We are a community in Christ who are infused with the deep love and compassion generated by the Spirit in our soul. A Spirit who creates a common bond of mutual love between all of us.

I wonder if Paul's letter to the church in Philippi helps us understand more, just a little.

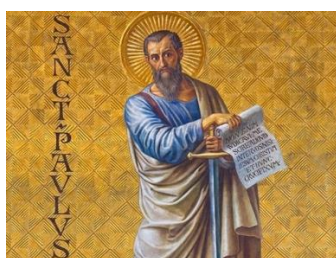


Photo - Stephanie Woollard

He writes his letter to a community undergoing changes, challenges, and suffering, like we have been and still are. Paul encourages the church at Philippi to continue to respond to God's call and live faithfully according to the gospel where they remain united and of the same mind, love, and soul. Perhaps this can encourage us to do the same.

Paul encourages members of the church at Philippi to choose self-emptying above self-interest and to have high regard for others rather than self-ambition, to have humility rather than empty self-glory and regard the interests of others, rather than their own interests all the time. Perhaps there is a message for us in this too.

Like the two sons there are choices to be made in life. Fact is, we face choices on a day-to-day basis on how we respond to God's call and the gospel way of life.

All of us are on a journey together and it's had its moments.

COVID has set us many challenges and we may at times have felt afraid or lonely or frustrated or down right fed up, like we're over it!! We have thought or said, 'Just one more challenge or change and I'll scream!!' I'm sick and tired of going with the flow and adapting. I'm over it!! This is endless!

When will things get better?

Have you ever had a day like that?

We are all in it together. Believe the sun is slowly coming out again, and it's time to answer some of those calls from God to go and work in the vineyard. It's time to act and discern what resources we have and how best to use them.

Do not doubt God is with us. We must remain faithful and remember prayer is the engine that drives God's mission amongst us. Let us be like the son who, despite hesitations, chose to go and serve God.

We are called to remain faithful to God and respond to His call, according to our gifts and graces and to do this not for our self, but for each other and for the glory of God.

The Lord be with you.

### **Quiet moment**



**YouTube Hymn - Will you Come and Follow me if I but call your name.**

**John Bell.**

<https://youtu.be/o469PRLdbHU?si=CqVwOIM3UIrKj1yZ>

### **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 – International Older Persons Sunday UCA Assembly resources**

#### **O loving Lord,**

You are the source of life, sustaining us in every stage of life's journey; You are the mother earth, ageing trees with time and nourishment, and embracing each fallen leaf back to its roots.

#### **Guide us, Lord,**

since the ancient times, your grace rises in the presence of the aged, and your blessing is honoured among the elderly.

Through ancient cultures, we have learned: Respect for the elderly is the foundation of all social goodness. Raise us in your grace, Lord, as we rebuild a culture of respect.

Send your blessings, as we honour life together with you. Amen.

### **Prayers for those in need**

Close your eyes if you feel comfortable and pray for those who you know are suffering, facing medical treatment or operations, grieving, or feeling lonely.

Lord in your mercy.

**Hear our prayer.**

**YouTube Communion Hymn 259 Among us and before us Lord, you stand – John. Bell.**

**Paul John Robinson 2020**

<https://youtu.be/zUyGFXWaiT4?si=AGe5WBQqvrLEeznw>

## **Communion**

Prayer of Thanksgiving (Interactive)

The Spirit of the Lord be with you

**And also with you**

Lift up your hearts

**We lift them to the Lord**

Let us give thanks to the Lord

**It is right to give our thanks and Praise**

**Holy, Holy, Holy God**

**Our life, our mercy, our might**

**Heaven and Earth are full of your Glory**

**Save us, we pray, you beyond all**

**Blest is the one who comes in your name**

**Save us we pray, you beyond all**

And so we cry, Mercy:

**Mercy!**

And so we cry, Glory:

**Glory!**

And so we cry, Blessing!

**Blessing!**

And so we cry, Come, Holy Spirit:

**Come, Holy Spirit!**

And so the church shouts, Come, Holy Spirit:

**Come, Holy Spirit!**

And so the earth pleads, Come, Holy Spirit:

**Come, Holy Spirit!**

You, Holy God, Holy one, Holy Three,

And so we cry, Amen

**Amen!**

Life-giver, pain-bearer, love maker.

Source of all life that is and shall be

Father and mother of us all

Loving God, in whom is heaven:

**The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!**

**The way of your justice be followed by all peoples of the world!**

Your heavenly will be done

**By all created beings!**

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom

**Sustain our hope and come on earth!**

With the bread we need for today, **Feed us**

In the hurts we absorb from one another, **Forgive us**

In times of temptation and test, **Strengthen us**

From trials too great to endure, **Spare us**

From the grip of all that is evil, **Free us**

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever, **Amen**

Christ is the bread of joy **Who shares food with sinners**

Christ is the cup of life **Who revives the faint hearted**

Let us receive what we are

Let us become what we receive

**THE BODY OF CHRIST**



**Invitation**

This is the table of the Lord  
 It is an open table where all are welcome  
 These are the Gifts of God for all the People of God  
**May we who Share these gifts be found in Christ and Christ in us**

**The Body of Christ keep you in eternal life Amen**  
**The blood of Christ keep you in eternal I life Amen**

**Prayer after Communion**

Blessed be God who calls us together  
**Praise to God who makes us one people**  
 Blessed be God who has forgiven our sin  
**Praise to God who gives hope and freedom**  
 Blessed be God whose word is proclaimed  
**Praise to God who is revealed as lover**

Blessed be God who alone has called us  
**Therefore we offer all that we are and all that we shall become**  
 Accept, O God, our sacrifice of praise **Amen.**  
**Accept our thanks for all that we are.**  
**Our hands were empty and you filled them.**

**After communion**

*Silence – contemplation - quiet music is played*

**Blessing**

**We go in Peace in the love of God in the Power of the Spirit**  
**May the Lord Bless and Guard us**  
**May the Lord make His face shine upon us and be gracious unto us**  
**As we bring Christ's love and peace to the world. Amen**

YouTube Hymn 778 Shalom to you now – tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oqiFenpWxY&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=35>

**Pastoral Care Tips – Rev Tina**

This Sunday is international Older Persons Sunday, and these are materials from the UCA Assembly for prayer and pastoral care.

**The wisdom of older people**



**A message from Rev. Sharon Hollis (Extract)  
President, Uniting Church in Australia Assembly**

*One of the stories I love in the Bible is of Anna and Simeon faithfully watching for God's salvation. I love it because they remind me of the power of faith tested over time and of the wisdom of older people to know how to watch and wait for God's new thing and to embrace that new thing with love and commitment. The Uniting Church's life is enriched by its many older members who remember faithfully and watch hopefully for where God is leading, speak out on issues of injustice and nurture and encourage others across the generations. We give thanks for their worship, witness, and service.*

**In the Hands of God**

More than ever I find myself in the hands of God.

This is what I have wanted all my life from my youth. But now there is a difference; the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself so totally in God's hands.

*(Pedro Arrupe SJ)*

**Suggestions for pastoral ministry with older people**

Within the context of faith, it is important to stress that whilst growing old can have its benefits (such as seeing great-grandchildren) it can signal much grief (death of friends, loss of particular body functions, moving into assisted care, inability to attend worship).

**A Lament – Theme song from Platoon**

<https://youtu.be/pOsWUA7cK50?si=npPEAgedmsm7Q4wO>

**Prayer for the Grace to Age Well**

When the signs of age begin to mark my body (and still more when they touch my mind);  
when the ill that is to diminish me or carry me off strikes from without or is born within me;  
when the painful moment comes in which I suddenly awaken to the fact that I am ill or growing old;  
and above all at that last moment when I feel I am losing hold of myself and am absolutely passive within the hands of the great unknown forces that have formed me;

In all those dark moments, O God, grant that I may understand that it is you who are painfully parting the fibres of my being, in order to penetrate to the very marrow of my substance and bear me away within Yourself.

*(Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.)*