

Whitehorse Uniting Church
Sunday 2 July 2023



Introit 717 Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart
Magdalene Shodavarum 2019
<https://youtu.be/047xtru0ZR0>

Welcome

May the worship bless you.

Acknowledgment – Naidoc Week

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 Psalm 88:1-2)

I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever.

With my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations

I declare your steadfast love is established forever.

Your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

Prayers of adoration

John Davies – Bare Feet and Buttercups (Edit. Ruth Burgess) Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow. www.ionabooks.com
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Lord Jesus, you are the king who comes in.

You come into the place where we are.

Into our world.

Into our church.

Into our homes.

Into our hearts.

You come as least expected.
 You come to unsettle the complacent and unseat the unjust.
 You come whether we want you to come or not.

This morning, we invite you to come.
 Into our world
 Into our church
 Into our homes
 Into our hearts

Come Lord Jesus
Come, Lord Jesus

Your kingdom is for those who mourn,
 And we ask that you come to them today and give them your comfort.

Come Lord Jesus
Come, Lord Jesus

Your kingdom is for those who are hungry and thirsty to see justice and right in the world,
 And we ask that you come to them today and satisfy their longings.

Come Lord Jesus
Come, Lord Jesus

Your kingdom is for those who are suffering because they stand up for right things,
 and we ask that you come to them today and give them the kingdom of heaven.

Come Lord Jesus
Come, Lord Jesus

Come, Lord Jesus, this morning to those who are sick and sad, come.
 To those who are healthy and glad, come.
 To those who are taking great decisions, come.
 To those who are giving birth, come.
 To those who are making music, come.
 To those who are making war, come.
 To those still in bed, come.
 To those still at work, come.

Come Lord Jesus
Come, Lord Jesus

And Jesus said, we are not to flower through worldly power.
 To guide his disciples, he shamed their pride and by kneeling, towel in hand,
 And made the cross, with all its loss,
 faithful churches symbol.
 Who for his sake his way will take.
 Make power the slave of love and justice seek for all the meek,
 Will, as disciples that's spent by grace is lent.
 A power that mountains move.

Come Lord Jesus
Come, Lord Jesus

Prayer of Confession

O gracious God we come before you knowing you are good and forgiving
 We trust your love and mercy and steadfast love for us
 Forgive us if we have hurt another and change our hearts and teach us your just and loving ways. Set us free from behaviour that makes us less and expand our hearts and make us your loving people.

Lord in this moment of silence we come before you with all that troubles our hearts
 Heal us, set us free and show us how to live a life where we love and bless others.

Silence

Hear then Christ's words of grace to us
 "Your sins are forgiven"

Thanks be to God

Hymn 154 Great is your Faithfulness.

Chris Rice (borisimmo1 2009)

Sung after child's diagnosis with cancer where he was angry at God but came to know God is faithful. His child is in remission (aged 18months)

Thomas Obadiah Chisholm 1801-90

<https://youtu.be/0k1WhFtVp0o>



Readings

Genesis 22:1-14 - New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

22 After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ² He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you." ³ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you." ⁶ Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. And the two of them walked on together. ⁷ Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" ⁸ Abraham said, "God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." And the two of them walked on together.

⁹ When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill^[a] his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ¹² He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." ¹³ And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place "The LORD will provide,"^[a] as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."^[a]

Matthew 10:40-42 - New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

⁴⁰ “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹ Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous, ⁴² and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”
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Young at Heart – Matthew 10:42

And whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.

The little ones are those who are not important in the church or society. They seek no recognition for their love and kindness, the ways they have helped others. What they do goes unnoticed, yet they reach out to those who are ignored, excluded, and abandoned. Who are little ones like them. The cold, the hungry, the elderly, the lonely, the homeless, the ill, the unwanted ones. Theirs is the kingdom of God.

Hymn 582 Lead Kindly Light

300 voice choir Classic hymns 2018

John Henry Newman

https://youtu.be/ZYbs0Vi1W_Y

Sermon

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



We’ve just sung a hymn written by Henry Newman called: *Lead Kindly Light*.

This hymn was written by Henry Newman. He had been dangerously ill in Sicily and homesick for three weeks. On his way back to Marseille, France, in a boat, he wrote it. Perhaps it was his response to being tested by his illness, where writing the hymn may have comforted him.

Today’s reading from Genesis is about responding to testing. Many of us will experience being tested some time in our life.

It seems Abraham’s faith is tested when he realises, he’s going to lose all God has blessed him with and promised him. His son Isaac and his future.

I wonder if Sarah knew he was taking Isaac to be sacrificed. Perhaps she was deeply grieved at this cruel choice.

Abraham’s response to God is to say: *Here I am*.

His fundamental belief is God is good and will provide a lamb.

His response to his sons’ concerns is: *Here I am*. He is there for his child.

When it comes to the moment of testing when he is about to sacrifice his son, God sends two messengers, angels, who call out his name.

He responds by saying: *Here I am*.

The Lord provides a lamb, and it is sacrificed.

Abraham names the place, The Lord will provide.

Nothing seems to shake Abraham’s faith in God.

He is relentless in his belief in God’s goodness.

Perhaps he refused to allow pain to colour his perception of God, where it may have affected him deeply, his faith, attitudes, relationships and more. Perhaps he saw this crisis as a moment in his life.

The story challenges us.

What kind of God gives and then takes? What kind of God asks someone to kill their child?

What's more challenging is Abraham's response.

He is obedient and is prepared to sacrifice Isaac.

Yet, he doesn't give in to despair or give up. He keeps on hoping.

I wonder if Abraham prayed for God to change his mind.

Some of us may have read the book *When Bad things happen to Good People* by Harold S Kushner. He writes: *We can't pray that God will make our life free of problems.*

Perhaps a crisis can either be like a race, a sprint, which is intense and lasts for a short time or a long-distance race that takes endurance, where there are lots of problems and burdens that seem to drag on forever and are exhausting. Some people give in to the crisis, while others find strength through their faith.

Life can test us.

Many pray and invite others to join them, and this may help them find strength and peace. Whether there is good news or bad news they are not alone.

Sometimes hope is lost. I visited Gethsemane in the early 1990's. It's one of the saddest places I've ever been to. When I arrived, I felt the sadness and began to cry and asked a Franciscan to remove the chains from around a large rock Jesus was said to have prayed on and sweated blood when he struggled with accepting suffering and crucifixion. I sat on this rock for a long time, crying. I was grieving at the time. What came to me in the darkness was the words: Living hope.



I looked this up later on in 1 Peter and discovered we receive new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Later I asked the Franciscan: *Why do people have to suffer?* His response was: *For the glory of God.* His comment wasn't comforting at the time. I can understand now.

The crisis did pass for Abraham and Isaac. God intervened at the last moment.

I've been listening to people whose faith has been tested by aging.

Losing their independence

Losing their licence

Losing loved ones

Losing their health

Losing their home

Losing most of their possessions

Sometimes people say there are good days and bad days. They are suffering deeply.

Sometimes people say I have a choice to give up or to make the best of it.

Many pray for miracles and are angry when the problem or crisis doesn't go away, and their prayers remain unanswered.

Others pray for God to work through doctors and nurses and for successful operations or treatment and their loved one may feel reassured they are not facing the crisis alone.

We often hear of people losing their entire families due to a tragedy and responding by beginning a foundation in their loved one's name, that benefits thousands. Harold Kushner wrote his book to make sense of his young son being diagnosed with a degenerative disease.

Harold tells a story of a survivor of the Holocaust rebuilding his life and having a new family only to lose them in a bushfire. He had a choice. Demand an investigation and focus on his pain and ask: *Why me?* He was obviously distraught and grieving and people would have supported him in this choice. Yet he chose to live for something and not to give into the pain. He rebuilt his life again.

Perhaps what's happening for Abraham and others like him is despite what's happening to them they continue to trust God and have hope, no matter how awful things become.

The story is meant to encourage us to have faith and trust in God, no matter what happens to us and to choose life, and not give up and run the race with perseverance.

The Lord be with you.

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 – Anne Smith

A responsive lament based on Psalm 13
(the responses are printed in **bold**)

Let us come to prayer
(a brief time of silence will be kept)

Oh Lord our God, we feel forgotten:

We feel your face is hidden from this world.

We see nations making war on other nations, and war within nations:

There is preparation for war and stockpiling of weapons.

Always people are hurt, and budgets are stretched without productive use:

We long for an end to strife – may your kingdom come.

Oh Lord our God, we feel anguish in our soul and grief in our heart:

We hear the distress of refugees, and see the conditions in which many must live.

We know the problems of the effects of climate change, and ever-developing horrors
of weather conditions and rising sea levels:

We grieve that the hardship of these disasters falls most heavily on those least able to bear it.

We are shocked to hear callous disinterest, or mocking of scientific evidence from leaders:

We long for an end to indifference- may your kingdom come.

Oh Lord our God, we feel despair at the troubles we see so near at home:

The duplicity of some businesses in their dealings both with the government and the public.

The greed which motivates so many places, from board rooms to dealers of drugs:

The violence used by individuals, the random acts of hurtfulness to others

The examples of road rage, petty theft, and disregard for the rights of others,

We long for an end to selfishness and careless hurts – may your kingdom come.

But Lord, we are able to say with the Psalmist,

“For my part, I will trust in thy true love”

We will trust your influence to be at work in the war-torn areas of the world

We will trust your wisdom to be with those who work against poverty and hunger

We will trust your strength to guide whistle-blowers and those willing to live with principle

We will trust your guidance in showing us our part bringing about these changes

And Lord we will trust your Peace to be with those we love, or those we name in our hearts,
as we bring their special needs to you in this time of silence:

Again, with the Psalmist, let us sing songs of thankfulness, trusting in God's true love always.

Amen

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 182 Bring Many Names.

First Plymouth Church 2016

Brian Wren

<https://youtu.be/8C6DQ7tp2k>



Image – Pallotti College Millgrove

Communion

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 our God.

It right to give our thanks and praise.

Prayer continues ...

We proclaim your power in goodness.
and your might in compassion, as we say:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Prayer continues...

As he broke bread before the brokenness of his death, **(Break Bread)**
 as he poured out wine before his blood was poured out on the cross, **(Hold up Cup)**
 Prayer continues

Nurture us with your brokenness,
 renew us with your poured out life,
 empower us with your powerlessness,
 that we may take root in your risen life and bear fruit in your world.

**You are our life;
 you are our hope;
 you are our peace;
 and we praise you. Amen.**

The bread of life is offered to us. **We feed on the bread of life with gratitude**

The cup of the newness of life is offered to us. **We drink of the cup with gratitude.**

The gifts of God for the people of God.
May we who share these gifts be found in Christ and Christ in us.

Prayer after communion

**God of truth and love who calls us and leads us into the future, make us a blessing for others
 Help us to see creation as being in the future and to love it into being.**

May we hold on to the hope You have planted in us,
 believing the unbelievable,
 reaching for the unattainable,
 trusting the things beyond seeing and the things beyond hearing,
 loving and living with compassion, offering hospitality and hope,
 until the people who walk in darkness see the great light and are glad and free.

Hymn 531 Sent Forth by God's Blessing.

Mary Munson, 2022. Omer Westendorf 1916-97 Music Welsh tune
<https://youtu.be/8BVuHxtW6OU>

Dismissal

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Send us out.
 Send us out to seek wisdom.
Send us out in peace.

Send us out.
 Send us out to do justice.
Send us out in hope.

Send us out.
 Send us out to be loving.
Send us out in joy.

Hymn 779 May the Feet of God
 Robin & Dorothy Mann 2017
<https://youtu.be/WfOFlWxGaP8>

Pastoral Care Tips

Being Healed



Read Mark 10:46-52

"Come,"
 he said – and I did.
 Following his voice,
 through the crowd on the edge of town.
 I needed wait no longer,
 my voice had been heard,
 calling for a change,
 crying for a fresh start-
 Even though it meant,
 casting off old ways,
 no longer the needy person everybody knew.
 "Come," he said,
 and I saw what God could do.
 "Your faith has healed you,"
 he told me. "Now go."
 He never said, "Follow me" –
 but, as I could see, there was no other way.

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