

**Whitehorse Uniting Church**  
**Sunday 9 July 2023**  
**Pentecost 6 A**



**Introit 699 A New Commandment**  
**St Laurence's Church Chorley, 2021**  
<https://youtu.be/aqM2Ujl7Aas>



**Welcome**

May the worship bless you.

**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**

To those without food  
**God is generous.**

To those without work  
**God is generous.**

To those away from home.  
**God is generous.**

To those who ask for help  
**God is generous.**

Today, where we live,  
**God wants to be generous through us.**

## Prayers of adoration

Loving God, Lord of time and eternity  
 You are with us whenever we embrace new beginnings.  
 You support us when we feel vulnerable and afraid,  
 You are with us as we journey, enfolding us and giving us courage for the journey.

Loving God,  
**We give you our thanks and praise.**

Loving God, Lord of heaven and earth  
 You are with us on the journey,  
 Through times of transition and change.  
 You are with us when we feel pressured and frustrated,  
 you help us move forwards with confidence and strength.

Loving God,  
**We give you our thanks and praise.**

Loving God, Lord of life  
 You are with us in the endings, and times of joy and sorrow.  
 You are with us when we need closure and struggle to let go.  
 You bring us peace and fulfillment,  
 as you lead us forward into an unknown future.

Loving God,  
**We adore you and celebrate your love for us.**

Lord, you have mercy on our beginnings,  
 Christ, you have mercy on our continuings,  
 Lord, you have mercy on our endings.

Loving God,  
**We adore you and celebrate your love for us.**

Holy Trinity, you give us vision, hope, and purpose.  
 In all our beginnings, continuings, and endings.

Loving God,  
**We give thanks for your blessings and grace.**

*Terry Garley, (adapted prayer, from Bare Feet and Buttercups (Edit. Ruth Burgess)  
 Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow. [www.ionabooks.com](http://www.ionabooks.com) Used with permission*



*This poster has been on a column of a bridge in Swanston Street  
 outside the University of Melbourne for over four years.*

## 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.

Teach us your just and loving ways and set us free from behaviour that is not loving. Expand our hearts so we may be 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.**

### **The Peace**

The Peace of the Lord be with you

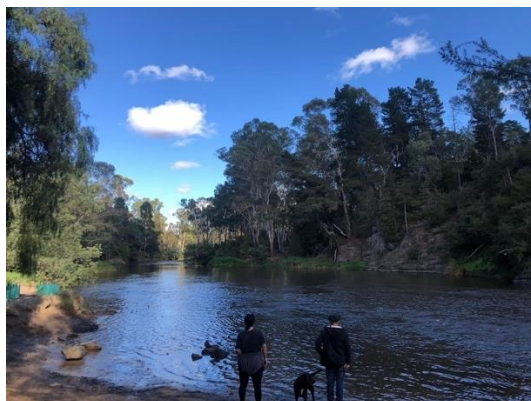
**And also with you.**

### **Hymn 398 Come Down O Love Divine**

Ralph Vaughan Williams 1872-1958, Bianco de Siena 1434

Fernando Ortega 2016

<https://youtu.be/2DbytPhyJzo>



## Readings

### **Romans 7:15-8:1 NRSV, updated.**

<sup>15</sup> I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup> Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup> But in fact it is no longer I who do it but sin that dwells within me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that the good does not dwell within me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do the good lies close at hand, but not the ability. <sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it but sin that dwells within me.

<sup>21</sup> So I find it to be a law that, when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. <sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, <sup>23</sup> but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. <sup>24</sup> Wretched person that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God<sup>[a]</sup> through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with my mind I am enslaved to the law of God, but with my flesh I am enslaved to the law of sin.

8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

## Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30, NRSV updated.

<sup>16</sup> “But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, <sup>17</sup> ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’

<sup>18</sup> “For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; <sup>19</sup> the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>25</sup> At that time Jesus said, “I thank<sup>[a]</sup> you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; <sup>26</sup> yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>27</sup> All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

<sup>28</sup> “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



### Young at Heart

Each of us is uniquely different, shaped by family, upbringing, history, genetics, stories, faith journey and our memories. We come together to worship God in our own unique way according to our perspective. Often our childhood memories shape us the most. They are foundational and make us who we are as people of God. I invite you to ponder about your favourite memories, the smell of roses, paddling your feet in water, climbing trees, running free and playing with your friends. As we age, we may encounter opportunities to play again and have fun and become more like the child God is calling us to be, where we find new life.

### Hymn 693 Come as you are – tMt video

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZ\\_XiYJKnQM&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLlsLD2rC&index=30](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZ_XiYJKnQM&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLlsLD2rC&index=30)

### Sermon – Rev Tina

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



RCL

This is a picture of women carrying sacks of coal through the snow. It's by Van Gogh and reflects how poverty inflicts burdens on people.

Many people live with poverty in Nepal. Once you get up into the mountains there are only narrow paths to walk on and stone steps the locals have made and if someone becomes ill, they are carried down the mountain in a large

basket on the back of a family member. I was coming down the mountains in the Khumbu region and had spent a day walking through the cold rain from a small village to the airport. I had Khumbu cough, was wet, chilled to the bone and feeling sorry for myself after walking for ten hours in the rain, when I saw an old woman ahead of me, bent over like the women in the picture, carrying two large bags of rice tied onto her back with ropes. Somehow, she was balancing a large black umbrella and must have carried these sacks, from the same village I came from, which means she'd been carrying them for over ten hours. When I came alongside her, I greeted her, saying Namaste. She looked at me, greeted me by saying Namaste and then signalled for me to come under her umbrella and walk with her. Not worried about her load, she held up her umbrella over me and began to pat my cheeks, and rub my hands and pat my back. It was like her load became light because she was living out her faith as a Buddhist by being compassionate and loving and I totally forgot about how miserable I felt. By the time we parted, we were both smiling.

In the gospel Jesus uses the metaphor of a yoke to speak about burdens. At this time Pharisees and scribes placed heavy burdens on the poor where they had to obey many rules to be able to worship God. Rules about food, sacrifices to God, and ritual cleanliness. Many were discriminated against if they had disabilities, because it was believed they'd sinned, or their family had sinned.

Paul writing to the church in Rome speaks of the inner struggle between good and evil and how we chose to live our lives. Paul knew about this struggle. He had a before and after experience of the risen Christ, that led to him experiencing conversion.

We have two readings, the gospel about people whose faith places burdens on them, and Paul's letter speaking about inner burdens where people struggle to observe the teachings of Jesus Christ and turn away from their old ways of living.

In the gospel Jesus calls the people to come to him if they are weary of carrying these heavy burdens of observing restrictive religious practices or internal personal struggles. He offers rest from these burdens and invites people to take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

People knew about yokes. The poor wore them to carry heavy loads.

Jesus offers us all a better way of life, one that involves love, the kind of love that is not a burden.

Life is made up of relationships. It's what shapes us as family, community, and congregation. We seek a place to live, to belong, to be valued, respected, included and loved.

We may wonder what kind of burdens people carry today.

Mother Theresa once said the greatest plague humanity faces today, is loneliness. Loneliness can be a burden for many.

I've heard people say as we age it becomes more challenging to build new relationships. It is often a time when people begin to set priorities and cut down on activities, due to health issues. But, cutting back on activities and relationships, can lead to loneliness, for some.

When we hear about plans and hopes to build new relationships with members of the community who share our buildings or visit the Op Shop, it can seem challenging. Some of us may ask where do we get the energy to do new things and form new relationships? Most of us have spent our lives doing this ministry, whether it be mowing the lawns, making a cuppa, leading a group, doing a reading, or being a volunteer at the Op Shop or Centre 81.

How do we take Jesus' yoke upon us and find rest for our souls?

Paul writes: *There is no more condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

I have met many people who have felt condemned by others or themselves for not being perfect, for mistakes in their youth or brokenness or for not obeying the rules. Paul tells the people to leave behind this way of thinking and living, like he did.

Christ doesn't condemn us. He loves us.

We are constantly leaving behind old ways of relating to others and old ways of thinking about ourselves. We are constantly growing into Christ where we come to know how much we are loved by God.

Through Jesus' teachings we discover new ways of being that offer us rest for our soul from the inner struggle and from thinking we need to be perfect, where we run ourselves to the ground trying to do things to prove we are good Christians. Our faith is more about receiving God's love for who we are and sharing that love with others. We love others as we love ourselves. We love others as Jesus first loved us. We love others as we love ourselves.



RCL

This means it's ok to embody love, rather than try and do a whole lot of activities to prove we are good Christians. The most important gift we can offer in relationships is our presence and our love.

We can do that at any age.

Joan Chittister in her book: *The gift of the years, Growing Old Gracefully*, wrote about relationships. (Used with permission)

*At its core, life is about relationships. It is the hands we go on holding in our hearts at the end that defines the kind of life we have led. Our relationships determine the quality of life as we have known it. They show us the face of God on Earth.*

As I began this sermon I spoke about the elderly woman I encountered who took away my sorrows. It was Mother's Day and my mother had died eighteen months previously and I was far from home and was missing my children and spending Mother's Day with them. She was my mother that day.

Jesus' teachings lift burdens from our hearts whenever we are struggling or feeling alone or condemning ourselves. He is gentle and humble with us and lifts our burdens.

In the same way when we meet someone who is having a bad day and offer kindness and love, we lift whatever burden they are carrying and make their load lighter.

### **Christ's Way, Our challenge**

Leith Fisher from *Acorns and Archangels* Editor Ruth Burgess, Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow. [www.ionabooks.com](http://www.ionabooks.com) Used with permission.

Son of the Father, glorious in light,  
Life of the world, before the world began,  
Now born amongst us, living out God's plan,  
Glory unveiled before our human sight,  
**You come to us, Lord Christ, the living Way.**

Fullness of God before us now, you bend,  
Take up the towel, and humbly wash our feet,  
Take up the cross, and make your way complete,  
Call us to see, love full and without end.  
**You come to us, Lord Christ, the living Way.**

Love is the way we meet the life divine,  
Love, full and free, in Christ, the Son of God,

Love, our response, love is our way, our road.  
 Thus does the life of God our lives entwine.  
**We come to you, Lord Christ, the living Way.**

We come to you, to learn the way of love:  
 Teach us to serve and share, and freely give,  
 Turn us from self, to help let others live.  
 Serving below, we share the life above.  
**We walk with you, Lord Christ, the living Way.**

So shall our lives re-echo with your praise,  
 For in our hearts, however poor and bare,  
 Love, bending low, will find an entrance there.  
 Come to us, Lord, transforming our days,  
**Be in us, now, Lord Christ, the living Way.**

### Hymn 640 Kneels at the Feet of His Friends. tMt video

*Tom Colvin 1925- and the people of Ghana*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tyNO9QVVK4&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=21>

## 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

Say the prayer, then pause for a moment, then add your own concerns, then say the response.

### World



NASA

Loving God, we pray for world peace, for peacemakers and that wars and conflict are resolved and end.

*Silence*

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

### Environment



T. Lyndon

Lord, we pray that nations join together to fight against climate change and all those who cause it, by creating, agreeing, and ratifying treaties, conventions and laws and enforcing them.

*Silence*

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

### Nation



T. Lyndon

Lord, we pray for all Aboriginal people in Australia.

*Silence*

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

## Church



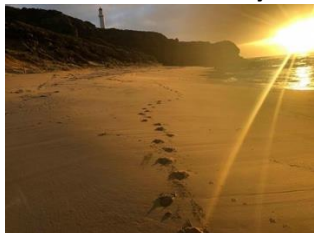
RCL adapted

Loving God we pray for your church, in the world, in this nation, in this neighbourhood and in this place.

*Silence*

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

## Those in need of Prayer



T. Lyndon

Loving God, we pray for those who are doing it tough this winter. For those who are going without food and heating. For those who have COVID or the flu. For the lonely and forgotten, the homeless and the unwanted. We pray for those who have lost loved ones and are grieving, for those with cancer, those recovering from operations and receiving treatment and for all those experiencing health issues and who are struggling.

*Silence*

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

## 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 607 Make me a Channel of your Peace

Katherine Jenkins 2018

Universal Music Group

Sebastian Temple 1928- based on an anonymous prayer.

[https://youtu.be/q4BVqj\\_V4gM](https://youtu.be/q4BVqj_V4gM)

## Dismissal

*Ruth Burgess, Acorns, and Archangels (Edit. Ruth Burgess) Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow. [www.ionabooks.com](http://www.ionabooks.com)  
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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/WfOFIWxGaP8>



## Pastoral Care tips – Rev Tina



### Grieving

**From Joan Chittister: *The Gift of the years* – used with permission.**

*We watch the ones we love leave us, and we find ourselves at another crossover in time. What do we do? Stop and withdraw into ourselves? Risk the chance of becoming a friend again? It is a life changing question. When the funeral of a dear friend is over, we know with a new kind of pain that another road has closed for us. There is one less friend to walk with now, and the list is getting shorter every day. When a spouse dies, the insatiable emptiness is even worse. Who cares for us now?*

When I was a teenager aged thirteen, I was staying with my grandparents. It was boxing day and my grandfather was sitting in his chair, and it seemed as if he knew. He went outside into the garden and died instantly from a heart attack. My grandmother found him lying under his favourite tree and asked me to sit with him while she called the doctor. His face looked peaceful, and it seemed like I was alone with him forever. When my grandmother returned, I remember her saying: *How will I live without him? What will I do?*

Children didn't go to funerals at this time, so I didn't see my grandmother for a while. She stopped having Christmas Day at her home, where the whole family gathered, all twenty or more of us. Then I heard her church, St Andrews, now a Uniting church gathered around her and supported her through her grief. My grandmother went on to study music, buy a baby grand piano, and play for her church. She made new friends, and I went and stayed with her at her guesthouse at Lorne, that she ran with her daughter and son-in-law and on occasions went to church with her.

I learnt at a young age about death, grief, the importance of being loved through grief by a church community and resilience, where my grandmother picked up her life and lived it differently.