

Whitehorse Uniting Church Order of Service
Sunday 7th July 2024 at Nunawading
Pentecost 7_B



Call to Worship

Do you ever catch yourself procrastinating
Because you are unsure of how you will manage?

Do you ever get nervous
When the attention is turned on you?

Do you ever struggle to make a decision
Because you lack the confidence you are OK?

Come then and join all of us who are flawed and struggle with life.

Come then and join all of us who know we need grace.

Come then and join all of us who know we need something more than we are.

For the love of Jesus embraces us.

The Spirit's peace empowers us.

And God's grace is sufficient for all.

We gather then to worship and praise the one who upholds us through all the uncertainties of life.

Hymn: TIS 626 Lord of creation to you be all praise!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3jh7sEFHvo>

Prayer: The Gift of Faith © 2024 John van de Laar, www.sacredise.com/the-gift-of-faith/, used by permission

Though our questions may overwhelm us,
and our doubts stridently speak,

We praise you, O God, for the gift of faith.

Though we may miss the signs of your life,
and ignore the little resurrections all around us,
We praise you, Divine Spirit, for the gift of faith.

Though we may constantly seek after proof,
and refuse to believe without seeing,

We praise you, O Christ, for the gift of faith.

Thank you, Great Mystery,
for your life
that transcends our understanding,
for your presence
from which we can never flee,
for your resurrection
which is never defeated,
and for the gift of faith that enables us to trust
even in the midst of our doubts and fears.

Amen.

Reading: 2 Cor 12:2 – 10 (NLT) © Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](http://www.holybible.com/)

² I was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know—only God knows. ³ Yes, only God knows whether I was in my body or outside my body. But I do know ⁴ that I was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to tell.

⁵ That experience is worth boasting about, but I'm not going to do it. I will boast only about my weaknesses.

⁶ If I wanted to boast, I would be no fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I won't do it,

because I don't want anyone to give me credit beyond what they can see in my life or hear in my message,⁷ even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.⁸ Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away.⁹ Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.¹⁰ That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

A prayer in response to our reading: The Measure Of Faith © 2024 John van de Laar,

www.sacredise.com/the-measure-of-faith/, used by permission

We celebrate a faith that is measured
not by the usual signs of greatness,
but by the marks of love;

And we celebrate the God who gives it.

We celebrate a love that is measured
not by romance or emotion,
but by acts of compassion and service;

And we celebrate the God who gives it.

We celebrate a life that is measured
not by the trappings of wealth or power,
but by the lives that are healed and enriched;

And we celebrate the God who gives it.

God, who measures every heart and life,
we praise you for the life that is revealed in Christ,
and for the Spirit who empowers us to follow
Christ's example.

***And we praise you for the love and grace
which we find in you, receive from you,
and against which we shall ultimately be measured.***

Amen.

Reading: Mark 6:1 – 13 (NLT) © Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](http://www.holybible.com/)

Jesus left that part of the country and returned with his disciples to Nazareth, his hometown.² The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. They asked, "Where did he get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?"³ Then they scoffed, "He's just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us." They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him.

⁴ Then Jesus told them, "A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his relatives and his own family."⁵ And because of their unbelief, he couldn't do any miracles among them except to place his hands on a few sick people and heal them.⁶ And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then Jesus went from village to village, teaching the people.⁷ And he called his twelve disciples together and began sending them out two by two, giving them authority to cast out evil spirits.⁸ He told them to take nothing for their journey except a walking stick—no food, no traveler's bag, no money.⁹ He allowed them to wear sandals but not to take a change of clothes.

¹⁰ "Wherever you go," he said, "stay in the same house until you leave town."¹¹ But if any place refuses to welcome you or listen to you, shake its dust from your feet as you leave to show that you have abandoned those people to their fate."

¹² So the disciples went out, telling everyone they met to repent of their sins and turn to God.¹³ And they cast out many demons and healed many sick people, anointing them with olive oil.

Acknowledgement of country

In the peace of God's love, we are called to be a people journeying together, sharing peace, hope and love. And so together...

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 468 We are your people

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOLAZCI2A1E>

Sermon

A thought from Rev Peter on Mark 6:1 – 13 and 2 Corinthians 12:2 – 10

As a kid, I was often told how messy my handwriting was. As I grew, I heard other criticisms of my writing skills, so much so that I came to believe I wasn't a very good writer. When I sat my HSC exams, I failed English even though I passed my other subjects quite well. It just went to show I wasn't very good at writing, eh?

The funny thing was that instead of undertaking what I thought I was good at, the sciences, I heard a call into ministry. The very things I felt I wasn't good at, I then needed to do a lot of; written assignments, arguing a viewpoint and speaking clearly in a way that kept others interested. Sometimes, I must confess, I felt like giving up because I thought I wasn't any good.

Over the years, I too have heard many people express how they aren't very good at various things. It doesn't matter what it is, so many people lack confidence. Some say they are no good at public speaking. Others are not good at organizing. It seems the one thing we are good at, is knowing what we aren't good at!

One good thing about knowing my failings is that it made me aware I need to look beyond myself. It reminded me I need to learn. It highlighted I needed to trust that God would use what little I could do for another's benefit.

Maybe this helps us understand a bit of what Paul was talking about in today's reading from 2 Corinthians. We too are aware of our inadequacies. For some, this becomes a discouragement but for Paul it was a stimulus to be open to let God work in and through him. So, he rejoices that his weakness actually leads to God's Spirit working more effectively through him.

Interestingly, in Mark's story in our Gospel reading today, we hear that Jesus was not able to be effective in his ministry in his home town. I find that surprising because we often hear of how he was able to do amazing things. We hear the stories of how he healed the sick, cast out demons and even stilled violent storms. Yet at home he could not do much!

Mark makes it clear that it was the stereotyping applied to Jesus by his neighbours that made it difficult; they thought they knew him and what he could do. It was their lack of faith or lack of confidence in him that limited Jesus' capabilities! This contrasts with the affirmation from earlier stories where Jesus declares, "your faith has made you well...".

We can often fall into the trap to think you need a capable person like Jesus to get anywhere. Mark makes it clear that it is ordinary people who struggle in life but who nevertheless are willing to take a step forward in trust or to just have a go, these are the ones that show God is active.

The latter part of our story from the Gospel demonstrates this. It is the disciples, the ones who struggled to understand, who go out and do the very things that Jesus had been doing! Yes, they were sent, but all they then had to do was step out and trust that God would do God's work.

It is easy to see what we can't do, haven't got or what our failings are. Both Paul and our story from Mark encourage us to accept these but to then step forward in faith. Our inadequacies are not an excuse to give up but an encouragement to trust. It is in stepping forward that the work of God's Spirit is seen.

In our congregation I have often heard people speak sadly of what we do not have. We lack families, children and energetic personnel. We could easily give up. Paul says instead to rejoice! Trust then that God will work. All that is required of us is to step forward in faith, show love and have a go. You will be amazed by what the Spirit will achieve!

Listening song: a song to aid reflection:

ATO 414 Take this moment <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFYt0S2UFDU>

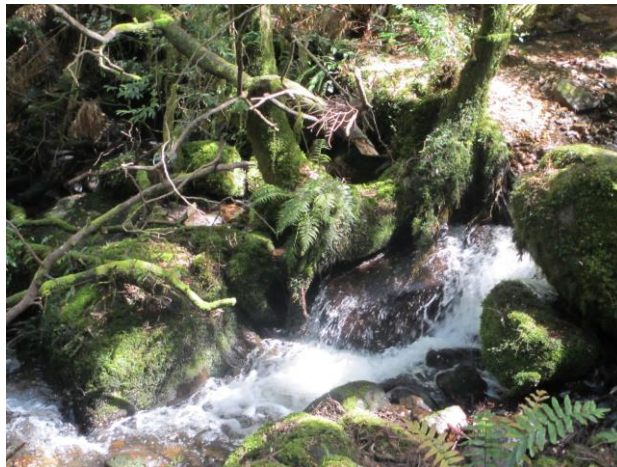


Photo: M Cosstick

Offering Prayer *(by Rev Peter)*

You have blessed us with love and grace.

May we respond as bearers of your compassion to all we meet.

May we respond by sharing all we have and are.

And in doing so, use us and what we offer today to bring life in its abundance.

Prayer for Others Sharon Collins

A Common Prayer ©Leunig used with permission

God help us to change. To change ourselves and to change our world. To know the need for it. To deal with the pain of it. To feel the joy of it. To undertake the journey without understanding the destination. The art of gentle revolution. Amen

Caring and Loving God

We remember all those affected by the surge in youth crime – those who have lost their lives or been injured, been terrorized by having their homes invaded, their families and friends, and the first responders and health professionals who assisted them. We especially think of all those who were at the scene of the

crash in Burwood who tried to help the victim. Lord bring them comfort and support and inspire those in authority and those who work with the young people who commit these crimes to work towards solutions. We pray your blessing on organizations like the Smith Family and Kids Hope and all those who work with children and young people who need assistance to get the most out of their school life and have family lives that are affected by poverty, drugs and violence. May these children and young people find role models to show them a better way.

We remember the homeless especially in this time of freezing nights and mornings. While we wake from our warm beds and try to think of the best way to get the ice off our car windows so we can get to work or appointments, others have spent nights outside under threadbare blankets or clothes. Bless all those organizations helping people to find shelter during this time and may there be enough funding and support from government and the community to enable more affordable housing to be built.

We pray for young people growing up in refugee camps all over the world – having fled war, famine or persecution, they now face lives of hopelessness, struggling for basic necessities – their only way out a visa for a country on another continent or in some cases being kidnapped and forced to become child soldiers. Lord bless the organizations that provide aid to refugees and also work with former child soldiers to help them integrate back into their communities and families. We pray that the more fortunate countries of the world open their hearts to take in more refugees and also work with other governments for solutions that enable people to return to their country of origin.

We pray for the growing together of our Whitehorse Uniting congregation. Bless and inspire Rev Tina and Rev Peter and the Church Council as they lead us on this journey together. We pray your blessing on those of our congregation not here today due to illness or other circumstance and all those watching from home or elsewhere.

Lord bless all those we love and who need our prayers and support. In this moment of silence we bring them to you.....Lord may we all feel your presence and strength as we go into another week and do our best to become the people of your way. This is our prayer. Amen

Communion

Great Prayer *(written by Rev Peter Cannon)*

INVITATION

In the midst of all the uncertainties of life, we are assured of Divine love as we gather around this table. So come, have courage, allow God's love to hold you, uplifting you into grace and joy.

May the grace and peace of Jesus be with you.

And also with you.

PRAYER

In accepting the invitation of love,

we focus on you O God.

In accepting the invitation of love,

We respond in rejoicing and thanksgiving.

There is simplicity in gathering around bread and wine but deep significance in the grace we experience.

In this encounter, there is love. In this love we are encouraged.

These simple things point to stories which stir our hearts as we remember.

And we remember the stories of Jesus, the teachings, the experiences, the sufferings and the joys.

In these, there is love. In this love faith blossoms.

And we give thanks for the nourishment provided, joining with creation saying:

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.***

Together we are lifted into joy and hope, for new beginnings are given to us. Yes, in your Divine presence there is life. We are embraced by love. Faith comes alive.

Bless these sacraments of grace, to break open Jesus' life of love...

...to pour into us Jesus' love of life.

May then we as your people be transformed into signs and celebrations of your all-embracing love.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

The cup we take is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

The gifts of God for the people of God

THE DISTRIBUTION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We have received your love. May we share your love. We have received grace. May we be bearers of grace. And so we go as bearers of your Spirit of life, love and hope. We go as blessings to all with whom we meet and share. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen

Hymn: TIS 531

Sent forth by God's blessing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nt2aU6ltXt0>

Following the singing of the final hymn, The Peace is shared as the congregation leaves worship.

The peace of the living God be with you...

And also with you. (The response)