

**Whitehorse Uniting Church**  
**Sunday 5 May 2024**  
**Easter 6<sub>B</sub>**



**Introit – 768 Praise God**

Stacey does hymns. 2023

<https://youtu.be/UPwFLDPZ-GM?si=KnK6YscryBUUijNJ>

**Call to worship.**

Let us sing a new song to the Lord,  
**For he has done marvellous things**

He first loved, chose, and appointed us,  
**to bear fruit, so we may minister in his name.**

He has made us his friends.  
**He has called us to love one another.**  
**Let us sing a new song to the Lord.**

**Acknowledgement**

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.

**Psalm 98**

*<sup>1</sup> O sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things.  
 His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory.*

*<sup>2</sup> The LORD has made known his victory; he has revealed his  
 vindication in the sight of the nations.*

*<sup>3</sup> He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house  
 of Israel.*

*All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.*

*<sup>4</sup> Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous  
 song and sing praises. <sup>5</sup> Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with  
 the lyre and the sound of melody.*

*<sup>6</sup> With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before  
 the King, the LORD.*

*<sup>7</sup> Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the world and those who live in it.*

*<sup>8</sup> Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy <sup>9</sup> at  
 the presence of the LORD, for he is coming to judge the earth.*

*He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with  
 equity.*



Image T. Lyndon

**Prayer**

We are branches belonging to your vine.

Bearing fruit.

You are the vine with roots that go deep into the red earth of this land,  
 grounding us in God.

We feel your wind blowing where it will,  
 filling us with joy, love, peace.

When we abide in you, we find life and friendship,  
 which helps us bear eternal and lasting fruit.

Autumn is coming. It's time to rest in your love.

Lord, prune us back for more growth.

Help us let go of whatever stands in the way of that growth,

Help us rejoice, be joyful, and sing a new song. Amen



## 152 Joyful, Joyful

Stacey plays Hymns 2023

<https://youtu.be/x1JkK-pXhqM?si=3ET8eBLvsKM42KNR>

### Reading - John 15:9-17 NRSV updated edition

<sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> I do not call you servants<sup>[a]</sup> any longer, because the servant<sup>[b]</sup> does not know what the master is doing, but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup> I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another. *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



Ann from Detroit. *Love and Happiness*, from *Art in the Christian Tradition*, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=54939> [retrieved May 1, 2024]. Original source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Love\\_and\\_happiness.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Love_and_happiness.jpg).

Jesus teaches us that love is about being a friend to others just as he is our friend. What does friendship and being a friend mean for you?

### 590 What a friend we have in Jesus.

Lydia Walker 2022

[https://youtu.be/TAYaXdvvgGU?si=IX\\_4jI7qIkqi\\_Oui](https://youtu.be/TAYaXdvvgGU?si=IX_4jI7qIkqi_Oui)

### Sermon – Rev Tina



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

Jesus often went out into the mountains to pray, in the early evening, sometimes praying through the night.

As you know I'm drawn to climbing mountains and find them a place where I can pray and put things into perspective. Perhaps I look to Jesus' example.

I used to say I found God in the mountains until God found me on a mountain and I realised my relationship with God had always been God's initiative, God's seeking me out to embrace me and love me, just like in today's reading.

On Anzac Day I climbed another mountain. I travelled up a chairlift to where a 13-kilometre trek began. I found going up the chairlift an emotional and sacred moment, where things became silent. Once I reached the top of the chairlift, I joined the crowds walking along metal grated walkways, battling a wind chill of -9C. Luckily Lorraine from our church warned me. I wore the right gear. A few people weren't prepared, and I saw a baby and child who were distressed and possibly overcome by the cold. Some parents had babies in prams, protected from the wind chill. There was a lot of beautiful scenery along the way, and I took my

time, having lots of breaks. At times I was alone on the path and wished my husband or a friend was walking with me, especially on the way back when I felt tired.



I reached the top in three hours, stayed for a bit, then headed down, arriving at the chairlift at 4:30pm, and found out it closed at 3:45pm. I didn't see the fine print on the ticket and missed the sign to the side of the chairlift. The only way down was on the cannonball bike tracks that had a no walking sign or a nature walk, but it gets dark at 5:30 and I'd end up walking in the dark. After a lifetime of responding to others when they needed help, I decided I needed to ask for help. It was too risky to walk down. These are the chairlifts, and you can see how steep the hill was. It was not a good idea to even try walking down,

especially in the dark. I would have risked injuring myself.

I rang my husband who was waiting in the car park below and gave him the news and asked if he could find someone to give me a lift down. Joe the manager of the bike Patrol was just leaving for home, and he heard about me. He used a four-wheel drive to go up the bike tracks and gave me a lift down, this very steep hill. As we went down the hill, he told me about himself, his wife and all the people who were injured riding mountain bikes down the side of this treacherous looking hill. I thanked Joe, several times. I was very grateful. My husband felt relief when I appeared near the carpark. I have realised it is ok to ask for help. That was the lesson I learned from climbing Mount Kosciusko.



On our way home to Melbourne I took this picture of my husband and our dog Moses outside a store. What is significant about this image is how Moses and John are looking at one another. They have a close relationship that involves sacrifice, loyalty, and faithfulness. What is even more significant is the sign on the seat. It says:

*"You'll never walk alone."*

That's what relationships are all about. We don't walk alone. My husband is there for me. Joe was there for me. Even my dog Moses is there for me. We don't walk alone. Today's gospel is about Jesus being our friend and each one of us being his friend and one

another's friend. We don't walk alone, and we are there for one another.

The gospel says when we keep the love command of Jesus to love others as he first loved us, we bear fruit. Fruit such as a deep heartfelt peace beyond comprehension that comes from abiding in Jesus and living out his love command. The kind of peace that moves our hearts to rejoice.

Jesus declares that only after we abide in him and live out his love commandment do we bear fruit and only after we bear fruit, can we ask God to give us what we ask for in Jesus' name. Something to pray and ponder about.

The gospel also describes the landscape of God, a place of peace within us, where the Spirit moves within our heart, the place where we know Jesus chose us, appointed us, first loved us. It was Jesus' initiative, not ours. Jesus appointed us to bear eternal fruit, fruit that lasts in a world that is ever changing, passing, temporary with many little truths.

It is only when we have become fruitful that we can stand bold before God and ask for the grace to minister in Jesus' name.

The Spirit moves us deeply and our hearts go out to others, and we love them. We may feel the pain of compassion, but this pain is held by God who sustains us, even when things are difficult.

The knowledge Jesus is our friend and constant companion when we keep his love commandment by befriending others and ourselves, can fill us with joy and make Jesus' joy complete.

I began with reflecting on how Jesus retreated to the mountains to pray and abide with God. We are also invited to retreat to quiet places. We may choose to sit in a quiet place in a chair by a window with a view, walk in the garden or through a park, sit somewhere quiet and read the bible or a devotional, or silently wait on God or go to the outback or climb a mountain or hill. We need to take time out so God can find us and build a relationship with us.



Dorothy Lee, a theologian wrote a book about the gospel of John called: *Flesh and Glory*. She reflected on the images of love and friendship found in John's gospel that witness to the deep attachment that begins with and is the goal of the incarnation.

Dorothy also reflected on the call to bear fruit is part of Jesus' teaching about the vine and branches, of us abiding in Jesus as the source of life. As branches on a vine, we cannot find the life we seek on our own. We depend on our relationship with Jesus and one another as the source of our life.

We exist in relationship with God and one another. That's where the life is, the peace and the joy we long for and the love that transforms everything.

Dorothy reflected on how abiding in Jesus is dynamic. It is vital to our wellbeing, where bearing fruit is about growth in love that draws us closer to God who is love.

No matter what happens to us over the years, belonging to the vine as a community of God sustains us, empowers us, transforms, and shapes us, in a dynamic ongoing way where we grow in grace. Grace is unconditional love and unmerited love, that is never earned through actions.



Our charism as a church is to love others as Jesus first loved us. We do this as friends of Jesus, who live out the love commandment and bear the fruit of love that comes from abiding in Jesus.

We may think our efforts are insignificant. But, when we seek quiet places and God finds us, and we pray and listen with our hearts, we will come to know the big picture. If we consider our history as congregations who have become one congregation in Christ, and reflect upon it, we will come to know we have all made a significant difference in our ministry in the name of Jesus. We will come to know we are bearing eternal fruit that lasts.

Finally, Dorothy Lee reflected on how abiding in Jesus is not about achievement. It comes from the place where the spirit of God dwells within us.

Abiding in Jesus gives us the grace to love in his name, for his sake, so his Joy may be complete, so our joy may be complete.

The Lord be with you. Amen

### **Quiet time**

**599 Take my life and let it be.**

Northern Baptist Association 2013

<https://youtu.be/Gf11rReeWIs?si=Y5f9VYjyIcbgcVmr>

## 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 Savior, amen.

## Prayers of the People – Jeff Randles

We come together today bearing many different emotions and thoughts that emanate from our personal lives and the world in which we live.

But we acknowledge the source of life and love which overrides it all.

May we be reminded that wherever people are hurting, this source of life and love is hurting also, and that wherever people respond in loving service, and advocacy for justice, they are well supported.

We pray for people who are in distress:

For those facing limitations,

- moving slowly because of accident, illness, or disability
- with chronic illnesses for which there is no known cure or relief.
- struggling to make ends meet,
- where relationships that are falling apart,
- forgotten,
- managing emergency situations,
- sleeping in the streets, in institutions,
- affected by mental health and family violence,

We pray that love and respect may be recognised, practiced, and included in programs through government, community agencies and in one-to-one care for each other.

As we face changes in our way of life, with increased population, new technology, social media, communication, and understanding of science, may we learn to cope and adapt according to our capabilities.

As we become increasingly aware of our planet and our relationship to it, how the climate is changing, and how it is becoming polluted with waste, plastics, and the burning of fossil fuels, may we adapt our habits and way of life to contribute positively to resolving this problem and sustaining it for all living things.

We pray for thinkers who help us understand the complexities of our life together.

Encourage us in the hard work of seeking solutions.

We pray for this congregation as it faces its many challenges, in pastoral care as we manage our properties, in our planning to grow our community, our mission here in Whitehorse and how we develop the Signposts we have identified to meet the many changes that our society encounters.

We believe we were brought together to support and care for each other, that everyone's feelings count and that the uniqueness of each of us strengthens all of us.

Spirit of life, we look to your love and light to shine in our lives and our world.

Amen

## Candle Prayers



*Image T. Lyndon*

**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. (pass the peace)***

**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.

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.

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. And we are embraced by love.

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. As 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

**534 Love is his word, love is his way.**

James Kilbane, 2021

<https://youtu.be/FB0jlj7Wbs?si=HExloyblxAhbmlWq>

**Blessing**

God the Father make you holy in his love;  
 God the Son enrich you with his grace;  
 God the Holy Spirit strengthen you with joy;  
 the Lord bless you and keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

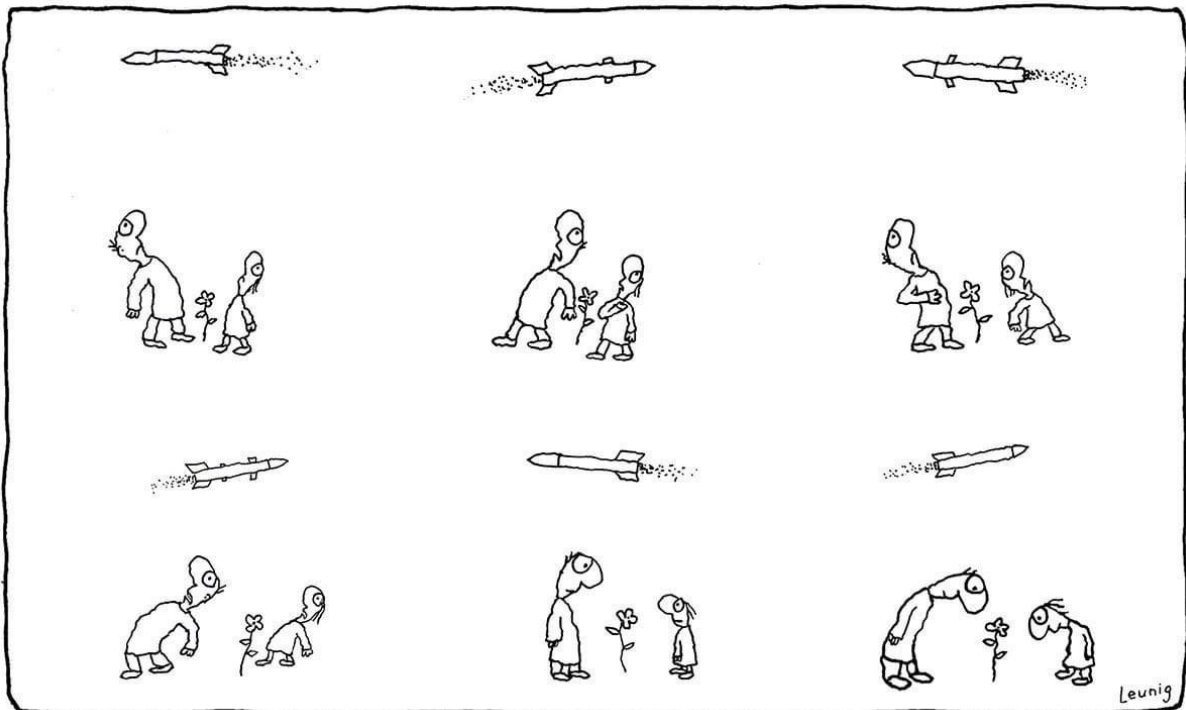
**Sending**

Go forth into the world in peace;  
 be of good courage;  
 hold fast that which is good;  
 render to no one evil for evil;  
 strengthen the faint-hearted;  
 support the weak;  
 help the afflicted;  
 honour all people;  
 love and serve the Lord,  
 rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

**755 You shall go out with joy.**

St Francis United Church 2022

<https://youtu.be/HHBzoaZ6JGI?si=j1deDNxOY-Kbtoov>

**Pastoral Care tips - Rev Tina**

*Leunig – used with permission.*

**Be Still my soul.**

Eclipse 6, 2017

[https://youtu.be/kqKVFYD8Obc?si=0Z9E5YI7KILNNY\\_s](https://youtu.be/kqKVFYD8Obc?si=0Z9E5YI7KILNNY_s)