

Whitehorse Uniting Church
Sunday 9th June 2024 at Mitcham
Pentecost 3_B



Call to Worship

Rev Peter

*(inspired by Psalm 138 as paraphrased by © B D Prewer, bruceprewer.com/DocB/BSUNDAY10.htm,
adapted by Peter Cannon with permission)*

With all my love we come to you, God,
filled with gratitude and praise.

***Along with all the children of the stars
We eagerly sing your glory.***

As we gather together,

We give thanks to you

The one who is utter love and faithfulness.

Though you are far larger than the universe,
and your promises are stunning.

***You remember even individuals like us,
when we call you answer with inner strength.***

With all our love we come to you, God,
filled with gratitude and praise.

Hymn TIS 210 O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4O9kw3clLpg>

Prayer confessing and committing to a new path: “Agendas”

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We like our agendas, Jesus,
we like to set priorities and plan outcomes;
and we want the world to follow.

***But, too often our agendas are not yours;
and that can't be good for us
or for our world.***

So we pray, that your agenda would prevail

***in our hearts,
in our words,
in our priorities,
in our relationships,
in our actions.***

May our world be captured by the beauty and grace
that flow from your Kingdom purposes;

***wherever there is violence,
wherever there is division,
wherever there is disease,
wherever there is need,
wherever there is grief,
wherever there is despair,
may human experience be shaped
by your awesome, creative reign.
Amen.***

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It is true, you know? Not just wishful thinking. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. He is our peace. Believe the Gospel and make your peace with one another.

Sharing of the Peace

Acknowledgement of country

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.

Readings (all readings NRSV [UE]):

Heather Bremner

2 Corinthians 4:13 – 5:1

¹³ But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—“I believed, and so I spoke”—we also believe, and therefore we also speak, ¹⁴ because we know that the one who raised Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and will present us with you in his presence. ¹⁵ Indeed, everything is for your sake, so that grace, when it has extended to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

Living by Faith

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our slight, momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, ¹⁸ because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen, for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

⁵ For we know that, if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Mark 3:20 – 35

²⁰ Then he went home, and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹ When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” ²² And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.” ²³ And he called them to him and spoke to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

²⁸ “Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter, ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin”— ³⁰ for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

³¹ Then his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. ³² A crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside asking for you.” ³³ And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴ And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

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Hymn TIS 640 Kneels at the feet of his friends

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tyNO9QVVK4&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLsLD2rC&index=21> tMt video

Sermon Tim Menger

Peace be with you,

Today's readings are a couple of fun ones.

As a chef, there's a bit in these passages that I relate to.

In a kitchen we spend a lot of time together and in all honesty, I see my Sous chefs more than I see Jo and the kids some weeks. We work in a hot, hard and fast-paced environment. We have pressures put on us from both within and without.

Yet we also have moments of peace, clarity and great creativity. We laugh, sing and have even been known to dance (much to Neo's embarrassment) in the kitchen.

The flip side of that is in the comments sections from reviews / social media, the micromanagement of some aspects of our job, issues that aren't seen as important to some but are to others.

We are a diverse group. There are 4 different religions, 8 different languages, 9 different countries but one common goal. A melting pot if ever there was one.

We aim to be the best at what we do, consistently and to the best of our abilities. Some are better than others but together we produce something that we are all proud of.

In the Mark reading there is a bit of turmoil going on. Jesus has started his ministry and has gone hard out of the blocks. He has been healing, preaching and travelling. He has now returned to his family home.

There Jesus is being mobbed by a crowd, his family is calling for him and wondering if he has gone mad. It's loud, dusty, and confronting. The scribes are there asking questions and Jesus is answering back! No wonder his family call for him to come home.

I got a similar response from my family when I said I was going to become a chef. Unlike Jesus's family mine got behind me and even now the support that Jo and the kids give me is humbling.

My mum still questions my sanity, especially when, for a while there, I took a job that involved starting at three o'clock in the morning. Can't blame her for that one as I am definitely not a morning person and I moved on from that job quickly!

The same however cannot be said for a few of my team. The expectations from their families are that cooking isn't a real job, or that it's a hobby but they will soon take their family role seriously. They need to look after and support the family. Family comes 1st.

We are challenged in Mark to see that living by Christ means to reject our family when it comes to matters of faith. That's a hard, hard proposition.

We as a team in the kitchen gather around them and give them support. There are fewer better moments than meeting doubting parents and being able to tell them how great their child is. How they have grown in their profession and have become part of a dynamic team in a world class restaurant.

During Jesus's time, this would have been even harder, as family and society was everything. Society was built around the family nucleus and the obligations to it. For Jesus to be out preaching, healing, challenging the social structures was huge. Mind blowing!

Jesus at the age of 30 was expected to be working, marrying and adding to the family physically and financially. Jesus is becoming something of an embarrassment for them and their community. He then rejects his family not just once but twice and to proclaim his believers as family.... Earth shattering for the time.

Jesus taking on the scribes and beating them in their own word games, to challenge their legitimacy. This is just as dangerous and controversial as rejecting your family. No wonder his family thought him mad!

Jesus also reveals his power in his responses such as in 3:27 "But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered". He has power over Beelzebub and as such cannot be Beelzebub.

He challenges their slandering of him by being in cohorts with Beelzebub by evoking the unforgivable sin of blasphemy on them. By slandering the power of the Spirit they are slandering God, rejecting God's power and grace making forgiveness impossible.

There are some hard kernels of truth in Jesus's reply to the scribes' challenge:

3:24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

3:25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

The tensions between Jesus and his family add to the drama of the moment.

In the kitchen if we are divided and not there helping each other we fail and fall. The proud moments for me are when the team comes together, and we produce some amazing dishes and services.

Does this reflect Whitehorse Uniting Church now? Are we brothers and sisters in faith?

We have been taking steps in joining our communities together (and yes, I use the word community because even though we are now one congregation we were made from three different communities). We are on a journey as a faith family, and it will be interesting to see where it goes.

This leads me into the 2nd Corinthians comments on faith and the spirit

Are we divided even though we have come together as one congregation? Are we a community or are we Christ's family?

We are joined under the grace of God. We praise his Son, we listened for the Holy spirit and we came together. And now what?

Corinthians lays it out for us. Paul clearly says to the Corinthians that Christ will raise us up in faith into the presence of God. That we are not to lose heart. That even though we may be growing older and slower our inner nature is being renewed every day.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians comes after he had visited them, told them off in 1st Corinthians, battled hardships, a ship wreck and was finally able to take a breath. Paul has not lost hope or faith throughout these experiences. Paul is still spreading the Word to all and inviting them to experience the joy of the Good News. Paul believes that God is a God of consolation and reconciliation.

As a congregation we are going through a moment with ups and downs. We are worried as to what the future will bring but we should be calmed by the Spirit in the knowledge that more is to come.

The builders of the grand cathedrals never saw the final result of their dream. They only saw the mud of foundations, the hardship of building. The glory of the final construct was finished after they had gone, but they saw it in their faith.

For as it says in 4:18- 5:1

“because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Let us find time to stop. To listen to hear the voice inside us that guides us and brings peace. Like Paul let us continue to put our faith in God, to be brought together in love and be aware of what we will leave. Let us allow for the Spirit to lead us.

So who are our brothers and Sisters? Who is our family?

For as the team at work are my sisters and brothers in cooking so are you my brothers and sisters in Christ and we look forward to the glory that is not seen with our eyes, together.

So let us rejoice in what is to come and know that through the love of Christ, we build for a future.

Amen



Photo M Cosstick

Quiet reflection

A song of response: “How beautiful”

By David MacGregor

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5T7ESys1VMs>

A word of commitment and response: We Choose Not

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We choose not to give in to fear:

Even when we are threatened by violence and abuse,
we choose to believe in the power of love.

We choose not to be led by despair:

Even when dreams fail and the world seems to grow colder and more broken,
we choose to believe in the power of hope.

We choose not to be blinded by cynicism:

Even when joy and celebration feel naïve and frivolous,
we choose to believe in the power of faith.

We choose not to be over-awed by death:

Even when grief shuts out all other voices,
we choose to believe in the power of life.

*In every time,
in each place,
with all people,
may your resurrection rise up within us,
and lead us to new, creative, healing choices. Amen.*

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.*

The ministry of Centre 81 Jill Kidd

Prayers for others

To Worship And to Follow

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We follow you, Jesus,
today as we worship;
In words of love and devotion
sung and spoken,
In service and kindness,
in shared life and sacred meal.

And all we need do to follow you
as we leave this place
is to continue saying and doing
– to others –
what we bring to you in this hour.

And so we pray for praise and affirmation
to empower our families and communities;
For confession and forgiveness
to reconcile personal and national enemies,
and lead us into integrity and goodness;
For thanksgiving and generosity
to curb our greed,
and overcome poverty;
For intercession and compassion
to heal the broken,
defend the weak,
and guide the powerful.

As you feed us now, Jesus, in our worship,
may we become, again, your body
which nourishes the world,
and embraces all people with kindness.
Amen.

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 TIS 459 In Christ there is no East or West

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GG8hzY1OoM4>

Commissioning and Blessing (© B D Prewer, bruceprewer.com/DocB/BSUNDAY10.htm, used by permission)

There is much to be done,
but not all things are of prime importance.
There is much to be done,
but each person can only do so much.
There is much to be done,
but our confidence and strength lie not in ourselves
but in the grace of Christ who loves us and gives himself for us.
Go and do what you can,
put all your trust in God,
and your days will not be in vain.
Amen!

Hymn TIS 780 May light come into your eyes



Freepik image

The Ministry of Centre 81 presentation by Jill Kidd follows

REPORT TO WHITEHORSE UNITING CONGREGATION

June 9, 2024

For those of you who do not know where Centre 81 fits into our newly formed Whitehorse Uniting Church, I will begin with a little bit about how Centre 81 came about.

Centre 81, our drop in/care Centre, was born out of a vision of some members of the then Mountview Congregation, who felt a responsibility to use their skills and dedicated resources to be more involved within the Community into which God had placed them.

Of the Strategy Committee formed, John Gerrand and Aileen Youngs are the only two remaining.

The old Presbyterian Church, which had been placed at the back of the Mountview Church became home to Centre 81 on July 18th 1989, when it was opened by the Rev. Dr. Alex Kenworthy, who stressed the importance of a listening ministry, coupled with practical emergency care, and in the early days, personal, family and financial counselling was provided to anyone who needed it.

Counselling is not part of our role now, but we will always refer to our Ministers should the need arise.

The address of the Centre is 81 Doncaster East Road, hence the name, Centre 81. Our ministers at the time were Rev. Graham McAnalley and Rev. Charity Majiza.

Some willing members of our Congregation were recruited to staff the Centre, which was a real leap of faith—what kind of challenges did we expect when encountering unknown members of the Community?

Many training sessions were provided, and our Receptionists, working in pairs, supported one another, as well as assisting our clients with their needs.

Again, our Ministers were always available when needed.

In 2008, under the leadership of Rev. Chris. Meneilly, our space was transformed from a rather compartmentalised area, to a welcoming open space where clients who come through our door see a homely area upon entry, and a feeling of welcome and safety.

When Mountview House was demolished to make way for Marrageil Baggarrook, our very capable Property Committee rebuilt our pantry from

items which were part of the demolition—our pantry works beautifully now, and we thank them so much.

We are a totally voluntary, and non-judgemental organisation, building great rapport with our clients, and when assistance is requested, access to our services will always be granted.

Very often, a welcome “cuppa” will be the catalyst to bring about the real reason why the client has come – food, access to furniture and household goods from Eastern Emergency Relief, or a deeper reason which needs a referral to our Ministerial Team.

The Pandemic, and the ensuing cost of living crisis has seen the number of clients increasing considerably.

We at Centre 81 are realising that not only are our clients being adversely affected, but it has taken its toll on a large percentage of those unknown to us who are living amongst us.

Consider being on the outside of Centre 81, and having to summon the courage to open the door, and explain why you are visiting, however, our clients are always greeted with a smile and a warm welcome upon arrival.

Over the years, we also raised money by way of providing a team of door knockers for the Whitehorse Community Chest Annual Appeal. They in turn, rewarded us generously financially

Denis Youngs and then Des Kidd convened the organisation on behalf of Centre 81 and the Church.

Plant & Book Stalls, Sausage Sizzles, Market Days, and of course, our longstanding Christmas Card Charity Shop happened regularly. Covid put an end to the Card Shop outreach, which ran for 21 years.

We are very fortunate to be supported by our Congregation, Christ Church Anglican Church in Mitcham, and the Op Shop, both during the year and at Christmas time, when we also receive gifts of food for our Hampers from our Young Adult Group, who at Halloween, collect donations of food from the neighbouring streets around the Mitcham Church, from Philip Webb Real Estate, and the Eastern Emergency Relief Network.

On the other hand, we have also supported many worthwhile causes, such as paying for School Camps/Books/Uniforms for some of the under privileged children from our neighbouring schools, the Box Hill Police appeal for food which was distributed to lonely/shut-ins in the community, Nadrasca, Share the Dignity, a project for women, Pamper Packs for those known to us, who were unable to get out during Covid.

Our toy collection at Christmas time, also part of our Hampers, and which were donated by the Congregation, who were invited to place a toy under the Christmas Tree in the Church, a couple of weeks before Christmas. They were dedicated, and then the toys were distributed to our needy families, and to the children of Prisoner's Aid, in the name of the parent who was absent from their Christmas, also, Whitehorse Churches Care Christmas Lunch, held at the Mitcham Baptist Church last November, the invitation to that, being for the wider Community.

Our support for the women living in the complex next to the Mitcham Church, "A safe space for Women in Crisis", or as we know it, Marrageil BaggarrOOK, which means "Divine Woman" to the Wurundjeri Community.

There are eight units, some single and some double, all occupied at the moment.

When the women begin their residency, Centre 81 provides them with a "Welcome Pack", which includes food and cleaning products, a warm rug, some chocolate, toiletries, and a directory of local facilities.

This is meant to see them through the first few days, and it is always greatly appreciated.

If they choose, they may come to Centre 81 for a "cuppa and a chat" and if needed, a food parcel—they seem to enjoy the social aspect of chatting with others.

One of the highlights for them is to receive a Christmas Hamper which they love and enjoy.

Recently, a Craft Group was formed, and they now meet weekly, in one of the Sunday School rooms at the Church.

When I asked the facilitators at Marrageil BaggarrOOK about how the ladies saw Centre 81 the reply was—

"We often hear positive comments from our residents about their experience with the Centre.

When they arrive, they feel displaced, fearful & nervous and not knowing anyone.

Centre 81 is a lovely, warm link to the local community that satisfies the need for a smile, a chat or some food. The Centre is a wonderful resource for them while they are learning new skills and adapting to a different life.

We count ourselves very lucky to have the support of the Centre and the congregation behind it"

When I asked some of our clients the question, "What does Centre 81 mean to you?", the replies were indeed very heart-warming.

"We appreciate being treated with respect and decency, warm and friendly, always a smile of greeting, non-judgemental, understood, good listeners, good social interaction, helpful, encouraging, and always very grateful for any items of food which we may provide for them".

When I asked some of our Receptionists the same question, the common thread was— "it appears that what we put into our volunteering at Centre 81, we get back in abundance".

Long term friendships have formed between the Receptionists, and sometimes, between client visits, sometimes there is time enough time to chat through our cares and joys too, but always, it gives pleasure to be able to assist in making our visitors feel cared for, and comfortable during their visit.

We look forward to continuing our work in this place, and ask for God's help and blessings, as we look to the future, and where it might take us.

Jill Kidd