



BELMONT UNITING CHURCH

25th July Weekly Newsletter 2021

2021 - THE YEAR OF HOPE

Rev Sharon Hollis Installed as President

The first-ever online meeting for the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia took place over the weekend, with former Synod Moderator Rev Sharon Hollis installed as President. In two historical and joyful moments for the Church, the 16th Assembly installed Sharon as its third woman President and declared Rev Charissa Suli the new President-elect, making her the youngest and first person from a diverse cultural background to serve in the role. The meeting began with a welcome and Acknowledgement of Country from Interim UAICC National chairperson Mark Kickett, who invited us to remember and hold in our hearts the First Peoples who walked on this land.

Hundreds around the country tuned into the livestreamed Opening Service of Worship and installation of Sharon as the 16th President of the Uniting Church in Australia.

In a powerful sermon reflecting on the theme for the Assembly, "Dwelling in Love", Sharon encouraged UCA members and the Church to be upturned and transformed by the radically inclusive love of God. "The love Paul talks about (in his letter to the Corinthians) is active, tough, resilient and long suffering," Sharon says.

"This love risks the fragility of human flesh in the incarnation. It crosses boundaries. It raises up those who religion and society have excluded. It endures the cross. It rises again."

On Sunday morning Charissa was declared President-elect of the UCA, describing it as "truly an historic moment for the Church. This is ground-breaking that you call a Second Generation Tongan Australian, still in her 30s. Today we move forward because of you all. "I am conscious of people, both known and unknown, who have prayed, sacrificed and struggled for this moment. But let us celebrate it and give thanks for what God has done and continues to do through your witness to Christ's radical hospitality."

Retiring President Dr Deidre Palmer delivered an address reflecting on her term as President, encouraging UCA members to remain strong and full of hope in the midst of the challenging global context we all face.

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Breaking News

COVID-19 UPDATE

As you may now be aware - State Government has announced mandatory lockdown measures which came into effect 11.59 pm Thursday 15 until 11.59 pm Tuesday 27th July. As a result, there will be NO In-person worship service this Sunday 25th July. There will be an online Zoom worship service instead - see page 7 for further details. Please, watch this space for future updates!

In her address, Deidre reminded us of the abundant grace of God and liberating hope we have in Christ – which is always more than we could ever imagine.

“These last three years have taught me that we can plan, imagine a way forward and be totally disrupted. But we are a people of Resurrection – we follow a risen, crucified Lord, who is with us always and empowers us to be a people of love, reconciliation, and hope. You are witnesses to this hope as you gather here.”

Black liberation theologian and Director of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Culture, Prof Anthony Reddie, delivered the Cato Lecture on what it means to hold together our oneness and our diversity.

“Holding together unity and diversity, particularity and universality, the sense of being one but also respecting our particular differences ... is something the church has asserted but rarely practiced well,” he says.

“I believe this is an ongoing tension in which the power of the Holy Spirit enables us to both celebrate those things that make us specifically who we are, but also affirms our oneness and affirms that we are all made in the image and likeness of God.”

Further the Assembly extended the appointment of Colleen Geyer as the Assembly General Secretary, elected a new Assembly Standing Committee, Advocates of Circles and Chairpersons for Assembly Agency Boards and National Committees.

Mark Kickett brought a report from Congress, and shared via video, stories about relationship, culture and faith from our First Peoples.

Sharon welcomed our overseas guests watching online from around the world and a Minute of Appreciation was observed for those who have served faithfully in the national life of the Church. Despite being physically apart, 16th Assembly members, and others from across the Church, shared in prayer and worship.

On Day 1, 16th Assembly Members finished the day in prayer with the practice of The Examen led by Richmond Uniting Church minister Rev Sally Douglas.

On Day 2, First Nations leaders from Nungalinga College in Darwin led the Bible Reflections. Speaking from their own cultural and theological perspectives, the leaders shared on the theme “Dwelling in love”.

In the closing worship, 16th Assembly members were invited to write or draw a prayer for the reconvened Assembly in 2022.

A final blessing was offered by Synod of Queensland Moderator Andrew Gunton from the Sunshine Coast, where the reconvened Assembly will meet: “Bless us in our gathering and our scattering. Bless us in our decisions and our discipleship. Bless us as we anticipate taking our leave and as we are excited for gathering together again.”



Dear Ikani,

Like so many of you, today I'm working from home due to COVID-19 lockdowns. In the midst of that, some really wonderful news: we've just finished tallying donations for our end of financial year appeal to support the work of our partners. This year you've been part of giving that totalled \$482,000!

Ikani, I'm incredibly grateful. Our entire team felt so determined this year to share the news of the courage, challenges and achievements of our partners, who face the fight of their lives as COVID-19 continues to devastate families and economies. Thank you for responding with such faith and generosity. Together we're making a big difference.

Thank you so much for choosing to walk with us and for sharing our belief that together, we're building the world of justice and hope that God called into being at the beginning of time.

In hope of gratitude,

Dr Sureka Goringe - National Director, Uniting World

Worship At Home

Acknowledgement of Country

Today, as we gather together, we acknowledge the Wauthaurong Peoples, the first inhabitants of this place from time beyond remembering. We acknowledge that through this land, God nurtured and sustained the First Peoples of this country, the Aboriginal and Islander peoples.

Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21 & John 6:1-21 For these words of faith and for Jesus the Word:

Call to Worship

These words come from the apostle Paul: *'Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever.'* Come, let us worship God.

Opening Prayer

God of abundance and grace, we offer our thanks for the many blessings that come through your love for us. In our seeming scarcity, you feed and nourish us with plenty. We offer our thanks and praise in joyful adoration, God of glory, God of love. But we remember too that often we struggle to see or accept the love you give.

When we can only see meagre offerings despite an abundance of blessing, forgive us. When we keep finding reasons to doubt what you bring to us, open our eyes to what grace and love can do. We hear again through Paul that Jesus is able to accomplish far more than we can ask or imagine. It is through Jesus Christ that we are filled with all the fullness of God.

Sharing the Word

We are very familiar with the story of the feeding of the multitude in the Gospel text for this week in John 6:1-21. It is the only miracle story told in all four Gospels and it holds an important place in our collective faith memory.

While each Gospel includes this story, and each tells it distinctively, only John makes clear to us that this event takes place near the festival of Passover (John 6:4). This turns out to be a clue to what the whole chapter claims about Jesus. In chapters 5 and 6, we are reminded of

God's faithfulness and saving acts with God's people through the Passover and the Exodus. God fed the people of Israel through all their wilderness wanderings. In the long history of the people of God, Jesus is now recognised as the fulfilment of the ancient promise that God will raise up a prophet like Moses (John 6:14). Yet, Jesus knows that the people have the wrong idea of what that means. They are expecting a different sort of king. He knows that they don't understand who he really is.

We will spend the next five weeks in our Gospel readings digging down deep as we dwell in this Chapter 6 from John's Gospel. Jesus feeds the five thousand and in the rest of the chapter, we find out what it means that Jesus is the bread of life and our bread for life. As we take this opportunity, may the Word dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16).

First, in the story of the feeding of the 5000, we read about the pressing need of the people and the meeting of that need by Jesus.

Then, there is a further story about Jesus coming in the evening to the disciples in the boat on the stormy sea and quelling their fear.

We can picture the scene. There is a large crowd out in the wilderness, across the sea of Galilee and away from towns where food might have been found. They had been following Jesus because the signs he had done gave them hope, but they are tired and hungry.

Jesus asks Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people?' He is testing Philip, but Philip sees only an insolvable problem. Andrew, on the other hand, sees possibilities and points to the boy with five loaves and two fish.



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Jesus' response is to say, 'Make the people sit down.' He then gave thanks and saw that what had been given was distributed to everyone in a way that surpassed all expectation. The disciples have to be reminded that they need to count on Jesus' presence and power in this situation and in any future time of challenge. They are weak and inadequate to meet the needs around them. With the resources of Jesus, they and we are enabled to meet even huge challenges with hope, rather than defeat.

Jesus is present and ready to help in any situation of need, and through John's Gospel we learn of the special promises that Jesus is Bread (6:28), Light (8:12), Gate (10:9), Good Shepherd (10:1), Resurrection and Life (11:25), Way, Truth and Life (14:6) and True Vine (15:1). The disciples are called to witness to Jesus and to spread the hope of this Good News with others.

Jesus met people where they were and gave them what they needed. This is central to who we are called to be as we seek to follow him. We are to feed the hungry. Of course, our resources are not sufficient and we are inadequate, but we are called to receive what Jesus gives and to go into the world with this gift, praising God for God's provision and knowing our dependence on God's grace.

Responding: Prayers for the World & Community

God of glory, God of love, we hear stories of hunger and feeding, and desire restoration and healing for our world.

We are aware of global disruption to families, to businesses, to trade and travel as the COVID pandemic continues while leaders and health professionals try to regain control towards a new normal. In that space, we see confusion and contested ways of moving forward - from opening up fully as though there was no problem, to closing things down fully until the problem goes away.

We pray for governments around the world, for health leaders, for community leaders as they seek to find a way through many discordant voices.

We pray for communities and families in grief. We pray for places impacted through unequal access to health, information and protection. We pray for our own leaders - national and state - as they navigate both local and country-wide challenges due to the coronavirus.

We think of those closest to us who face difficulties of their own and pray that they may find comfort within the storms. Help us to be bringers of love and blessing where possible.

(silent prayer)

We pray for our church, as we seek to follow the call of Jesus Christ in a rapidly changing world. Bless our newly inducted president of the Uniting Church, Rev. Sharon Hollis, and bless members of churches all across Australia as we gather to hear stories of Jesus and as we are sent out again to share his light in the world.

Passing the Peace

May the Peace of God dwell with you: And also with you.

Offering

It is through Jesus Christ that we are filled with all the fullness of God. As we have been filled, what will we offer that the world may be filled?

Blessing

Go now, to employ your tongues and talents in the name of Christ. Go with spirits full and well-nourished to share loaves that abound in the name of Christ. And a blessing as you go out: May you be richly blessed by our abundant God of love - creator, redeemer and sustainer. Amen.

Acknowledgements:

Weekly Worship for this week was prepared by Season of Pentecost 2021. Presbytery of Gippsland, Fig Tree Worship Resource.

What if.....?

Rev Ikani Vaitohi

Here we go again! COVID pandemic time is unprecedented and worrisome. And according to popular belief, the highly contagious Delta variant that has caused us all now to be restricted to our homes, except for the five permissible reasons, should rightly draw our collective ire. But wait, some would argue, such blame should be levelled against the Federal Government's bungled Covid-19 vaccine roll-out debacle. Others would point their fingers at the Covid-19 vaccine hesitancy. Some are still blaming China! No matter where we point our fingers, our worries and concerns are ever abounding.

It is interesting that when we look at the history of 'worry', some argue that it is a rather modern condition. The word 'worry' as it is understood today did not emerge until the 19th century, with the growth of major cities and modern industry. Since then, Francis O'Gorman explains in *Worrying: A Literary and Cultural History* (Bloomsbury Academic), worry has crept into the affairs of "busy, high-pressured nations" and those "who use their brains too much."

It is rather interesting then to put O'Gorman's understanding of 'worry' alongside the journey or the shift that has taken place from 'faith' in God to 'thought' or reasoning as the way we seek to find answers for what is happening around us. The emphasis on thought and reasoning promotes the idea that we must use the power of our brain to work our way out of our present predicament. And according to O'Gorman, no wonder we worry too much.

Faith, however, is not neglecting the use of our brain and our creative thoughts. Faith, according to St Paul in his letter to the Hebrews 11:1 – 'Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.' Faith is accepting all that we are restricted by and overwhelmed with but not allowing it to overcome us. Faith is about lifting our gaze in faith to God, who has offered us hope in a future that will always be brighter because God will cause it to be.

Over our first week in isolation, I have done my fair share of worrying. What if we did not attend the game at AAMI Park...? What if we sat at a different aisle...? What if we have now infected other people or my own children with an underlying health condition?

Perhaps all we can do is to be reminded of the limitations of our thoughts and the point where faith can help us reframe our life experiences. For Christians, our life experiences are couched in the faith of a God who is in control of our past, present, and future. And so for us Christians, we give all our "What ifs?" to God and trust in a hopeful and a promised outcome.

A sign outside our front door

Update from the Manse

Saying hello to you all from the Manse. We are happy to report that morale is still very high and we are all feeling great. There are plenty of things to keep us occupied, online education for the children, no shortage of housecleaning for Moana and Ikani, the kitchen is still a very contested space and even the old dusty treadmill has been working hard of late. We would like to extend our appreciation for all the kindness and care expressed to us. We are now well stocked for another round of isolation if need be! With everything going to plan, we are hoping to come out of isolation on July Saturday 31. Love all from Moana, Ben, Lisa, Siale, Fane, Viliami and Ikani





Belmont Uniting Church August Roster 2021



PLEASE NOTE!!!



Due to the uncertainty of any "easing out of lockdown rules regarding numbers" and the fact that Rev Ikani and family only complete their isolation on July 31 there will be NO In-Person Church Service on August 1st. There WILL be a Zoom Service on August 1

Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Aug 8	10.00am	Rev. Ikani	J. Jeffers	G. Allen	R. Bunting	R. Ferguson	G. Schneider	L. Rankin

Date	Communion	Flowers	Morning Tea
Aug 8	N/A	E. Wood	Sue & Bill Jennings, Alwyne Merritt

Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Aug 15	10.00am	Rev. Ikani	J. Ferguson	R. Ferguson	C. Schaller	R. Ferguson	R. Bunting	L. Rankin

Date	Communion	Flowers	Morning Tea
Aug 15	N/A	A. Ingles	Moana & Fane Vaitohi, Glen Coomber

If for any reason you are unable to attend your rostered duty, please endeavour to swap with anyone & contact the worship leader and the Newsletter Editor too.

Prayer Points For the Week

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for people who have been devastated by the worst floods to hit Western Europe. In particular, Western Germany, where more than 140 people have died, streets and homes were submerged in muddy water. May You keep the rescue workers safe and surround those who have lost loved ones with Your comforting Spirit.

Loving God, help us to know when we face challenging situations and difficulties that You will never leave us, that You are watching over us. Thank You for Your love, care and protection.

Dear Lord, help us to identify with others who are suffering, grieving or faced with health burdens which are impacting their lives. May we regularly pray for them and offer them our loving support.

Peter Woods

Lectionary Readings

July 25 - Pentecost 9	August 1 - Pentecost 10	Aug 8 - Pentecost 11	Aug 15 - Pentecost 12
2 Sam 11: 1 - 15	2 Sam 11: 26 - 12: 13a	2 Sam 18: 5 - 9, 31 - 33	1 Kgs 2: 10 - 12, 3: 31 - 33
Psalms 14	Psalms 51: 1 - 12	Psalms 130	Psalms 111
Eph 3: 14 - 21	Eph 4: 1 - 16	Eph 4: 25 - 5: 2	Eph 5: 15 - 20
John 6: 1 - 21	John 6: 24 - 35	John 6: 35, 41 - 51	John 6: 51 - 58

→ **NOTICES** ←

SCONES, JAM & CREAM/SAVOURY OR PLAIN

Please be advised that due to the current snap lockdown, this fundraising is now postponed. A new date will be communicated to you when it is known.

The Social Justice Group is providing the morning tea as a fundraiser for the ALOLA Foundation.

This East Timor charity supports women and children in many aspects including assistance for victims of domestic violence, health and education. \$75 will provide a scholarship for a girl to stay in school and gain a qualification to prepare her for work.

We are asking, if you feel able, for a donation to go toward providing some \$75 scholarships. East Timor has a population of 1.3 million. Covid19 numbers are high but probably underreported. The Australian Government is providing some vaccine assistance.



NOTICES continued.....

BELMONT UNITING EVENING FELLOWSHIP

The next meeting of Evening Fellowship was to have been a Travel Talk by Raye Pearson on **Wed July 25**. Due to the close proximity to hopefully coming out of Lockdown 5 only hours before and of it possibly being extended anyway this meeting has been changed. Raye will speak at our meeting to which everyone is invited on **Wed August 25 at 1.30pm. Note change of time.**



An update on Liz Aitken

Liz saw surgeon 2 weeks ago at the 10 week mark. He's very happy with the healing and plaster is off now and she is in a Moon Boot. She saw physio and is starting to weight bear as tolerated. Liz will be using a wheely frame. Though the surgeon says all fine by end of August the physio is not so sure. However Liz says just to be able to have 2 feet on the ground feels good - so one day at a time.

Liz and Geoff send greetings to all and we pray for her comfort and healing.



NEWS FLASH



In line with the lockdown restrictions, the in-person worship service for this Sunday 25th of July is cancelled. Instead, you are welcome to join together online for a Zoom worship service at the same time of 10.00 am using this zoom link:

[https://zoom.us/j/99984774012?](https://zoom.us/j/99984774012?pwd=Ky85NGtwbnZqb1h2YzFGNDdDZEMlQT09)

[pwd=Ky85NGtwbnZqb1h2YzFGNDdDZEMlQT09](https://zoom.us/j/99984774012?pwd=Ky85NGtwbnZqb1h2YzFGNDdDZEMlQT09)

Meeting ID: 999 8477 4012 - Passcode: 1234

Any changes to this current arrangement will be communicated to you promptly. Thank you for your patience and understanding.



BUC FACEBOOK PAGE

Please follow, like or share our new facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100069883847973>

When the latest shutdown was announced I had a sinking feeling of "Oh no! Not again."

I had to remind myself of some of the advice I had given to a family member who is struggling mentally at the moment: focus on the things that you can control, and let the other things go. Begin each day telling yourself that it is going to be a great day.

Then set one or two goals for the day. At the end of the day stop, and identify two things that you are grateful for, or proud of.



Lorraine Leitch



The ABC's of Thanksgiving

Poet: Unknown

Although things are not perfect;
Because of trial or pain;
Continue in Thanksgiving;
Do not begin to blame;

Even when the times are hard;
Fierce winds are bound to blow;
God is forever able;
Hold on to what you know;

Imagine life without His love;
Joy would cease to be;
Keep thanking Him for all the things;
Love imparts to thee;

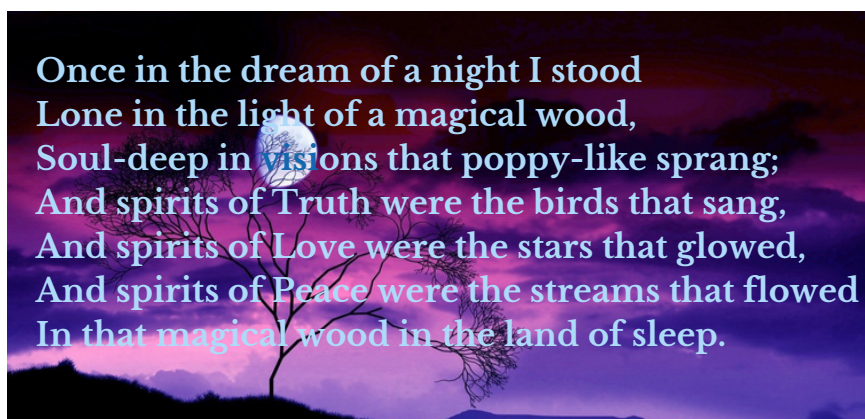
Move out of "Camp complaining";
No weapon that is known;
On earth can yield the power;
Praise can do alone;

Quit looking at the future;
Redeem the time at hand;
Start every day with worship;
To "thank" is a command;

Until we see Him coming;
Victorious in the sky;
We'll run the race with gratitude;
Exalting God most high;

Yes, there'll be good times and yes some
will be bad; but . . .

Zion waits in glory...where none are ever sad!



The Man in the Moon

He used to frighten me in the nights
of childhood,
the wide adult face, enormous, stern, aloft
I could not imagine such loneliness, such coldness
But tonight as I drive home over
these hilly roads
I see him sinking behind stands of winter trees
And rising again to show his familiar face
And when he comes into full view
over open fields
he looks like a young man who has fallen in love
with the dark earth
a pale bachelor, well-groomed and
full of melancholy
his round mouth open
as if he had just broken into song.

Billy Collins

Oneness is the perfect expansion of our inner reality. Let our heart's oneness only increase to make us feel that we belong to a universal world family, and this world family is a fulfilled Dream of God.

COVID-19 VICTORIA FAQs

Current Lockdown Information



Victoria's current lockdown has been extended until 11.59pm Tuesday July 27.

The following restrictions apply across all Victoria until that time:*

- **There are only 5 reasons to leave home:**
 - ▶ Shopping (within 5km of home, unless nearest shop further than 5km)
 - ▶ Exercise (within 5km of home, max 2 hours per day, with max 1 other person or members of your household)
 - ▶ Authorised work or Education
 - ▶ Caregiving & medical treatments
 - ▶ To get vaccinated
- **Masks** must be worn (indoors and outside) unless at home or with a valid exemption.
- **No visitors to the home, other than intimate partner.** Anyone who lives alone may create a "bubble" with one other person.
- **No public gatherings.**
- **Worship services** – Broadcast only. 5 people max in broadcasting.
- **Funerals** – maximum of 10 people plus those required to conduct the funeral.
- **Weddings may not proceed.** The only exceptions are for end-of-life or if deportation is pending.
- **Schools** – closed except for vulnerable children or children of emergency workers.
- **Adult education** – Online only.
- **Childcare and Early Learning** – may remain open.
- **Restaurants/Cafes** – Open for takeaway or delivery services only.
- **Libraries and Toy Libraries** – Click and Collect services only.
- **Residential Aged Care** – No visitors, with very limited exceptions.
- **Hospitals** – Visitors only for end-of-life, or one support person for childbirth.
- **All entertainment, hospitality, accommodation and tourism to remain closed.**
- Travel between Metro Melbourne and Regional Victoria is not allowed, unless for a permitted reason.

** The easing of restrictions remain dependant on case numbers, contact tracing and whether positive COVID cases remain in isolation during the period in which they are infectious.*

There have been some restriction changes announced on July 20:

- Schools will open for children with special needs only.
- Some changes to restrictions are being discussed for some industries where work occurs exclusively outdoors. Details will be available on the govt websites (see below).
- As of 11:59pm July 20, there are significant restriction to travel from red-zone areas, for the next two weeks. The only people, including Victorian residents, permitted to enter Victoria from any red-zone will be essential workers, those in "border bubble regions" or those granted an exemption on compassionate grounds.

For further information including any such easing of restrictions, please monitor the DHHS and CoronavirusVictoria websites listed below.

Should you require any further detail, please see DHHS website: [DHHS website](#) or the [Coronavirus Victoria](#) website.

Should you have any further questions please email the [Crisis Management Team](#).



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA