



# BELMONT UNITING CHURCH

14th March Weekly Newsletter 2021

## 2021 - THE YEAR OF HOPE

### Love liberates!

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him." John 3:16-17

John 3:16 is genuinely one of our favourite verses in the bible. Why? Each one of us will have our own reason. It seems to me that part of its appeal is that it speaks about the real conundrums of life. Life is hard. Condemnation is real. Bondage is its consequence. However, Love liberates. That is true in families, in communities and our churches.

Our Old Testament reading highlights the Israelite's similar life experiences from bondage in Egypt to the Promised Land. Although the story itself is puzzling because it contains aspects of ancient rites and God's action against his people, the story is about people struggling, complaining and speaking against God in their time of trials. Yet despite their rebellion and lack of trust, God, once again, provides healing and relief for their troubles.

Both stories, from different times and contexts, are being brought together this week by Jesus' declaration that "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." (Jn 3:14) As the serpent is the symbol of life for the Israelite, Jesus being lifted up on to the cross is God's gift of healing and new life.

Condemnation is a specialty of human beings. We are trying most times to apportion blame on others or shift blame entirely to those around us. Condemnation is not God's thing. The Good News of Jesus Christ is about healing and rescue. Jesus did not come to add a greater burden of condemnation to our already heavy load. Instead, when he is lifted up on the cross, we are assured of his forgiveness and restoration.

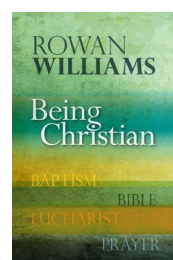
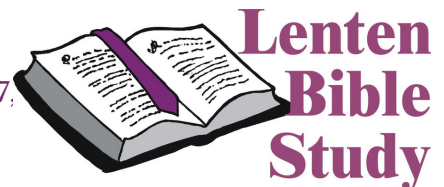
Jesus action on the cross lies at the heart of love that John 3:16 speaks about. God's unconditional love for us all is assured no matter what others thought of us or what we thought of ourselves.

What God does for us, we are also to do for one another. We are to love others sufficiently to forgive, not condemn, to uplift, heal and restore. We are called to be the mediators - the church has the ministry of making reconciliation, forgiveness, restoration real to ourselves and others. What an awesome responsibility. Let us allow love to liberate us as we seek to live out this good news amongst our family, friends and the community.

This year's Lenten Study will be held at 5 pm on Sunday afternoons in the Church hall, in safely distanced seating, on the four Sundays Feb 28, March 7, March 14 and March 21. The study book is Rowan Williams' Being Christian and it is about strengthening the practices that underlie our lives as Christians. It has been borrowed for free from the Otira library so there are no costs for participants. We will look at one of its four chapters each week. They are on Baptism, Bible, Eucharist (communion), and Prayer.

We propose that you bring a sandwich for yourself and that we stay on for this self-supplied light meal after the study session. Tea and coffee will be served in paper cups in a Covid-safe way.

Please let Ikani or Cherry (phone: 5245 8225) know if you would like to take part in this Study.





## Belmont Uniting Church March Roster 2021



Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Mar 14	10.00am	Rev. Ikani Vaitohi	Bev. Dickie	Rev. Ivy Goodwin	H. McCann C. Schaller	Ben Vaitohi	R. Bunting	L. Rankin

Date	Communion	Flowers
Mar 14	N/A	R. Buckwell

Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Mar 21	10.00am	Rev. Ikani Vaitohi	Liz Moss	R. Ferguson J. Ferguson	R. Jeffers J. Jeffers	R. Ferguson	B. Jennings	C. Collins

Date	Communion	Flowers
Mar 21	N/A	J. Jeffers

**If for any reason you are unable to attend your rostered duty, please endeavour to swap with anyone & contact the worship leader**



Ray Bunting - Wednesday 10th March  
Elizabeth Richards - Wednesday 10th March  
Ray Ferguson - Monday 15th March  
Yvonne Johnston - Thursday 18th March  
Cliff Rankin - Saturday 20th March  
Marion Neil - Saturday 20th March

### Thank You

Elizabeth Wood and family would like to thank Ikani and church members for their love, prayers, kind expressions of sympathy, visits and practical support after Brian's passing in late January. Your caring is much appreciated.



A new noticeboard sign



### From the Treasurer

Offering via Direct Debit—Our bank details are:  
Account Name: Belmont Uniting Church  
BSB: 063-504, Account No: 00902634.

## Prayer Points For the Week

Loving God, we pray for the Uniting Church, the President, the Moderator and all who provide leadership throughout 2021. Guide them with Your Holy Spirit in all their decision making; may they seek to serve You faithfully throughout the year.

Dear Lord, when we become disillusioned and begin to doubt, encourage us through Your Holy Spirit to renew our faith, trust, love and commitment to You.

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for all members who are unwell or awaiting the results of tests or are in hospital recovering from operations or illness. May Your healing Spirit and comforting love surround them during their time of need.

*Peter Woods*



Australian Red Cross is looking for Community Visitor Volunteers to visit socially isolated older people. If you are interested please call 0451309028 or see [vicsocialconnections@redcross.org.au](mailto:vicsocialconnections@redcross.org.au)

### PLEASE NOTE

Congregation Meeting - Sunday 14th March  
Annual General Meeting - Sunday 28th March

### Presbytery Pastoral Care Seminars

19 Mar - Friday 9:30am-12:30pm  
16 Apr - Friday 9:30am-12:30pm  
22 Apr - Thursday 6:30pm - 9:30pm  
*Speak with Ikani for details*

## Lectionary Reading

March 14 - Lent 4  
Nm 21: 4 - 9  
Psalm 107: 1 - 3, 17 - 22  
Eph 2: 1 - 10  
Jn 3: 14 - 21  
March 2021

March 21 - Lent 5  
Jer 31: 31 - 34  
Psalm 51: 1 - 12  
Heb 5: 5 - 10  
Jn 12: 20 - 33

March 25  
Is : 7 - 14  
Ps 45 or 40 5 - 10  
Heb 10: 4 - 10  
Lk 1: 26 - 38

March 28  
Is 50: 4 - 9  
Psalm 31: 9 - 16  
Phil 2: 5 - 11  
Mk 14: 1 - 15

### Do you need a recliner??

The Church has received a call offering a recliner in pristine condition that is movable and reclines completely. If interested please phone or see Lorraine Rankin.



### Church Council met on 2 March.

- The budget for 2021 was approved.
- Committees and groups are asked to refrain from holding meetings during Holy Week (29 March to 3 April).
- An election for Church Council membership, Congregation Chairperson & Secretary will be held on 28 March.
- Recognising the disruption caused last year by COVID-19, current Church Council office bearers and Committee Convenors were requested to remain in their roles for the remainder of 2021 (please contact the Secretary if this is not possible for you).
- The Harvest Thanksgiving Service will be held on Sunday 21 March 2021.
- The Executive Committee, with representatives from the Property and Finance Committees, were asked to consult with Synod and Presbytery about maximising income from the congregation's property portfolio, and report back to Church Council.
- Three members of the congregation have recently retired from longstanding leadership roles; arrangements are in hand to recognise their service.

### The Transport Roster



This column of your Roster is no longer applicable as those requiring transport are now permanently coming with other church members. If anyone should require transport in the future please phone Jeannine Oman. Thank you.



A huge thank you to Jeannine and Ikani for their completion of the main roster. It is an extremely difficult task and we say a huge thanks!



A Celebration of life for

*Elsie Presidder*



Please join our family on  
Friday 26th March 2021  
at 2:00pm  
Belmont Uniting Church  
42 Thomson St. Belmont  
Kaye Ph. 0418338038



### HARVEST THANKSGIVING SERVICE NEXT SUNDAY, 21st MARCH

The collection of food for Harvest this year takes on a very different form from previous years. To share the message of HOPE, you are invited to bring tinned and packet food (see below) as you come to church next Sunday, leaving your donations in the church foyer.

Alternatively you may wish to make a cash donation in the red buckets before or after the service.

☿ All donations of food, plus the Food Vouchers purchased with your cash donations, will be taken to Uniting for distribution to those who need a helping hand. To keep everything as safe as possible, we are limiting the handling of the food and unfortunately this year we cannot receive any fresh produce from

your garden. However, you are encouraged to share your garden produce with friends, neighbours and family, with a message of HOPE.

Uniting Barwon (at Grovedale) would appreciate the following items of non-perishable food: rice, white sugar, long life milk, coffee, tea bags, tomato sauce, peanut butter, toilet paper, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, laundry powder or liquid.

THANK YOU for your continued support and generosity.

*From the Mission and Outreach Committee.*

