# WELCOME BELMONT UNITING CHURCH

22nd August Weekly Newsletter 2021



### Responding to the Challenge - John 6.56-69

From the confine of the prison cell, Paul writes to the community of Ephesus with words of encouragement. Almost overwhelmed by the persecuted reality of Christian life, Paul offers them a reality check. Living the life of a Christian does not come easy but they must not lose hope as God has provided them with all that they need to counter the forces of evil seeking to destroy their lives. Paul offers them a choice. They must wear the amour of God if they would but stand a chance against their foes.

In our Gospel reading for this Sunday, Jesus offers something that some of his followers choose not to accept. Unlike Paul, he doesn't offer familiar and easy explanations. Instead, Jesus offers them provocative words knowing that for some of his followers his teaching is too difficult to understand and live by. Many of Jesus' disciples leave him at this point. Sometimes we experience the same in our congregations – we should not be disillusioned when people join us for a while and then leave. Jesus had the same experience.

But this is not necessarily a one-off decision. The Old Testament prophets called people to return to the Lord again and again. Peter re-commits to following Jesus on the beach after the resurrection. Wrestling with faith doesn't mean we are judged and found wanting. The offer remains open. And that very act of wrestling with it makes us more resilient when we do make a commitment to faith. For some people, having faith is a significant challenge to those around them. Young people especially find that their Christian faith is a source of



challenge and ridicule among their peers. Have you ever experienced your faith being challenged? Do you find it harder to be challenged by family and friends or by strangers?

Jesus asks his most committed friends how they are going to respond to his challenge. We can imagine that it was hard for Jesus to ask this question, knowing that one of the disciples would betray him, and another denies knowing him. Peter's enthusiastic response is given in the form of another question. 'To whom can we go?' Despite our doubts and questions, for a disciple of Jesus, there is no other choice. In our wider community, we are facing a significant challenge due to doubts and uncertainties around the choice to be vaccinated or not. It is not an easy choice and there are no easy answers too. But from time to time, we witness that our faith in the goodness of God will always carry us through those difficult stages of life.

For Jesus, the ultimate challenge for any follower is to know where to go first. Peter did. When we begin with Jesus, with amour of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, our choices and decisions, no matter hard, become bearable because we have faith in Jesus Christ. Our faith commits us to the challenge of being disciples of Christ, and the words of the hymn 'Will you come and follow me' by John L Bell and Graham Maule express our mission to the world around us well. We follow Jesus, leaving behind our own desires in order to love the world and the people in it, in God's own name.



Latest on our Sunday Worship Services - more details on page 4
Sunday 22 August - 10.00am in-person worship - (Sacrament of Baptism for Riley Gill)
morning tea (Scones & Cream)
Sunday 29 August - 10.00 am in-person worship - morning tea

Sunday 5 September - 10.00 am in -person worship and Sacrament of Holy Communion - morning tea

# 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 6.10-20

#### Call to Worship

The Lord is loving and gracious, worthy of worship with all of our hearts, with all of our minds, with all of our strength. You are a great God, and worthy of our praise. Amen.

#### A Prayer of Strength

Lord God, Paul didn't let the fact that he was physically in chains stop him from serving you. We may have chains of a different kind. We pray that whatever we see as our chains, our limitations, our obstacles, our weaknesses, we will know you are leading through the trials of our lives; and that, equipped with your armour, we will work together for you. Amen.

#### Sharing the Word

Towards the end of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul provides a reality check: life as a follower of Christ will not be easy, but God will provide you with what you need to face evil, in whatever guise it may come.

Paul's vision of a cosmic problem requires a cosmic solution in which every Christian plays their part. He calls upon us to stand firm against all that threatens the unity and health of the body of Christ, both from within and without.

A Roman legionary is an obvious model in Paul's mind for his armour of God metaphor. A foot soldier was well equipped for battle, but also part of a larger unit. Soldiers had to work together to protect themselves, and any weakness in their defensive shield could undermine the whole unit. The armour comprises five

defensive elements (cf. Isaiah 11.5 and 59.17): a belt of truth, a breastplate of righteousness, a shield of faith, a helmet of salvation and shoes of peace. There is only one offensive weapon: a sword, which represents the Word of God. They are given as gifts to resource our lives and to help us fulfil God's vision for his people.

Finally, Paul shows us how to wear our armour by reminding us to pray, emphasising cooperation in God's mission. As we 'go into battle', our ultimate aim is to defeat evil with good and be messengers of the gospei of peace.

#### Questions for reflection

- What armour do Christians need in today's world?
- ▶ Do we as a community - use all the armour God aives?
- How can we be more effective in 'standing firm together'?



#### **Prayers of Intercession**

O God, who answers prayer, we hear the words of Paul the apostle. He exhorts us to pray on all occasions and with all kinds of prayers and requests. We pray for communities that have seen tragedy. For vulnerable people who struggle to face what life throws at them. We pray for people who suffer for their faith. For ministers and evangelists who seek to spread your word. For us all as we share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for people who feel bound by chains of unemployment and poverty, chains of disability or illness, chains of sorrow. We pray for ourselves when we feel vulnerable. Lord, we pray in your Spirit. Amen.

#### **Blessing**

Lord, I know that if I trust you to protect me, you will give me whatever I need to keep me safe, and to keep me fighting on your side. Thanks be to God. Amen.

#### Live your faith

Remember Paul's injunction to persevere in prayer. Investigate – and, if appropriate, commit to – a new way of being equipped as a person of God, and/or a new way of persevering in prayer.

<u>Date</u>	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers		PA Operator				
<u>Aug 22</u>	10.00an	n Rev. Ikani	L. Jackson	R. Pearson	<u>R. Jeffers</u>	R. Ferguson	B. Jennings	L. Rankin			
					J. Jeffers	-					
Date	ate Communion		Flowers	Morning Tea (assist Raye Pearson)							
<u>Aug 22</u>		N/A	R. Buckwell		Nola & Peter Wo	oods					
					Liz Moss						
Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	<b>PowerPoint</b>	PA Operator	<u>Organist</u>			
<u>Aug 29</u>	10.00an	n Rev. Ikani	G. Allen	G. Coombo	er A. Merritt	R. Ferguson	D. Zucarro	L. Rankin			
T. Yates											
Date	Con	nmunion	Flowers		Morning Tea			_			
<u>Aug 29</u>			R. Buckwell	Fay & Wal Harper							
				Katrina Haas							
Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	<b>Greeters &amp; Ushers</b>	PowerPoint	PA Operator	<u>Organist</u>			
Sep 5	10.00an	n Rev. Ikani	Ros. Buckwell	D. Stepher	ns R. Ferguson	B. Vaitohi	G. Schneider	A. Ingles			
				1	J. Ferguson						
Date	Com	ımunion	Flowers		Morning Tea						
Sep 5	L. Moss		S. Jennings	R. & J. Ferguson							
<u>,</u>					<u>_</u>						
	A. Merritt			F. Vaitohi							
	J. 1	effers				•	•				
		Pearson									
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Thank you to these willing people for keeping our Church services going. If you need to swap please endeavour to do so or if finding it difficult phone Julie 0418996592

Prayer Points For the Week

Dear Lord, we pray for Haiti which was struck by an earthquake, with over 1000 people killed and thousands badly injured and having their houses and other buildings destroyed. Bless the rescue workers and medical staff who are helping people in need.

Loving God, we want our faith to be strong and based on You. Help us each day to put our trust in You, the only One who is eternal and steadfast. May we believe in Psalm 28:7, "The Lord is my strength and shield. I trust Him with all my heart"

Dear Heavenly Father, we love You and humbly come to You with open hearts, wanting to share our hurts and concerns. We know that You are working in our lives, may we daily turn to You seeking Your guidance and love.

\*Peter Woods\*\*

#### **Lectionary Readings**

Aug 22 - Pentecost 13	Aug 29 - Pentecost 14	Sept 5 - Pentecost 15	Sept 12 - Pentecost 16
1 Kgs 8: 22 - 30, 41 - 43	Song 2: 8 - 13	Prv 22 8: 1 - 2, 8 - 9, 22 - 23	Prv 1: 20 - 33
Psalm 84	Psalm 45: 1 - 2, 6 - 9	Psalm 125	Psalm 19
Eph 6: 10 - 20	Jas 1: 17 - 27	Jas 2: 1 - 10, 11 - 17	Jas 3: 1 - 12
John 6: 56 - 69	Mark 7: 1 - 8, 14 - 15, 21 - 23	Mark 7: 24 - 37	Mark 8: 27 - 38

#### Riley Kevin Gill's Baptism - This Sunday 22nd

It was in early February that Riley's parents Suzie and Stewart were discussing Riley's baptism with Rev Ikani. Due to Riley having now outgrown his baptismal clothes, now the new ones that were sourced, are ready for Sunday 22nd, the waiting is almost over for Riley. Thankfully, big sister Bridie is keeping him focussed and motivated as they eagerly await Riley's turn to be baptised and welcomed as a member of the family of God. Thank you Riley for your patience!











#### SCONES, JAM & CREAM/SAVOURY OR PLAIN

#### This Sunday 22nd August

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.

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#### BELMONT UNITING EVENING FELLOWSHIP

Next Wednesday August 25 at 1.30pm - Please note time
Raye Pearson will come and tell us about her many travels on this afternoon. Everyone is invited!! There will hopefully be a cuppa too.



In-person Faith Sharing at Church every Tuesday at 10am.

Welcome Mat is back every Friday.

Liz Moss no longer has a landline so if you wish to contact her you can do it by using her mobile no. which is 0428 579 479.





#### NEWS FLASH



There will be an in-person worship service this Sunday August 22nd @ 10:00am (with morning tea & scones) The News Team are excited, are you?

#### 'Special Prayer Service'

You are welcome to attend a 'Special Prayer Service' for those who are affected by the developing situation in Afghanistan and the Covid 19 Delta Variant outbreak. Please contact Ikani with your enquiries.

Date: Friday 27 Time: 2.00pm Place: Belmont UCA It doesn't take much to make an ordinary day special. Add a small garnish to your day by buying a bouquet of fresh cut flowers or light candles for dinner. Pull out those unused champagne flutes and use them as water glasses, and set out the good china even if you're eating leftovers.

Turn the phone off. Ignore your emails. You can bring a little flair to your work life, too. Bring flowers to your desk. Dress up a little. Read an inspiring quote before you and your team dive into a project. Little touches like this can have a big impact.

P.S. pictured is a 'virtual' afternoon tea we recently had with our family.

Regards, 'the deep voice'.  $\square$ 



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# AN OPEN LETTER OF SINCERE GRATITUDE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

From the Chairs of Uniting Vic.Tas, Uniting AgeWell, U Ethical Investors and The Moderator of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.

Dearest friends,

The past 18 months have been trying for us all, including communities within the Uniting Church of Australia and our organisations. The COVID-19 pandemic and its cycle of lockdowns, re-openings, restrictions and interruptions, has touched almost every aspect of our lives. Many of the things we once regarded as 'normal' may never return.

We have all made sacrifices, big and small. Parents have faced the challenges of home-schooling, often whilst trying to work from home. Families have been unable to visit loved ones to share important celebrations. Hard-working, proud people turned to others for support, many for the first time, as their work has disappeared. Refugees and foreign students have been unable to work or access government supports. Many people with family overseas have been separated from them for long periods of time. Small business owners have had to let staff go or have closed permanently. The list goes on.

At the same time, the pandemic has also brought out the best in many of us.

Where would many of us be if it weren't for caring neighbours? People have held out a helping hand to those in need without concern for the potential risk to themselves. They have put the needs of their community first, demonstrating a true love of neighbour.

And where would we be if it weren't for the essential workers? Our own health and family support workers, aged care and disability support workers, and early years educators who have worked tirelessly to provide care and support to others? Not to mention the people working in supermarkets, transport, teachers, medical staff and everyone else who have enabled most of us to remain in the relative safety of our homes.

Their stories fill us with gratitude and also with hope.

In many ways the COVID-19 pandemic has changed who we are as a nation by providing us with the opportunity to become part of a more compassionate community. It will be many months, or even years, before we find ourselves in a world where our hopes and plans are not driven by Covid case numbers.

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#### AN OPEN LETTER OF SINCERE GRATITUDE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Yet there is no doubt that vaccination is a key part of moving to that new normality.

As the vaccines roll out, everyone has a personal decision to make. For some, getting vaccinated is a simple choice; another way to support their community and in particular those who are most vulnerable. For others, there are factors that make it more complicated.

Many of those working with older people or people with disability see vaccination as part of their commitment to the wellbeing and safety of the people they work alongside every day.

For others, vaccination is our best chance to achieve that elusive COVID normal. It is our best hope to be able to visit families and friends freely, to plan weddings and celebrations, to be able to travel and see loved ones, for businesses to open with confidence and secure local employment.

We all long to be able to make plans without the fear of cancellations and lockdowns.

For love of neighbour, for the wellbeing and safety of our community, we encourage everyone to carefully consider vaccination. If you're unsure, talk to your doctor and make your decision based on what vaccination means for you, your families, and your community.

We've seen over the last year and a half that individual acts of kindness can have a huge impact on the lives of many people around them. Let this same generosity of spirit continue to guide us now.

We all have an important part to play. Together we can make a safer community for everyone.

Yours in gratitude,

**Rev Denise Liersch** 

Moderator

**Jude Munro AO** 

Chair

Uniting Vic.Tas

Raelene Thompson

Chair

Uniting AgeWell

**Lindsay Mann** 

Chair

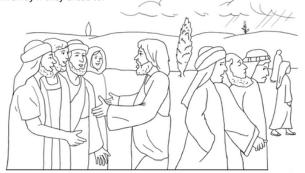
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## ROOTS Activity sheet

#### John 6.56-69

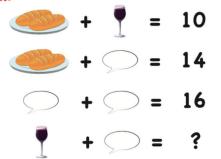
Jesus heard the followers grumbling and gave them a choice. He told them the Spirit was the source of the living words he brought, but they could walk away if they chose to.



Some of Jesus' followers walked away, as they found his message too



??????? Today's passage is about not knowing the answers, but following Jesus anyway. Can you solve this puzzle which has a clear answer?



rite answer: Let your heart be lead by God



Use the code to find the message that Jesus gave his followers.



12/5/20 25/15/21/18 8/5/1/18/20 2/5 12/5/4 2/25 7/15/4

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
								٧				
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26



Jesus was in the synagogue talking to his followers. Add Jesus to the picture.



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esus said, 'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, lives in me, and I live in them. Just as the Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is what I mean by the bread that has come from heaven; not like the manna that your ancestors ate, and they died. Anyone who has this bread inside them will live for ever.'

Many of Jesus' followers complained. 'This is too difficult to understand. How can we believe it?'

'Why are you upset?' Jesus asked. 'Suppose you saw the one sent by God, go back to God? Would you believe then? It's the Spirit of God, not the body, that gives life. My words are Spirit and they are life.'

He looked around sadly and said, 'But I see that some of you do not believe.' And he knew that one of them would betray him. He went on, 'That's why I told you that people will only come to believe who I really am if their hearts are led by God.'



Because of what he was saying, many of Jesus' disciples turned away from him and stopped following him. Jesus asked his twelve disciples: 'And what about you? Will you leave me too?'

Simon Peter answered, 'Lord – where would we go? You have the message of eternal life. We believe, and know, that you are the Holy One of God.'

John 6.56-69

#### Did you know?

- To 'abide' means to stay or remain.
- 'Manna' is the food God provided for the people of Israel during their time in the wilderness.
- 'Ancestors': members of your family who have lived before you, also the people of Israel, whom Moses led out of Egypt and into the wilderness, where they spent 40 years.

bread (7) plus wine (3) = 10, bread (7) +



Further COVID restrictions are now in force for METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE until at least September 2.

## The following COVID-safe restrictions apply to Regional Victoria from 11:59pm on August 9:

- Stay at Home requirement has been lifted and the 5km travel limit has been removed.
- Masks must be carried at all times and must be worn indoors and outdoors unless at home or with a valid exemption.
- **Visitors to the home** are not permitted. Intimate partner visits or single person bubble permitted.
- Public outdoor gatherings are limited to 10 people only.
- Religious gatherings and ceremonies are permitted for up to 100 people indoors and up to 300 people outdoors subject to the following:
  - A density quotient of 1 person per 4 square metres applies
  - A venue smaller than 100sqm can have up to 25 people per venue before the density quotient applies
  - COVID Check-in Marshals must ensure all attendees check-in
- Funerals (indoors or outdoors) maximum of 50 people plus those required to conduct the funeral. Children under 12 months are not counted in the cap. COVID Check-in Marshals must ensure all attendees check-in
- Weddings (indoors or outdoors) maximum of 50 people, including the two persons being married and two witnesses. The celebrant and photographer are not included in the cap. COVID Check-in Marshals must ensure all attendees check-in. Dancefloors are not permitted.
- Schools All students return to face-to-face learning subject to 1 person per 4sqm in all nonstudent areas. Facemask requirements apply to everyone aged 12 years and over.
- Adult education If you can study from home, you should continue to study from home.
- Childcare and Early Learning may remain open.

#### **GATHERINGS**

# What face-to-face gatherings are permitted at church?

Indoor and/or outdoor religious gatherings are allowed, subject to maximum attendance caps and density limits, with COVIDSafe plans including cleaning and signage. Covid Check-in Marshals must be used to ensure check-in upon entry using the Service Victoria app (QR code), even for visits less than 15 minutes.

#### **WORSHIP SERVICES**

# Religious gatherings and ceremonies are permitted for up to 100 people indoors and up to 300 people outdoors subject to a density quotient of 1 person per 4 square metres. A venue smaller than 100sqm can have up to 25 people per venue before the density quotient applies. COVID Check-in Marshals must ensure all attendees check-in using the Services Victoria app (see p4).

As of 09/08/2021

# Do face masks have to be worn at all times during worship?

Yes. Masks are currently mandatory in all settings, apart from at home, unless an individual has a valid reason for not wearing one. Ministers or other faith leaders may remove their masks whilst leading worship, as teaching/broadcasting/public speaking are valid exceptions.

# Can we gather for morning tea afterwards?

As seated service is currently available in cafes etc for up to 100 people indoors, it is possible to gather for morning tea, providing:

- all attendees remain seated and socially distanced, with no more than 10 people in any group
- the same density quotient and maximum numbers would apply as for the worship service.
- all food and drink would need to be served, rather than buffet style.

As of 09/08/2021

#### Can we sing?

Singing is permitted, but facemasks must be worn at all times.

As of 09/08/2021



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