

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

Easter 4

8th May



Christ before the High Priest – Are you the Christ?

WORSHIP AT HOME

Today in our worship at Ormond we conclude the placement of Andrew Boyle. The congregation is joined Dr Tom Spurling, the chairperson of the Presbytery of Port Phillip East, who will lead the Cutting of Pastoral Ties.

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

Carve out a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are.

Prepare a space in the house; find a comfortable chair, light a candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.

... for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Rev. 7. 17

Prayer

Loving God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,
God of Moses,
God of the prophets,
God of our brother and friend, Jesus Christ,
You are the God who calls and sends your people.

You are the God who places your stamp upon us,
Instils your spirit in us,
and lays claim on our lives.
By water and the Spirit we swim in the tide of Jesus' followers,
finding ourselves mysteriously joined with his saints
Across time and space.

For the Word which has lodged in our hearts and minds
And reminds us of your love for all people,
we are filled with gratitude.
For the saints whose faithfulness to you, O God,
has become pattern for our own living,
We are filled with gratitude.
For your spirit who unsettles us
And throws us out of our comfort,
propelling us into life,
We are filled with gratitude.

O God, the risen Christ says to us: follow me.
Grant us grace and abandon
that when we are called, we may follow

And so, find your life abundant.

In the name of him who has traversed death
and beckons us to the springs of the water of life,
Christ, the Risen One.
Amen

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

The Revelation to John 7. 9 - 17

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!' And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, singing, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.'

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, 'Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?' I said to him, 'Sir, you are the one that knows.' Then he said to me, 'These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

For this reason they are before the throne of God,

and worship him day and night within his temple,
and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.
They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;
the sun will not strike them,
nor any scorching heat;
for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'

The Gospel according to John 10. 22 – 30

At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered, 'I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.'

Reflecting

Now you listen here. He's not the Messiah. He's just a very naughty boy!

So squawked the mother of Brian to the crowd who had come to her door wanting to make her son the Messiah in the film *The Life of Brian*. They were desperate for a Messiah, so they had come to make Brian their glorious leader.

He's not the Messiah. He's just a naughty boy! Now go away!



I can recall the furore created by the humourless defenders of Jesus who didn't understand the point of the film, gathering outside cinemas to protest the blasphemy against Jesus. Of course, they hadn't seen the film or, if they had, they didn't understand the point it was trying to make –

the human tendency of all groups to want to make someone Messiah. Anyone! Anyone, to make us feel secure. Even the hapless Brian.

It would be funny if it wasn't so tragic, but I am curious that Vladimir Putin seemed to be behind the door when the sense of humour was being handed out. His mission is to eradicate someone who captured his people's hearts and wills by being a clown for them. Beware the humourless is my experience.

I can recall being at the induction service of a colleague and friend a number of years ago and it came to the prayers of the people in the service. A member of the congregation came to the lectern to lead us in prayers focussed on the newly inducted minister. It was as though as she began the prayer, the person leading figuratively took the minister and placed them on a pedestal and, as the prayer progressed, it was as though she was pumping a foot pump. Higher and higher the minister went in estimation and expectation. The Messiah had come amongst them! Oh, please spare her the adulation, I thought. There was a long way to fall by the time the end of the prayer came. Having had a number of falls, this minister really could not afford another one.

In all of the gospels there is this undercurrent of expectation that there will be a Messiah who will come to save Israel. As we heard the Sunday after Easter, as the two disciples walk along the road to Emmaus, they say to the risen Jesus – *but we thought he was the one to redeem Israel.*

We are all currently caught up in a Messiah-making escapade. The media playing off prospective leader against prospective leader in our minds. *Save us from Morrison*, some are shouting; *anything but Albo*, others. *Freedom*, proclaims the overweight nickel miner from Queensland on ubiquitous yellow billboards.

Our church over a long period of time has developed a culture which valorises ministers, priests, clergy. Some of us avoid this attention like the plague. While others, the likes of Brian Houston, build a whole church around their immense egos. Eventually we all, probably by the grace of God, fall. And move on. But the church has always had people in ministry; people who are set aside by the church to nurture and lead. People who are both gifted by the spirit and equipped by the church in their training to support the life of the church. We have been doing this from the very earliest days – the Acts of the Apostles records the earliest disciples setting people apart by prayer and the laying on of hands. And setting people apart for the priestly role is something all faiths and cultures have done through time. The trouble is we are in a period of immense flux where everything about our way of doing everything is under scrutiny. So often the baby is thrown out with the bathwater, though, without proper examination of why. The trouble is often that we were not clear why we were doing something in the first place. We just did it – sometimes, simply, out of habit.

The time after a minister leaves, the time in between ministries, is a delicate and vulnerable phase. In my presbytery role I saw so many congregations go into a kind of collective panic. Quick, what do we do now? We didn't think this was ever going to come to an end. And everything grinds to a halt. Some say in one way or another, well that was all a mistake, let's start again – let's go back to the way things were before <insert minister's name here> came along. Or some say when a minister moves on: it's all over, what's the point.? I'm going fishing, said Peter. Some are paralysed by grief. Others rush to occupy the space – come on folks – I'll save you. And there is an anxious rush to fill the gap left by the departed minister. What I found in my

presbytery involvement was this time of vacancy is a time of anxiety and uncertainty. And the reality is also that, as you found after Joan Wright and Fiona Winn left, this time of vacancy can be protracted and demanding on the local leadership.

You are in a profoundly liminal point in your life: you are in a very protracted planning phase to realise a new set of buildings; your existing buildings have been demolished; we have all survived two years of the uncertainty and disruption of COVID, and; you are now entering a period of ministerial vacancy. As you are in the midst of this liminal time in your life, you are in the right place to examine the question of why ordained ministry, for what purpose? The question cannot simply be reduced to some question about whether you can afford full-time ministry or not; it is an invitation to reflect on what you need at this time, the character of the ministry you seek to sustain you as Jesus' disciples. While there will be economic issues at play, this should not be the first thing you reflect on together; and it should not be the last measure of how you shape your life. All of this said, I believe that you have the leadership in a place where these questions will be given proper consideration.

When fourteen or so of us read *The Church as Salt* by Sally Douglas, minister at Richmond Uniting Church, earlier in the year we were encouraged by her to be reconciled with the reality that the church is smaller. We were challenged to give up the belief which our society feeds us that big is proof of the rightness of what we are doing. And that small equals failure. Sally reminded us of Jesus' saying: you are the salt of the earth. Sally writes of the littleness of salt; the humanity in the saltiness of our tears; the salty wombs from which we emerge into the world; the preserving quality of salt and the need for us to salt our dishes in order to make them tasty. The character of salty people is the posture of hopefulness. Our culture mostly tells us that hope is about hoping for some-thing, a particular outcome. Of course, this is our natural human tendency to anticipate concrete outcomes. But the nature of Christian hope is really about an orientation; a way of being in the world. Paul writes: hope does not disappoint us.

The Revelation to John is written to a group of churches which are undergoing extreme persecution. Revelation is a vision written to engender hope and to orient its hearers toward a vision of divine vindication of the Lamb who was slain. The confronting images and strange anticipations of the book are quite possibly not something we hold out for. Nevertheless, the vision draws us forward and galvanises our resolve to be part of that multitude oriented toward the throne with our hearts filled with joy and our wills shaped by the love which traverses death.

As we go our separate ways, we all continue to travel in that great tide of followers through time and space, united in life and beyond by the Crucified and Risen One. In him is our joy, our unity, our peace, our life. Thanks be to God.

Prayer – prepared by Ron Townsend

O God, you bound Andrew and us together for a time
as minister and people
to work for the advancement of your kingdom in this place:
we give you humble and hearty thanks
for the ministry which we have shared.

We thank you
for your never-failing presence with us through these years

and for the deeper knowledge of you
and of each other which we have received during Andrew's ministry here.

We thank you for those
who have been made members of Christ's family
through baptism here.

We thank you for opening our hearts and minds
again and again to your Word proclaimed faithfully by Andrew,
and for feeding us abundantly with the sacrament
of the body and blood of your Son.

Lord Jesus, you alone are worthy!
You alone are worthy of blessing and honour, glory, and praise.
Give us grace to praise your greatness, to bless your name,
and to live lives worthy of you, our Shepherd and Saviour.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

St. Paul exhorted the elders of the churches to protect your flock from the wolves that threaten them. Bless your Church with ministers and theologians who rightly proclaim your Word, defend against heresy and schism, and lead your people into lives of holiness, faithfulness, and love.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Bless and direct this congregation. Call us by name and lead us in love.
Guide us in paths of discipleship and service. Let all be done to your glory,
and for the good of our family, community, and world.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Bless our littlest lambs: our infants and toddlers, and all newborns in the faith.
Lead them safely through the dangers of this world. Crown their innocence with holiness.
Teach them to know your voice and to gladly follow wherever you would have them go.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Thank you for mothers, foster mothers, and for all who care and love with a mother's heart.
Adorn their lives with wisdom, goodness, common sense, and patience. Give them endurance –
and a good night's sleep – to carry out their many tasks with a light heart and ready smile. Be
their strength and shield when their burdens are great and sorrowful. And bestow your dearest
comfort on all who have lost a child, or who are unable to have one.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Give a shepherd's heart to the leaders of all nations, especially our own. Teach them to seek the
welfare of their people above power, wealth, or re-election. By their labours, grant the simple
blessings of decent food, clean water, and the chance to raise families in freedom and safety.
Give wisdom and integrity to all who risk their lives on behalf of others. And to all people,
especially those whose lives have been shattered by violence, grant a measure of your peace.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

*God of peace and justice,
we pray for the people of Ukraine.
We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.
We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,
that your spirit of comfort would draw near to them.
We pray for those with power over war or peace,*

*for wisdom, discernment and compassion to guide their decisions.
Above all, we pray for your precious children, at risk and in fear,
that you would hold and protect them.
We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.*

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

O great and good Shepherd, carry on your shoulders all who are suffering in body, mind, and heart. *Especially we remember before you: {List}*. Give a double portion of you Spirit to all who care for them, and restore them to wholeness and hope.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, we pray the Shepherd's Psalm when a member of your flock has died, confident that you bring them through death's dark vale into your Father's house. We therefore entrust to you all our dear departed. Lead, feed, and protect us, as you have done for them.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Amen.

Our Father ...

Conclusion of the Placement & Cutting Of Pastoral Ties

Dr Tom Spurling, chairperson of Presbytery

There are diverse gifts

but it is the same Spirit who gives them.

There are different ways of serving God:

But it is the same Lord who is served.

God works through people in different ways:

But it is the same God whose purpose is achieved through them all.

Each one of us is given a gift by the Spirit:

And there is no gift without its corresponding service.

There is one ministry of Christ

and in this ministry we all share.

Together we are the body of Christ:

And individually members of it.

The Chairperson of the Presbytery says:

Andrew my brother in Christ, you were called to be a servant and shepherd in the Ormond congregation and inducted into this placement as a Minister of the Word in November of 2015. Since that time you have been blessed by sharing in the joys and struggles associated with the ministry of the people of God in this place. Now after six and a half years of rich and fruitful ministry we come to that time when your relationship with these people as Minister and Pastor formally ends.

The chairperson addresses the Congregation:

We have gathered here today to express gratitude to God for Andrew's life and work amongst you, to recognise the alteration of our relationship, both corporately and individually, and release him from this placement.

Secretary of the Church Council – Brian Moore

Andrew, with us and amongst us you have taught and unfolded Christ's gospel with us. You have called us to follow in the way of Christ and assured us of God's mercy. You have celebrated the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and proclaimed the love of God through our worship. You have shared your life with us, counselled and encouraged, inspired and enabled, and walked with us on our pilgrimage through life. You have celebrated our marriages and supported us in our griefs and loss. You have shared the high points, low points, sadness, grief, celebrations of our congregation. Through your ministry you have encouraged and mentored us to be a church oriented toward the future. For this we are grateful.

Thanks be to God.

A representative of the Presbytery of Port Phillip East (Gary Richter) says:

Andrew, the witness and care expressed on behalf of members and friends of the Congregation has also been the experience of the Presbytery of Port Phillip East. In many ways you have shared your many gifts and talents with us. For your involvement with the wider work of the church through the Presbytery we are grateful.

Thanks be to God.

Minister: I am grateful for the call of the church for the opportunity to respond to God's call to serve and care in this congregation. I have endeavoured to take Christ the good Shepherd as my example, and to proclaim the Good News in all we have done together. I thank God for all of you, for the love, kindness, generosity and support shown to Christina and me over the span of this placement. I know you have prayed for us and encouraged us in our personal lives. You have affirmed and encouraged Christina's ministry in the wider church

I have been encouraged by the responsiveness of elders, church councillors and members of the Project Control Group over this time as we have worked together for the good of the congregation. In particular, I have been grateful for close collaboration with Neville Parker, Mardie Townsend and Heather Baxter as key leaders in my time here and those who have served as office-bearers of the church Council and the Congregation. I ask for forgiveness for the mistakes I have made. Now, as I leave, I go with strong memories of our years together, with much love for you all, and an appreciation of what you have taught me.

We thank God for the ministry you have faithfully exercised. We acknowledge that this is the time for your ministry to conclude. We express our gratitude for all you have done for us as minister and for the ways your leadership has been reflected in our life together.

The Congregation stands as they are able.

Chairperson:

Do you, members and friends of this church, release Andrew from his role as Minister of the Ormond Congregation?

We release him and we pray for God's blessing on us all as our relationships change.

Chairperson

Andrew, do you release the people of this congregation from its commitment to you as its minister? Do you release its members from pastoral ministries they seek?

I do, by God's grace.

Four representatives of the Congregation come forward: Neville Parker, Suzie Ferguson, Hans Tilstra, Lorraine Denniston

When I was inducted into the Congregation in November 2015 you presented me with the symbols of our life together: a Bible, water, the bread and wine, and the roll of the members of the Congregation. As I prepare to conclude my ministry with you, I return, these symbols of ministry as sign that our shared ministry has come to an end.

These are handed back to the members of the Congregation, and returned to their places as a sign that the life of the congregation continues under the leadership of the Church Council.

The congregation sits

Prayer of Separation – Brenda Grootendorst

Loving God, through your church you called Andrew to serve in this congregation. We recognise that just as he has been your gift to us, so now he goes to seek new paths. We pray for each other now, as our once parallel roads of pilgrimage diverge.

We thank you God for all that we have done, learnt and shared together. We pray for ourselves as we stay, that you will inspire us by your spirit and keep us faithful to the vision we have shared.

We pray for Andrew as he discerns his future.

May he grow in grace and in the knowledge of your love, so that he may continue to be a blessing to others.

As we part, we re-affirm that your Spirit has brought us together, and has enlivened our fellowship.

Congregation members raise a hand of blessing.

It is your Spirit who goes with Andrew and Christina and your Spirit who stays with us; your Spirit who unites us in the world-wide unity of your Church. Amen

Chairperson: In gratitude to God and trusting in him who calls us to be his people, we send you onwards.

All: **The Lord is with you,**
And also with you.

Blessing

Go in the power of the Spirit;
in all things, at all times,
remember that Christ dwells in you;
make your life your worship
to the praise and glory of God.

Prayer for Ukraine, from the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell.

Adapted from: CORE: Lutheran Coalition for Renewal – A Voice and Network for Confessing Lutherans

Music Director: Mr Peter Hurley

Office Administrator

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NEWS AND NOTICES

CONCLUSION OF ANDREW'S MINISTRY AT ORMOND

After a period of reflection, Andrew has decided to conclude his placement at Ormond. This will be effective from Sunday 8th May, when a Cutting of Pastoral Ties service led by the chairperson of the presbytery will form part of our Sunday worship. This will be the last service Andrew will lead.

Andrew is not moving to another placement at this stage but will initially be taking Long Service Leave as he considers future options. Church Council will also now undertake a period of reflection and planning as they consider the next phase of the congregation's life.

A special farewell morning tea will be held after the worship service on Sunday 8th May to say thanks and celebrate Andrew's significant contribution at Ormond.

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our Annual General Meeting this year will be held after Worship on

SUNDAY 29TH MAY 2022.

Documents relating to the meeting will be sent by email and distributed in hard copy at a date to be confirmed.

Please put this date in your diary – we would love to see as many people as possible attending and participating in this important meeting.

Brenda Grootendorst, Congregational Secretary.

BOB'S BOYS MEN'S BREAKFAST

A reminder that Bob's Boys aka Men's Breakfast has commenced again, from **8.30am on the last Saturday of the month** meeting at **Fig Jam Café, 128 Koornang Road Carnegie.**

Contact: Neville Parker if keen to join in.

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE FOOD DELIVERY WEDNESDAY 18th MAY

Liz Northwood and I will be doing a food delivery to the ASRC on **Wed 18th May**. There are some specific foods that the foodbank is running very short of – these are...

- Tuna in oil
- Canned chickpeas, lentils, kidney beans and tomatoes.
- Cooking oil – 1L bottles Nuts

Thank you so much for all those considering a donation to our very vulnerable refugees. If you are unable to bring food to the church please contact Brenda and I will arrange for collection from your home.

Many thanks always, for your support.

Brenda Grootendorst
ph. 0433494600

EAST COAST of AUSTRALIA - FLOODING EMERGENCY APPEAL

The recent floods in southern Queensland and NSW have been truly devastating in their magnitude and destruction. As is so often the case, the Uniting Church is stepping up to support individuals and communities affected by such disasters. Below you will find details of the National appeals from the Vic/Tas Moderator Rev. Denise Lersch and National President Rev. Sharon Hollis to support the work of the Assembly in flood relief efforts. If you are able to contribute there is a button which takes you to a site where you can make a financial contribution to this work.

You will find the link [here](#) (press ctrl key and click mouse) for the national appeal launched by Uniting Church in Australia President, Rev Sharon Hollis.

ACT FOR PEACE – UKRAINE CRISIS

Please refer to the link below for more information and ways to help.



UKRAINE CRISIS EMERGENCY APPEAL

The shocking Russian invasion of Ukraine has created a humanitarian crisis unlike anything seen in Europe since World War II. Millions of people could become refugees, forced from their homes and their loved ones.

Please give what you can today to help provide urgently needed food, medicine and temporary shelter to displaced families.

PLEASE GIVE URGENTLY

CALL: 1800 025 101
AFP.ORG.AU/UKRAINECRISIS

ACT FOR PEACE
 CONFRONTING INJUSTICE TOGETHER
 THROUGH THE *actalliance*

The international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia | ABN 86 619 970 188

As we are all aware, the crisis in the Ukraine continues and there are ways to help. Please refer to the link [here](#) (Cntrl & click mouse) for more information and for the many ways to donate and help this appeal.

ROSTER for next week Sunday 15 May 2022

READING	David Northwood	
PRAYERS	Brenda Grootendoorst	
DOOR DUTY	Lorraine Denniston	Dianne Richter
SOUND	Lisa Saffin	
MUSIC	Karen Roberts	
MORNING TEA	Lynne Parker Mary Coulthard	Elizabeth Northwood
RESOURCES DELIVERY	Brenda Grootendorst	