



Werribee Uniting Church

We acknowledge the people of the Kulin alliance, the original custodians of the land which was never ceded and on which our buildings for worship stand and we gather.

1 June 2025: Easter 7

Assembly President's message

A message from the Rev. Charissa Suli regarding the situation in the Gaza was issued on the 16th of May. It has been edited because it is too long for this newsletter, and a full version is available on the Assembly's website. I hope I have captured the essence of the message. (Ed.)

"In this season of Easter, as we proclaim 'Christ is risen!' and life is stronger than death, we cannot help but hear the cries that rise from the tombs of this world. In the lands where Jesus walked, the anguish of the wounded, displaced, hungry and grieving fills the air.

As President of the Uniting Church in Australia, I am compelled to speak with moral clarity, compassion, and a heart broken open by the suffering we are witnessing. We cannot remain silent while bodies are crushed by bombs, children starve, and our Palestinian siblings in Christ fear for their very existence. If we do not speak, even the stones will cry out.

With humility and repentance, we confess that our voice has not been clear or courageous in naming the immense and disproportionate suffering of Palestine. We lament our silences and hesitation. We know we cannot claim peace as our prayer if we have not named the injustices we see.

For more than seven decades, Palestinians have lived under the weight of occupation. On 7 October 2023, a horrific attack by Hamas militants in Israel claimed over 1,100 lives and saw 250 people taken hostage. Israel unleashed a ferocious retaliation. For 19 long months the Palestinian people have endured merciless bombardment. Homes, hospitals, sacred places of worship, and centres of learning lie in ruins. Nearly two million Palestinians have been forcibly displaced. Medical workers, journalists, and humanitarian servants have been targeted and killed.

Human rights abuses occur daily.

50,000 Palestinian lives – many of them women and children – have been stolen with unspeakable cruelty. For those who live, there is nowhere safe to go. We believe unequivocally that this desecration of human life is an outrage, a grievous wound in the heart of God. ...

The fragile hope of a ceasefire was shattered in March when Israeli military forces resumed their assault, sending a new wave of devastation across a traumatised and grieving people. Israel sealed off crossings into the Gaza Strip for over 10 weeks, cutting desperate people off from food, water, and medicine, and defying international law. Three weeks ago, the UN World Food Program announced all humanitarian and food supplies were exhausted. The situation is desperate. An avoidable and human-made famine is unfolding in full view of the world.

TODAY AND NEXT WEEK

Worship services

1 June: Rev. Valerie Johnson

8 June: Rev. Ian Pearce

For Pastoral Care: Please contact Raymond Surujpal, convenor of the pastoral care team on: 0432 619 184 or Margaret Bull: 0417 500 961.

Bible readings

This week: Acts 16:16–34; Psalm 97; Revelation 22:12–14, 16–17, 20–21; John 17:20–26

Next week: Acts 2:1–21/Genesis 11:1–9; Psalm 104:24–35b; Romans 8:14–17; John 14:8–17

What's on this week

Monday: 9.30am Playgroup

Tuesday: 9.30am Bible Study

Wednesday: 1pm UCAF meeting

Thursday: 9.30am Gardening Group; 5.30pm Health & Fitness; 5.30pm Choral Practice (chapel)

Saturday: 7.30am Samoan Health & Fitness

Rosters 1 June (& 8 June)

Greetings: Node Madu (Sandra Savory)

AV: Christian Ropeti-Kilifi (Jacob Lewis)

Morning Tea: Margaret Gook (Sandra Savory & Margaret Gook)

Flowers: Church

Music: Wendy Barnes (Wendy Barnes)

Prayers: Node Madu (Sandra Savory)

Reader: Ian Gainey (Lyn O'Meara)

Werribee UC on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/621987747878234/>

Church office

Open 9.30am to 12 noon. Phone 97411084

Email office@werribeeunitingchurch.org.au

WUC Newsletter

Send information for inclusion to the Editor at robert.renton@bigpond.com or 0427 812 606.

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BSB 083-909 A/c 516109795

To book facilities at WUC:

Email: (Elizabeth Barnes)

bookings@werribeeunitingchurch.org.au

Samoan service

3rd Sunday, 4pm, in the Church: All welcome.

‘To remain silent about the disproportionate suffering and long-standing oppression faced by Palestinians would be to deny the truth of what we see, and can never give us a just peace.’ ...

To leaders across the global community: you are standing at a moral crossroads. How much more suffering before you are compelled to act? You must take brave, principled action to end the violence which is an affront to humanity, uphold international law and insist upon the dignity and security of every person in the Holy Land.

As the Uniting Church, our longing remains the same as always: peace, true peace, in and between Palestine and Israel. In this, we grieve every life lost – Israeli and Palestinians – and reject all violence against civilians. We reject all hatred – antisemitism, Islamophobia, and all that divides or dehumanises.

Yet we affirm there can be no peace without justice, and no future built on the rubble of military power or the forced erasure of a people. To remain silent about the disproportionate suffering and long-standing oppression faced by Palestinians would be to deny the truth of what we see, and can never give us a just peace. Lasting peace can only be found through the dismantling of occupation, self-determination, and the full restoration of dignity and security to every person in the Holy Land. ...

Let us be the Church God calls us to be – courageous and faithful in love and solidarity, so that all may know the peace, shalom, salaam of God.”

Church Council news

The Church Council met on Wednesday 21 May and would like to inform the congregation of the following:

§ The congregation profile was received from the Joint Nominating Committee (JNC). Church Council reviewed and approved the profile. The profile has been forwarded to the Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) of Presbytery for their review/approval at their meeting on Tuesday 3 June.

§ The preaching plan for June, July and August was approved. Rev. Bruce Watson and Rev. Ian Pearse will be continuing as worship leaders on alternate Sundays. Rev. Valerie Johnson will also lead some services.

§ Tracey Seulupe and Armando Aragon have offered to co-ordinate arrangements for the church fete to be held on Saturday 25th October. Meetings to commence planning for the fete will be take place shortly.

§ Approval has been given to the property committee to proceed with the leasing of the manse at Filippin Court, Werribee.

§ A request received from Natalie Ward of Uniting Wyndham about the congregation participating in the 2025 blanket appeal was approved. The Social Justice Task Group will be co-ordinating this appeal in the coming weeks.

§ A request from Tom and Pene Tunai for the baptism of their son Jeremiah was received and approved for Sunday 6 July during morning worship.

(Margaret Bull, Church Council Secretary)



Last Sunday's baptism of Hudson and Colby Hanniver

Reading the bible—Jesus style

More than telling us exactly *what to see* in the Scriptures, Jesus taught us *how to see*, *what to emphasize*, and also *what could be de-emphasized or ignored*. Beyond fundamentalism or literalism, Jesus practised a form that the Jewish people called *midrash*, consistently using questions to keep spiritual meanings open, often reflecting on a text or returning people's questions with more questions. It is a real shame that we did not imitate Jesus in this approach. It could have saved us from so many centuries of righteousness, religious violence, and even single-issue voting.

Rather than seeking always certain and unchanging answers, the Jewish practice of *midrash* allows many possibilities, many levels of faith-filled meaning—meaning that is relevant and applicable to you, the reader, and puts you in the subject's shoes to build empathy, understanding, and relationship. It lets the passage first challenge *you* before it challenges anyone else. To use the text in a spiritual way—as Jesus did—is to allow it to convert you, to change you, to grow you up as you respond: What does this ask of me? How might this apply to my life, to my family, to my church, to my neighborhood, to my country?

Jesus consistently ignored or even denied exclusionary, punitive, and triumphalist texts in his own inspired Hebrew Bible in favor of passages that emphasized inclusion, mercy, and honesty. (*This is an edited selection from the writings of Richard Rohr.*)

NEXT SUNDAY, June 8th...

PLEASE WEAR SOMETHING **RED, ORANGE** or **YELLOW** to celebrate the DAY OF PENTECOST!