



Werrabee 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.

28 April 2024: Easter 5

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd"

It was a strange claim for Jesus to make. Few grown men were shepherds or wanted to be shepherds. It was a job for women, children, the enslaved, or the elderly—all people who were socially marginalised. Many modern notions of Jesus the Good Shepherd are shaped by European romanticism than by any sense of historical reality. We hear "I am the good shepherd" and we think something like this.... But the people to whom he said this probably thought something entirely different. In the ancient world, sheep were important to their owners. They signified wealth and status.



Despite their value, however, the job of shepherd often fell to society's least important members. Some would do the job well but they were still expendable. A good shepherd tended sheep, guided and guarded them, provided food and protection and generally cared for them. But they were still people in menial but necessary jobs. Not that different from many jobs today—I am the good migrant farm labourer; I am the good dishwasher; I am the good night security guard; I am the good sanitation worker.

I am the good shepherd. These are biblical texts of reversal with radical implications. It was obvious that the sheep were valuable and needed attention. But if we focus only on the sheep, we might miss the most compelling point. Jesus identified himself with the shepherd—a job held by those unfit for any other occupation. Respectable people must have winced.

He elevated a mean occupation to sacred status, claiming it to be the very work of God. In effect, he extended dignity to all those consigned to such work by the powerful and wealthy. While criticising "hirelings" who treated their work carelessly, he sided with those who did the good and essential work of community—tending, guiding, guarding, providing, protecting and caring.

I am the good shepherd. Suddenly the sheep—although always financially valuable—become more than mere property. And the shepherd, the necessary but largely invisible cog in the economic machine, is ennobled. The new community isn't based on money and status but on compassion, care, mutuality and service.

This is the comfort and safety of God's commonwealth—God loves, the Good Shepherd loves, and the community is constituted by and bound by love. Jesus imagines an entirely different kind of flock, not one owned by some greedy and distant overlord, but an inclusive human family tended by the motherly love of God and led by little children.

(An extract from Diana Butler Bass's "Sunday Musings" 21/4/24)

TODAY AND NEXT WEEK

Worship services

28 April: Rev. Amanda Nicholas

5 May: Rev. Ian Pearse (HC)

Bible readings

Today: Acts 8:26–40; Psalm 22:25–31; 1 John 4:7–21; John 15:1–8

Next Sunday: Acts 10:44–48; Psalm 98; 1 John 5:1–6; John 15:9–17

What's on this week

Monday: 9.30am Playgroup

Tuesday: (No bible study until 7th May)

Wednesday: 10am Property Committee; 1pm UCAF—all welcome!

Thursday: 9.30am Gardening Group; 5pm Health & Fitness

Saturday 7am Health & Fitness

Rosters 28 April (& 5 May)

Greetings: Tulaua S (Elizabeth B)

Audiovisual: Paul K (Jacob L)

Morning Tea: Marie C & Site T (Samoan Ladies)

Flowers: Emily M (Bev C)

Music: Wendy B (Wendy B)

Prayers: Lauina L (Luciana A)

Reader: Wendy B (Lauina L)

Werrabee UC on Facebook:

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

Church office

Open Monday to Friday 9.30am–12noon. Phone 97411084 Email

office@werribeeunitingchurch.org.au

WUC Newsletter

Send information for inclusion to the Editor at robert.renton@bigpond.com or Neil T

Bank Account & Boom Gate (0459#)

BSB 083-909 A/c 516109795

To book facilities at WUC:

Email: (Elizabeth B)

bookings@werribeeunitingchurch.org.au

Samoan service The Samoan language service is held every 1st, 2nd, 3rd & 5th Sunday at 4pm in the church. All welcome.

Welcome to Amanda Nicholas

When I asked Rev Amanda about her faith journey, she said: “It began when I was baptised at the Wynyard (northern Tasmania) Uniting Congregation just after Union; I was one of the newest members of our new Uniting Church.”

Until middle of 2023 Amanda had been in placement at East Geelong Uniting, she is now awaiting placement and thus open to occasional preaching and supply! Her husband the Rev. Will Nicholas is minister at St David’s Uniting, Newtown, Geelong. They have three sons, between 14 and 25.



She continues: “I went to school at Wynyard and Burnie; a life-changing event came as I was appointed one of two Australian delegates from the Uniting Church to an international youth conference of the United Presbyterian Church of the USA, held in

Indiana. People came from many countries and helped me see the unity and diversity of Christ’s church.

Soon after, another formative event happened to me, as I was involved in the preparation for the Uniting Church’s 1997 National Christian Youth Convention (NCYC) in Tasmania; planning and organising venues and arranging accommodation for the indigenous contingent and international delegates in homestays. I met remarkable Christians from all over Australia who opened my eyes to the diversity of the church.

Will my husband came from West Sydney, he was a specified youth worker. Soon after we married I found myself raising three boys.

“I was trying to work out what to do with myself, so I entered the Uniting Church’s Period of Discernment (POD).” It turned out God was calling me into Ministry of the Word, so I began studying at the Uniting Theological College at Paramatta, NSW, learning theology from a wonderful team.” After College, my first placement was in North Launceston.

I love playing games of all kinds, painting and any kind of creative pursuit.

I feel excited to be involved in ministry in the Uniting Church at this time when the peoples of the earth and countries are going through great social change. It’s good to be doing supply! (From Neil T)

3030 Beach Patrol report

We had 13 enthusiastic volunteers cleaning Campbell's Cove last Sunday. There were lots of rubbish in the carpark including an estimated 450 cigarette butts. Lots of dumped rubbish were also collected from the side of Campbell's Cove Rd. We estimate the total weight of rubbish collected to be 80kg. This included 22 drink cans, 24 plastic drink bottles & 54 glass drink bottles. It was also great to welcome new members, but we do miss seeing many of our earlier members. If you haven't been

for a while we would love to see you again. Our next clean is on May 12 at Wyndham Harbour. (NT)



Uniting Church Adult Fellowship

We meet on Wednesday 1st May at 1pm in the foyer—everyone is welcome to attend!

Working Bee – Saturday 27 April

We need some willing workers for a working bee/garden tidy up being held at the Werribee manse, 8 Filippin Court, Werribee on Saturday 27 April from 8.00 am. BYO garden tools.

Come and share in this time as we work together. (MB)

Combined Pentecost Service—May 19

Presbytery is planning a combined Pentecost service on Sunday 19 May at 2pm at St John’s Essendon UCA. Pentecost is the birth of the church, and it is quite symbolic that we gather together on this special day. We are stronger together and you can be part of this exciting event.

Presbytery are looking for musicians—instrumentalists (not piano or organ) and singers to work together for this service and will be introducing some new music for the congregations to learn beforehand.

If you would like to be involved in this combined service please let Margaret B know.

To contact the Rev. Ian Pearse

Mobile: 0411 771 853

Email: enps@inet.net.au

