



Werrabee United 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.

7 April 2024: Easter 2

The one and the many

[Unfortunately, I have lost the details of the origin of this piece of writing, but it is well worth including as something to reflect upon as our ‘musings’ this week—Editor.]

Much of our life we are trying to connect the dots, to pierce the heart of reality to see what is good, true, and beautiful for us. We want something lasting and transcendent.

How we search, however, will determine what we find or even want to find. I suggest that we should be searching primarily in the universal and wise depths of recurring symbols, metaphors, and sacred stories, which is where humans can find deep and lasting meaning—or personal truth. That is what we mean by the Perennial Tradition and why George Bernard Shaw wrote, “There is only one religion, though there are a hundred versions of it.” The best religious metaphors assert not just a truth held by one religion, but a universal truth.

Metaphor is the only possible language available to religion because it alone is honest about Mystery. The underlying messages that different religions and denominations use are often in strong agreement, but they use different metaphors to communicate their own experience of union with God. Jesus says, for example, “There are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well. They too listen to my voice” (John 10:16a). He is quite obviously talking metaphorically by calling people sheep. He is also saying that sometimes the outsider of the “flock” hears as well as the insider. Furthermore, he says that he cares about and respects the “other sheep”, which means that we should too. These are crucial points, and those who refuse to mine the metaphors will miss them.

Jesus’ intention here that there be “only one flock” (John 10:16b), and his later prayer “that all may be one” (John 17:21-23), can be achieved only by overcoming all *otherness*—so Jesus speaks of the “other sheep.” The goal is never to overcome all differences, since God clearly created us different in limitless ways. *Differences are not the same as otherness, or at least they need not be.* Through clever metaphors such as sheep and flocks, unity and yet differentiation, Jesus resolves what is sometimes called “the first philosophical problem” of *the one and the many*. How does one reconcile diversity with any underlying unity? To do this, Jesus, himself, uses many metaphors, so it is difficult to say that even he has only one and completely consistent image of God—beyond love itself!

We must never be too tied to our own metaphors as the only possible way to speak the truth. Rather, we must approach all metaphors and symbols humbly and respectfully, keeping all the inner spaces of mind, heart, and body open at the same time. I would call such respectful and non-egocentric attention “prayer.”

TODAY AND NEXT WEEK

Worship services

7 April: Rev. Ian Pearse

14 April: Rev. Val Johnson

Bible readings

Today: Acts 4:32–35; Psalm 133; 1 John 1:1–2:2; John 20:29–31

Next Sunday: Acts 3:12–19; Psalm 4; 1 John 3:1–7; Luke 24:36b–48

What’s on this week

Tuesday: (No bible study until 7th May)

Wednesday: 10am Property Committee; 7pm Church Council.

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

Rosters 31 March (& 7 April)

Greetings: Kur M (Margaret B)

Audiovisual: Jacob L (Noel S)

Morning Tea: Samoan Ladies (Elaine B & Julie R)

Flowers: Jennie K (Elaine B)

Music: Wendy B (Gina L)

Prayers: Neil T (Jan Bradley)

Reader: Lauina L (Sandra S)

Werrabee UC on Facebook:

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

Church office

Open Monday to Friday 9.30am–12noon.

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WUC Newsletter

Send information for inclusion to the Editor at

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BSB 083-909 A/c 516109795

To book facilities at WUC:

Email: (Elizabeth B)

bookings@werrabeeunitingchurch.org.au

Samoan service The Samoan language service is on 3rd Sunday at 4pm in the church. All Welcome.

Welcome to the Rev. Ian Pearse



Werribee UC congregation welcomes Rev Ian Pearse, (pictured) who will be our supply minister through four months until July this year.

Ian is well known to the previous Crossroads congregation for supplying pulpit and pastoral care during the Rev. Annetia Goldsmith's vacation in January 2020, when the Covid pandemic caused us to have worship services on-line.

Ian is a retired Uniting Church minister, who served in metropolitan and country parishes in Western Australia for some years, and was chaplain at Royal Perth Hospital.

He and his wife Bev moved to Maddingley, Bacchus Marsh Victoria in 2014. Ian served the Bacchus Marsh congregation as minister since coming here.

In retirement, they caravanned twice across the Nullabor, "Now we are focusing more on cruises," says Ian.

Asked about his interests these days, Ian says: "I'm doing family history. Amongst other things, I'm trying to trace a "lordship" in the family during the 1700s. I haven't found the ancestral castle yet!"

As noted in last week's newsletter, Ian will be leading morning worship here on every first and third Sunday and will be available for pastoral work on two other days of each week. (NT)

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the congregation will be held next Sunday following the church service. Elections will be held for the positions of Congregational Chairperson (one nominee: Sandra S) and Congregational Secretary (one nomination: Bev L).

Correct addresses

The Office has updated the Newsletter Contact List for Hoppers Crossing members. If you have been normally receiving the newsletter but have not this week, please email the office on office@werribeeunitingchurch.org.au and let us know the correct email details.

Hi from Judith F

Judith F, former member of our Werribee UC congregation and her husband Leon have recently moved to Warrnambool. I spoke to Judith on the phone. "We are now living in serviced apartments in Gillin Park Retirement Village, adjacent to Deakin University Campus. We are 2 km away from our daughter Karen, and 200 metres from the walking path beside the beautiful Hopkins River," she says.

Judith transferred her membership from Electra Street Williamstown UC to the former Crossroads congregation about 8 years ago, when she and Leon moved to the Heathglen Retirement Village, Werribee and she soon made friends here. A regular worshipper, Judith was active in UCAF.

For many years 1976 to 2000, the F lived in Portland. "Here at Warrnambool we are renewing old acquaintances," says Judith. "Rev Mark Dunn kindly informed the Pastoral Care co-ordinator at Warrnambool UC, who happens to be an old friend."

"Here at Warrnambool UC, the congregation is in the process of choosing a new minister, a little ahead of Werribee. I send greetings; all the best to everybody at Werribee Uniting," she says. (NT)

Some thoughts about Easter

Where is God when the poor are exploited by the rich?

This freedom from economic, physical and social oppression is central to the life of Jesus and here, at the start of his ministry, we see his later work foreshadowed in the simple statement that the "kingdom of God has come near". Unfortunately, since the era of Constantine in the 4th century, this aspect of Christianity has been swept under the carpet by those who would use it to reinforce the status quo.

This reminds me of the creeds of the Church through the ages. The Nicene creed, for example, reduces the life of Jesus to a full stop. He was "born of the virgin Mary. Suffered under Pontus Pilate..." If this is all we have to say about the life of Jesus, then redemption is reduced to a magical effect of the crucifixion. Yet, as theologians from many persuasions point out, the death of Jesus is nothing but the inevitable consequence of living out the kingdom of God. Had Jesus preached a purely spiritual redemption, then the authorities would not have wanted him killed. Instead his acceptance of the outcast and challenge to the self-righteous bought him enemies in those who stood to gain from the status quo.

(Extract from an article by Elaine L of W.A.)

