



Hornsby Uniting Church

Our Vision: To grow in Christ and share His love.

News for January 21, 2024

Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. - Psalms 62:8

There is no more charming book in the whole of the Old Testament than the book of **Jonah**. When one reads it, one can't help smiling over the angry little prophet, sulking under the castor oil plant. The story lends itself to our imagination and it must be one of the most familiar stories in the whole bible because of its imagery ... Definitely a story that appeals to the imagination, of all ages and generations.

It is a storyteller's story with one of the Old Testament's most prophetic messages - the repudiation of exclusivism - whether religious, theological, ethnic, political, national. It really is very significant that this reading from the internationally used set of bible readings for this third Sunday of Epiphany is being read here on the Sunday nearest Australia Day. Because, as we hear these ancient words addressed to the situation where people believed themselves to be racially or religiously superior - it calls our thoughts and actions into question if we are in any way guilty of thinking ourselves superior in any shape or form - particularly in the two categories which the story addresses - religious or racial.



The story of Jonah is the Old Testament version of the kind of story which Jesus told so well - the parable. In this parable, the author rebukes with charm and humour a claim made amongst his people in Jerusalem - and, sadly, by people of every age, the claim of exclusivism and superiority. In the case of Jonah, it is a claim with special theological overtones, challenging the belief that WE have God in OUR camp, on OUR team, on OUR side - that WE have a formula, a ritual, a programme that guarantees God's exclusively favourable relationship with us. The story of Jonah cheerfully and brilliantly and unrelentingly proclaims the central word of God's boundless love and it does so by means of an inspired series of images. To the pious protest which proclaims that God is contained in buildings of specific design and architecture, Jonah's author simply laughs, "Don't be ridiculous," he says, "her is God now, receiving praise in the most unlikely place of all - the belly of a great fish swimming in the sea."

To all claims of God's exclusive love and concern for one people (or one class, or one colour, or one gender, or one race) this storyteller replies: "Don't be ridiculous - for here is God now loving the most unlikely of all people - the Assyrians - murderers from the Israelites' point of view - plunderers - and a godless race."

The interesting thing about the book of Jonah, however, is that the prophet himself never does repent, and yet, throughout the book, he is the constant recipient of God's mercy. Given the call to go to Nineveh, he sets out in the opposite direction. It would be as though we had been asked to go to Darwin and we turned around and went to Auckland. Thrown overboard by the sailors, he is saved by God through the big fish. And then, patiently, painstakingly, never in anger, God deals with the angry prophet - once again sending him to Nineveh - giving him success in his mission, overlooking his sulking, shading his head, working through worm and sun and explanation, to teach Jonah the marvels of mercy and the unlimited nature of love. Jonah does not repent, but God never gives up on him. And, much of the time, we modern day Jonahs do not repent either, but God does not give up on us. Rather, God continually calls and challenges us to see and know the world from God's perspective - created and sustained in love. It is your world, says God to Jonah because it is my world. All its people are your people because they are God's, who loves when you cannot. The Book of Jonah shows that God can bring even the most hard hearted people to repentance- even you and me- even power hungry leaders of the world and society - as it also demonstrates that God can use the most reluctant prophet or disciple for the most difficult of tasks. Even you and me. For that we can say - 'Thanks be to God!' - *Moiria Laidlaw*

Our morning worship service is videotaped each Sunday, and made available online later in the day.

You can join us at <http://hornsby.unitingchurch.org.au/church-at-home.html>

On A Mission!

It's easy to create a paper document and then file it away, forgotten. For a good number of years now, we have had a set of Vision and Mission statements and goals which are intended to be both our current goals as a congregation, and a forward-thinking plan which guides us into the future.

We have reviewed the longer Mission Plan on a regular basis at an annual planning meeting, to be sure it still matches our intentions and actions - but with disruptions over the last couple of years a little less attention has been paid. So, for the next few weeks we'll present the important parts of our Mission and Vision, to keep it in front of you.

Are we meeting these statements by our actions? Do we need to revise our plans, or focus attention on a particular goal? Your thoughts are welcome - chat to any member of the Church Council!

Short Form: our Vision statement

If you can't repeat this vision statement without stopping to think, time to commit it to memory - it's printed at the top of every weekly newsletter! (and, from this week, on our electronic noticeboard).

Our Vision: To grow in Christ and share His love.

Longer Form Vision statement

This is the first thing people will read when they come to our website to find out "who we are". Does it reflect the current reality?

We are people of God who seek to grow in faith and discipleship as we engage hearts and minds with the message of the Gospel and share the love of Christ in all we do.

Next week - part one of our detailed Mission Plan.



Bulletin 210124 - Our Redemption



What is the BIGGEST Problem of our world today? 2 Timothy 3:1 states; *You should know this, (Timothy) that in the last days there will be very difficult times.* The last decade has been marked by significant progress in various fields such as science, medicine, and technology but, at the same time, the number of problems in today's society has steadily grown. In 2020 and 2021, undoubtedly some of the most uncertain and difficult years of the last decade; where the biggest numerous difficulties in the world have been frightening - in a way exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. The years following the pandemic, the years following have not

abated the worries and anxieties people face in the world because of other events, and the rumours of newer pandemics and instabilities and issues continued to be somewhat complex and certainly no less easy.

In 2022 – 2023, the war in Ukraine started and it is still raging, then the Israel - Hamas conflict started in October 23. We still have the energy crisis and hyperinflation caused multiple economic shocks and stagnation across the continents.

As a platform to address global issues that cannot be resolved by any single country, the United Nations organization is spearheading humanity's struggle to survive. Its most visible efforts, concern resolving conflicts and undertaking peacekeeping activities. See UN's list of the world's greatest difficulties.

- Climate Change.
- Wars and military conflicts.
- Water contamination.
- Human rights violation.
- Global health issues.
- Global poverty.
- Children's poor access to healthcare, education and safety.



- Access to food and hunger.
- Others also do consider the following as their bet. Biodiversity loss · Climate change · Destructive artificial intelligence · Environmental disaster · Nuclear holocaust · Pandemic · Biotechnology risk, Etc.

Interestingly, Roy Lloyd, a Lutheran minister, once interviewed Mother Teresa. He said that one of his questions and one of her answers stands out in his mind as "a bright sun burning in my mind." He asked her, "What's the biggest problem in the world today?" And she answered, without hesitation, "The biggest problem in the world today is that we draw the circle of our family too small. We need to draw it larger every day." With all that is evil and wrong in this world today it would be easy to answer that question with a hundred different events. That's what makes Mother Teresa's response so jilting. She is saying that the problem is not so much with the world as it is with us. We need to see more people as our neighbour than we are currently doing. In Jesus' baptism; He included us in the redemption not only of our souls but also of our stress and anxieties and of troubling events in our world.

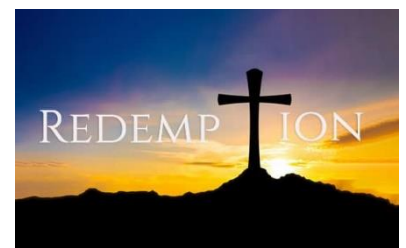
He identified with humanity, with our need to be cleansed, and our need to be made pure. If you are in Christ Jesus, you have been drawn, by Jesus' baptism, into the circle of God's family. You are living for Christ. Imagine the world drawing a bigger circle to include everyone in God's family, what a change that will bring to our world and the catastrophic events we face! There are many worldviews and belief systems that claim to offer a way for us to have true life, to be fulfilled, and to have a world of peace - alas it can happen only in God through His son who became flesh to heal our world through the love he teaches us - that we may grow into his likeness. He only offers the right alternative way for humanity to be set free from the chaos and problems of this world. He only is the real Redeemer of humanity. *Christ is the fulfillment of Scripture's redemptive theme (Romans 3:25).*

The apostle Paul explains that our complete redemption will be experienced in the future. Right now, we have "the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory" as we "wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us" (Romans 8:23, NLT). He will also strip the world of all its difficulties and problems. In the eternal state, we will enjoy every glorious aspect of the spiritual inheritance God has promised to His people.

- Ephesians 1:14: *who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*
- Romans 8:17–18: *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*
- 1 Peter 1:3–5: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Oh, what a Redeemer we have in Jesus! May we always remember and rejoice in the deliverance and freedom He supplies. The world cannot give us what it does not have. May the world family circle be drawn bigger and wider to include all in Jesus. May our prayers for peace really come when we all come into contact and fellowship with the man of Advent wherein is found our individual and global redemption. God richly bless you!

REV JOJO NKIRUMAH! 18/1/24 (QA ABABIO INSPIRED)



IN PRAYER

For God alone, we are still; we wait in silence.
For God alone, we are still; we wait in silence assured of strength and healing. If we put our trust and our hope in other than God, we are setting our hearts on vain hopes and worthless distractions.
Trust therefore in God at all times and rejoice in the knowledge that we can safely reveal our most innermost thoughts within the safety of God's heart.

The words of the psalm describe you, O God, as hope, as salvation, as shelter. We who hear these healing words are invited to put all our confidence in you, to pour out our hearts to you, knowing that you hear.
Hear us now, O God, as we worship and praise you.

Forgive us when we listen to the voices which tell us to put our trust in whatever institution can increase our wealth; in whatever breakfast food can expand our brainpower, in whatever mode of transport can get us anywhere faster, cheaper, more comfortably. Renew our trust in you and help us to use this time to deepen our relationship with you and to re-align our priorities with yours.
Hear us now, O God, as we worship and praise you.

Forgive us when we are reluctant disciples, and renew our desire to follow you - even if, like those first disciples, it means having the direction of our lives completely changed.

Forgive us when we forget that we do not have to do everything in our own power when challenged to take risks of faith.
Holy Spirit, breathe new life into us now, as we can only offer true worship and provide faithful discipleship when we are empowered by you. In Jesus' name, we pray.
Amen



Yes, my soul, find rest in God;

my hope comes from him.

Truly he is my rock and my salvation;

he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

My salvation and my honour depend on God;

he is my mighty rock, my refuge.

Trust in him at all times, you people;

pour out your hearts to him,

for God is our refuge.

Surely the lowborn are but a breath,

the highborn are but a lie.

If weighed on a balance, they are nothing;

together they are only a breath.

Do not trust in extortion

or put vain hope in stolen goods;

though your riches increase,

do not set your heart on them.

One thing God has spoken,

two things I have heard:

"Power belongs to you, God,
and with you, Lord, is unfailing love";

and, "You reward everyone
according to what they have done."

- Psalms 62:5-12

Do you need to contact someone? Have a support need?

Kent Blackmore - 0438 611 795 Rev. Kodjo Nkrumah 0408-250-601

Joyce Lum - 0402 093 618. Bill Laidlaw - 9477 3409

The church office opens on Thursday mornings from 9:00 - 10:30am.