



## **BORONIA PARK UNITING CHURCH**

### **SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE**

#### **Preparing for worship**

Welcome to our online worship service today with the People of Boronia Park Uniting Church! The season of Epiphany is where we, Christians may deepen our true relationship with the Incarnate Christ Jesus the King. We are invited by Alan Keast, one of the worship leaders of Boronia Park UC to explore in this worship that we might find out the meaning of following Jesus who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. All aims belong to Him. All purposes in life have destiny in Him. Thus we today follow Him in faith.

#### **Acknowledgement for the First Peoples**

We would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the land on which we meet; the Wallumettagal people of the Eora Nation. It is upon their ancestral lands that the Boronia Park Uniting Church is built. As we share our own knowledge, teaching, learning and

Christian practice within this congregation may we also pay respect to the knowledge embedded forever within the Aboriginal Custodianship of Country.

### **Call to worship (from Psalm 121)**

I lift up my eyes to the mountains—  
where does my help come from?

**My help comes from the LORD,  
the Maker of heaven and earth.**

He will not let your foot slip—  
he who watches over you will not slumber;  
indeed, he who watches over Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.

**The LORD watches over you—  
The LORD is your shade at your right hand;  
the sun will not harm you by day,  
nor the moon by night.**

The LORD will keep you from all harm—  
he will watch over your life;

**The LORD will watch over your coming and going  
both now and for evermore.**

**Amen.**

### **Opening Prayer**

*Let us pray:*

Dear Loving Father, as we gather together but apart today we thank and praise you for your love and the grace given through the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Dear Heavenly Father, give us, in small doses we can handle,

- The hearing of Samuel who heard you calling in the night and responded;
- The authority of David in responding to the challenges and taunts of the Philistine Goliath;
- The eyesight of Fanny J Crosby, in that while she could not see the delights of this world she could see and write songs to the glory of you, her Father and God;
- The hands of Mother Teresa who tended to the poor and sick and diseased, in your name;
- The feet of Saint Paul who travelled the lands far and wide to share the love of God who had come into his life;
- The faithfulness of Eric Liddell who chose to honour you in the 1924 Olympics and to continue to honour you as a Christian missionary until his death in February 1945;
- The love and respect shared by the women who went very early in the morning to Jesus' tomb; and
- The thankfulness of the one leper, one out of ten, who returned to thank Jesus for his healing.

Father God, we come to worship you in awe of your presence yet thankful for your closeness to each one of us today. Amen.

*This first hymn is a reminder to each of us that God is with us this morning, and morning by morning, wherever we might be, even when we are not worshipping together in our church building.*

### **Hymn: Great Is Thy Faithfulness**

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not  
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be

*Great is Thy faithfulness, great is Thy faithfulness  
Morning by morning new mercies I see  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love  
*Great is Thy faithfulness, great is Thy faithfulness ...*

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside  
*Great is Thy faithfulness, great is Thy faithfulness ...*

Words: Thomas O. Chisholm  
Music: William M. Runyan  
CCLI# 260394

## Bible Readings – Elaine Wallbank

### John 14:1-6

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**

### John 3:1-16

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him. “Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” **“How can someone be born when they are old?”** Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it

is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” **“How can this be?”** Nicodemus asked.

“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*This song is one we used to think was a modern song, “back in the olden days’. It does remind us, as we ponder the Bible readings and look forward into the sermon of how we should respond in our lives and how God responds to us.*

**Song: Seek You First The Kingdom Of God.**

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God  
And His righteousness  
And all these things shall be added unto you  
Allelu, alleluia

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*Allulua, alleluia, alleluia,  
allelu, alleluia.*

Ask and it shall be given unto you  
Seek and ye shall find  
Knock and it shall be opened unto you  
Allelu, alleluia  
*Allulua, alleluia, alleluia ...*

We shall not live by bread alone,  
But by every word  
That proceeds from the mouth of the Lord  
Allelu, alleluia  
*Allulua, alleluia, alleluia ...*

Words and music by permission Maranatha Music  
CCLI# 260394

## **Sermon      Alan Keast**

I want to talk about four things this morning

- A popular saying;
- A short story with a bigger message;
- A section about Kim Phuc's book *Fire Road*; and
- Some bible passages.

People are using the saying, "It is what it is." It seems to come up so regularly now. The French equivalent is "c'est la vie" which sort of means the same thing. *Such is life*. It is mostly used to downplay your disappointment in what is happening.

Once you have God in your life however, it no longer needs to be “*c’est la vie*” or “*it is what it is*”.

Remember that, as we work our way through this message, prepared in love for you by God.

### The 710 Story

- A lady took her Toyota Corolla for a service and as she left, the man told her she needed a simple plug part. He gave her a bit of paper and told her he didn’t have any but she could buy one at any of the motor stores. When she opened the folded sheet she saw written on her bit of paper were the numbers 710.
- She went to the first motor spare parts place but the attendant after searching his computer told her he didn’t have a 710 part for a Corolla, in fact he had never heard of one.
- A man at the second place gave her the same response after checking the computer and motor books for a Toyota Corolla. Suddenly a man who was lying on one of the trolleys looking upside down at them called out. “Hey, turn the paper over. We have them.”
- When she turned her page over she realised she should have been asking for an OIL plug, not a 710 thing.
- You see, she was looking at this thing the wrong way, and there are times when we look at things the wrong way and wonder why nothing is working out for us.

I recently read Kim Phuc’s book *Fire Road*. (pronounced Fook and her name meant “golden happiness”). Some of you may ask who this person



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is but if we put up this photograph by Pulitzer Prize winning photographer Nick Ut, I am sure many of you will suddenly say “ah”. Taken as napalm bombs mistakenly rained down on the villagers in a South Vietnam community it continues the story of this remarkable young girl who is now a woman. (Kim Phuc Phan Thi: Fire Road – the Napalm Girl’s Journey through the horrors of War to Faith, Forgiveness and Peace.)



You see, it doesn't have to be “It is what it is” anymore. Jesus has changed all that for those who love Him and call on His name. It's also important to remember that we may be looking at things upside down or back the front.

Background to Kim's story

- Kim was number 6 child in a family of 9 although one had died early in life. They found it easier to call children by their number rather than by name. Number 1 was the oldest.
- Her family were very religious and worshipped through the Cao Dai (pronounced cow die) faith.
- Mother worked at making foods and became famous for the signature pork and rice pudding. They were, to some extent, a rich family among those in her village in South Vietnam. In her early years they had regular occasions to fear the North Vietnamese army Viet Cong. This was in 1972.
- Ho Chi Min the leader of North Vietnam was intent on “unifying” the whole of the Vietnam while American forces were supporting the independence of the South Vietnamese people and government.

Quickly to her story:

- Planes with Napalm bombs were mistakenly directed by the American and South Vietnamese armies to bomb the areas where Kim and her family were living.
- Kim was burnt all on her back by the force of the bomb. The photographer took Kim to a hospital but the medical staff thought she was dying or dead and moved her to the morgue. Her family found her there three days later.
- Many years passed and Kim underwent multiple operations to assist her as the body grew but the burned skin did not.

- In her teenage years she encountered several Christian people and teachers and began questioning her original faith. She could not believe that to become a follower of this Jesus Christ one only had to accept Him. (Romans 10:9 states that “if you confess with your mouth ‘Jesus is Lord’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved”.)
- To some extent this is when I first thought of REJECTING the saying “it is what it is”. For young Kim, she challenged this saying totally when she rejected her Cao Dai faith and accepted Jesus as her Lord and Saviour
- She kept asking about all the “works” she had to do in her previous faith and was confronted by the message from Ephesians 2:8 – “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”
- She was also challenged by the concept that this man Jesus was the only way to Heaven, not the many ways she had been taught her whole life. In John 14:6 Jesus says, “I am the WAY, the truth and the life.”

Her story is quite remarkable and a story of her journey through the horrors of war to faith, forgiveness and peace. A couple of further points that remind us of the story of the 710 plug, that maybe Kim (AND YOU AND ME???) sometimes look at things the wrong way up.

As a child Kim and her friends always dreamed about growing up and getting married. After her recovery from the burns she wondered “who would ever love me? Who would ever want to marry me?”

- Along came a guy Toan who wanted to marry her. You see God looked at Kim and her predicament differently.

Since before her fateful day with the bomb, the South Vietnamese people had been terrorised by the North Vietcong and Ho Chi Min. (Perhaps any viewers from South Korea might have some idea of the issues and emotions associated with North and South Vietnam and North and South Korea.)

- Of all things, her beloved Toan was from North Vietnam. What a conflict of emotions for God to deal with.

Kim's mother and family disowned her totally when she left their faith for the Christian faith.

- In time her mother, father and family all came to know the forgiving love and saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Doctors told Kim that because she was so badly burned throughout her whole body, there was no way she would EVER be able to have children.

- Kim and Toan are the proud parents to two fine young boys, now men and seeking to follow in missionary service.

Finally, Kim always thought she wanted to become a doctor to heal suffering and bring peace to the lives of burnt victims.

- Instead as she gained peace through her Lord Jesus Christ, God has used her to bring peace to others through being an ambassador for Peace with the UNESCO. Here she speaks with Kings, Queens, prime ministers and millions of “ordinary people” of the peace that Jesus can bring into their lives. Jesus says in John 14:27 “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

## BIBLE REFERENCES

If we look briefly at the Bible passages, there are numerous examples of places when someone may have said “it is what it is” or looked at the paper with 710 written and didn’t look to see if it said anything else. I won’t go through them all but let’s look at just a couple.

Maybe, and it doesn’t say it in the Bible, but just maybe, as King Saul sat in his tent listening to his soldiers tell him about this giant of a man called Goliath, maybe, just maybe, he said “it is what it is”. He didn’t think that maybe God had other plans for His people.



In John 3 – Nicodemus was questioning how one gets born again. Nicodemus was a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews. Perhaps he just looked at the answer from Jesus as a piece of paper with 710 written on it. Twice he asks Jesus “How can...?” and twice Jesus tells him in love that he is looking at the issues the wrong way.

In John 14 – The classical Thomas reminds Jesus they don’t know WHERE he was going so how could they be expected to know the way. I can identify with Thomas as I like to know what the plans are and what is happening today and in the coming days and weeks. (Seungjae might laugh as he has seen my planner in my diary.)

Our dearest Old Testament character Moses is constantly guilty of trying to second guess God, to work it out in his own way and so to limit the power and direction of God. Fortunately, God is bigger than Moses and is not restricted by the operating systems Moses uses.

## CONCLUSION

So as we move into a new year let us move with confidence in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, trusting Him for the things we can and cannot understand and having the confidence we can gain through his saving grace.

The last song is great reminders of God's saving grace, called *God will make a way*.

## **Prayers of the People      Robyn Harvey**

Let us reflect on Jesus' statement, "I am the way, truth, life". Jesus made this statement during the last meal he shared with his disciples before he died. During this time with his disciples, Jesus asked them to let him wash their feet. This was a shock to the disciples and completely counter-cultural: a leader getting down to the level of his followers and serving them in the most humbling way.

Lord Jesus we ask that you give us the vulnerability and intimacy in both giving and receiving service. We pray that when you encounter the most vulnerable and perhaps shameful parts of us you will be able to tenderly

love and honour us. Jesus, your way of power is to serve in unglamorous, personal ways. What a contradiction to the image of power that our dominant culture promotes: rising above, serving ones own interests. In the context of this example, Jesus, you tell us “I am the way, the truth, and the life”. This is the example from Jesus this is the way that you want us to follow. It is truth and goodness. It is true, abundant life. As we walk the way of Jesus, we are challenged to not only accept his deep love for us, but also to reflect this love in lifting up and honouring the ones who are usually forgotten.

Help us to hold onto the truth that you are the only way to have a relationship with God as our Father. Lord Jesus you are the way that leads to the Father. Help us to believe that we are truly your child, completely loved and accepted by you the moment we rusted in Jesus. Fill our hearts with joy and celebration because Jesus’ life is inside us.

Show us the best ways to be your example to others who may not know you as we do. Show your way to those who are seeking a life of meaning and integrity, but who have not yet looked to you. Show your way to us here that we in this church may know the next steps in our pilgrimage of faith together.

In our local Circle of Prayer, we pray for the Rev Michael Armstrong, Rector of Hunters Hill Anglican Church and St Mark’s Church. We pray for Michael and his people that they are all well and keeping their faith alive in these challenging times.



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Today in our World Circle of Prayer we pray for the people of North Africa – for people in Tunisia, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. We pray for all the people of these countries: Muslims, the tiny remnant of Christians, those of other faiths who continuing bearing witness to their faiths and for all people of good will.

We pray for an end to political violence, for an end to how dominating powers have fought over these lands and their resources through the years and for those suffering exploitation and mistreatment as they travel through these countries.

I will close with a prayer attributed to St Augustine of Hippo, titled “Prayer on the Road of Life” that was chosen by the World Council of Churches for today.

*God of life, there are days  
when the burdens we carry are heavy on our shoulders and weigh us down,  
when the road seems dreary and endless, the skies grey and threatening,  
when our lives have no music in them,  
our hearts lonely,  
our souls losing their courage.*

*Flood the path with light.  
Turn our eyes to where the skies are full of promise;  
tune our hearts to brave music;  
give us the sense of comradeship with heroes and saints of every age.*

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*So quicken our spirits  
that we may be able to encourage the souls of all,  
who journey with us on the road of life,  
to your honour and glory.*

Attributed to Augustine of Hippo

We ask these prayers knowing that God is always listening and will answer them in his own way.

AMEN.

## **Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and forever.

Amen.

## Offering

The offering will be used for the congregation's continuing mission and ministry including young people and youth ministry in these changing times. Please make your offering through a Bank Deposit or a personal cheque whichever is convenient to you.

**Account Name: Boronia Park Uniting Church**

**BSB: 634-634**

**Account: 100023784**

**Reference: Offering**

Please contact Robyn Harvey, Treasurer on 0418 783 290 or [robyn.49@bigpond.net.au](mailto:robyn.49@bigpond.net.au) for more information about how to make Direct Debit.

## Song: God Will Make A Way (Don Moen)

*This song came to me as a result of the direction of the message you have just heard. It reminded me immediately it came into my head that life doesn't have to be "what it is" and that the 710 plug might really be something else, depending which way you look at things. This song is a testimony to Kim's life as she wrote in her book Fire Road.*

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God will make a way  
Where there seems to be no way  
He works in ways we cannot see  
He will make a way for me

He will be my guide  
Hold me closely to his side  
With love & strength for each new day  
He will make a way  
He will make a way

By a roadway in the wilderness  
He'll lead me  
Rivers in the desert  
Will I see  
Heaven & earth will fade  
But his word will still remain  
And He will do something new today

### **Thanksgiving Prayer and Benediction.**

Let us embrace the work and wonder of this day  
with fresh commitment.

May we go forward together  
in the power of the love of God  
in the company of Jesus Christ  
and by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**