

A Service to mark the conclusion of the
ministry of
Pr. Andrew Shearer-Cox
as Chaplain Co-ordinator

A companion on the journey.....



..... when you're far from home.

3pm. 22nd February, 2026
Ballarat Central Uniting Church

**AS A GATHERED COMMUNITY WE COME TO
WORSHIP GOD— Luke 24: 13-24**

Hymn – ‘When You Are Far From Home’ Tune: Slane 2 (TiS 613)

Do not be troubled do not be upset;

Put trust in the Father and in His Son rest.

God’s home bids us welcome wherever we roam,

God’s Spirit your companion “when you are far from home.”

Welcome and Acknowledgement (Graeme)

From river to ocean, from campfire to hearth, may the First People who have cared for this Land be blessed.

From breath to song, from step to dance, may those who follow your Songlines* [ancient stories] guide us on the journey of living honourably in this place.

From greeting to Amen, from silence to chorus, may our worship join with the voices of the First Peoples of this Land.

Welcome to all who are gathered in our congregation here this afternoon, to visitors and representatives from congregations and chaplaincy partners as well as to our connected community on line. Welcome also to the many others who will choose to watch this service in the days and weeks to come. I invite you to greet each other in the name of Christ.

Call To Worship (Graeme)

We begin this season of Lent with mixed emotions and thoughts. Change is constant.

We are tempted to turn from trust in God.

What does the future hold for us, for the Chaplaincy ministry?

But, we come with eyes open, ready to face the snares and pitfalls that threaten to capture us away from our trust in God.

As we think and reflect, as we grieve that Andrew is moving on from this ministry after 13 years, as we give thanks, Jesus has come alongside us to walk with us, speak his words into our spirits and call us to continue to follow in his steps of love and care.

Hymn—(continued)

God walks beside you. You are never alone.
For Jesus is with you – He calls you His own,
This Jesus – God’s way and His truth and His life,
When you are far from home. He’s God’s light in your strife.

When in a far place or when not in control,
In subjection to others, when downcast in soul.
Remember God’s blessing: you’re never alone
God stays your companion even though far from home.

Tried, tested, tired and cannot carry on?
Then take God as your refuge, your strength and your song
God sends you companions to walk by your side,
To comfort, and encourage you in your time far from home.'

Sure in God’s promise to keep us and bless.
With His face turned towards us, we’re loved by His grace.
Secure in the gift of God’s comforting peace,
Though yet still far from home will our praises increase.

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Prayers of Adoration and Confession (Margaret Bennett)

Lord God, we gather as a community of faith within the Presbytery of Western Victoria, sharing, working and playing together, supporting one another in furthering Your mission in today's world.

All: As the Chaplaincy ministry continues to evolve and change, we are very glad that you are with us.

We are conscious of the depth of your love and grace upholding us.

All: Your word is more precious than gold, your ways always right.

You have gathered us from all places, from all walks of life and given us grace by means of Jesus Christ.

All: Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us, may we keep the good things that You have entrusted to us in order that we may bring Your life and energy not only to Your Church, but also to the community in which we live, move and have our being. In the name of Christ. Amen.

Our responsive prayer of confession is from the Psalm set for today: Ps 32.

Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

Blessed are we whose sin the LORD does not count against us and in whose spirit is no deceit.

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.

And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found;

Surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach us.

You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble

And surround me with songs of deliverance

Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous;

Sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Declaration of Forgiveness

God was in Christ reconciling all broken things to himself, not counting our sins against us. He has entrusted this same message of reconciliation to us.

All: Now we can walk according to the Spirit who bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children.

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us: Your sins are forgiven.

All: We are forgiven. Thanks be to God.

Doxology Hymn – TiS 717 Give thanks

Give thanks with a grateful heart

Give thanks to the Holy One,

Give thanks because He’s given Jesus Christ His Son. (repeat)

And now, let the weak say I am strong,

Let the poor say I am rich

Because of what the Lord has done for us. (repeat)

Give thanks. Give thanks. Give thanks.

WE HEAR AND REFLECT ON GOD'S WORD FOR TODAY— Luke 24:25-27

Your word is a lamp to our feet

A light to our path

Readings: 2 Corinthians 1: 3-11 (Laurenne Robertson)

'3Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, '4who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. 6If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

'8We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. 9Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

Luke 24: 13-35 (Les George)

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked.

About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus." He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

May your word live in us

And bear much fruit to your glory.

Music Reflection - A Companion on the Journey (sung by Barb Snibson)

When far from home in deepest grief, without the loves she's known;
Through death of husband and two sons, Naomi was alone.
Lamenting what the future holds the words of Ruth came clear
to overcome her emptiness, these words came to her as a brand new song:
Where-e'er you go I'll journey with you.
Where-e'er you stay I will stay.

*Where ever you die I will die there with you,
And your people and God will be mine there too.
Companions journ'ying far from home
With God walking with us we're never alone.*

When far from home on Sunday morn, two men walked home alone.
Confounding and confusing thoughts, events and things unknown.
Redemption's hope had been denied, the longed for future now was lost.
But, speaking to their emptiness, These words came to them as a brand new
song: *Where-e'er you go I'll journey with you....*

When far from home long years ago, our families journeyed alone.
To seek new land, new life, new hope, a future yet unknown.
Some found their wealth and made their mark, but others lost their land their
hope.
Yet, calling from their emptiness These words could be heard as a brand new
song: *Where-e'er you go I'll journey with you....*

Still, far from home you call to us to care for others alone.
To be companions on the road; to care as Jesus has shown.
To help the weak, support the frail, to journey with the sick and aged.
To offer in their emptiness
Some words that would come as a brand new song:

ALL *Where-e'er you go I'll journey with you.*

Where-e'er you stay I will stay.

Where ever you die I will die there with you,

And your people and God will be mine there too.

Companions journ'ying far from home

With God walking with us we're never alone

© Graeme R Sutton – September, 2023

Address: Pr. Andrew Shearer Cox—*Where is God? Where is home?*

Song: 10,000 Reasons

Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul

Worship His holy name

Sing like never before, O my soul

I'll worship Your holy name

The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning

It's time to sing Your song again

Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me

Let me be singing when the evening comes

Bless the Lord, ...

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger

Your name is great and Your heart is kind

For all Your goodness, I will keep on singing

Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

Bless the Lord, (Repeat)

And on that day when my strength is failing

The end draws near and my time has come

Still, my soul will sing Your praise unending

Ten thousand years and then forevermore

Bless the Lord

Jonas Myrin / Matthew James Redman

WE RESPOND TO THE WORD IN ACTION

WORD AND SONG— Luke 24:28-32

Prayers of the People (Tune: Amazing Grace) (Graeme)

We offer our prayers for others in word and song:

All: **We're on a journey – here to pray, Companions, all in need;**

Lord, journey with us, through each day give help through word and deed.

(S (Sylvia Wallace)

Lord God, you have called us to be a people who are companions on the journey. Jesus, you said "I am the bread of heaven." We pray for all gathered here today that we may continue to offer what we have that You may provide for all our needs out of Your riches in glory through Christ Jesus. We pray that you will equip us all with strength, creativity and insight as we journey alongside others, whether that be only for a brief moment, or for deeper and meaningful care and for those whose journey has brought them far from home.

**We're on a journey – here to pray for those in need of care,
and those who serve them every day to ease the pain they bear.**

(Manesty Brown)

Lord God, in hospital, all outward appearance is stripped away and we are neither Jew nor Gentile, rich or poor, worker or entrepreneur. We pray for our hospitals, doctors and nurses, the ancillary staff, the paramedics who come along side us in all our vulnerability with their gifts of healings and administrative care; who give us the will, the courage and restore our physical health that we may return with strength and well-being to the responsibilities, joys and challenges of our everyday life.

**We're on a journey – here to pray for those whose paths we cross;
For stories heard, rich, new each day that speak of fear or loss.**

(Jim deJong)

Father God, we pray for the frail and aged in our community, mindful of their increasing vulnerability and powerlessness as society and its systems change around them; conscious of their loss of independence, of the fear and loneliness that sometimes grips them. We give you thanks for the staff working in the various Aged Care facilities across the region; the many people who have trained as volunteers who visit, ring, drive, care for and support those who need companionship and a friendly face. May we treasure those with whom we have even fleeting contact as we would treasure old books in a library for the richness of the stories their lives give to ours. We pray your peace and comfort on those who are undergoing medical tests, those who are awaiting further treatment, and those for whom there is no known cure. Lay your hand of peace and blessing on all.

**We're on a journey – here to pray fed with Christ's wine and bread
we lead with hymns, through words we say, and Scriptures that are read.**

(Geoff LeMarshall)

Blessed are you, Lord God, Sovereign of all that is, who creates the fruit of the vine, the wine that makes glad our human hearts. We pray for those who lead worship in hospitals and aged care facilities – may they be channels of your peace, beacons of your hope.

**We're on a journey – here to pray; no matter where we roam
God offers hope, so when we stray we're never far from home**

(Joy Moreton)

We ask your blessing on the Uniting Church in Australia: National President

Carisa; Moderator Salesi; Chairperson Rosemary; the Chaplaincy Committee and volunteers; ministers, leaders and congregations of our Presbytery. Experiences now force us as a church to think differently and act courageously. We pray for the Chaplaincy ministry of the Presbytery and for Andrew as he moves to a new placement. Inspire us together now as we seek to re-frame how chaplaincy might be going forward, so that all our endeavours may carry us forward into a future which calls for the risk of practical faith.

**With all who in our journey share; companions on the way;
Though far from home, God's home's in view God hears, and answers
prayer:**

**Father in heaven, holy your name, your kingdom come we pray;
Your will be done, on earth as heaven, this is our prayer today.**

**Give us today our daily bread; our sin, forgive us, Lord,
As we forgive another's sin, we live in one accord.**

**Lord, save us from the testing time; from evil - set us free.
For yours is kingdom, glory, power; now through eternity.**

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Service of Release; Presbytery Chairperson: Rev. Rosemary Carter

Andrew, you were called to and commenced your leadership and pastoral role of Chaplain Co-ordinator in July 2012, became full time in May 2013 and in November 2013 you were commissioned as a Pastor to this ministry of the Presbytery. Since that time, you have been blessed by sharing in the joys and pain associated with growth and changes as this ministry continued to evolve. Now after 13 years of rich and fruitful ministry we have come to that time when your relationship with the Chaplaincy ministry formally ends.

The Chairperson addresses the Congregation:

We have gathered here this afternoon to express gratitude to God for Andrew's life and work in the Presbytery as Chaplain Co-ordinator, to recognise the alteration of our relationship, both corporately and individually, and release him for a new ministry in the Congregations of Ballarat South and Creswick-Clunes.

There are diverse gifts

but it is the same Spirit who gives them.

There are different ways of serving God:

But it is the same Lord who is served.

God works through people in different ways:

But it is the same God whose purpose is achieved through them all.

Each one of us is given a gift by the Spirit:

And there is no gift without its corresponding service.

There is one ministry of Christ -

and in this ministry we all share.

Together we are the body of Christ:

And individually members of it.

Prayer of Separation:

Chair: In gratitude and to God and trust in him who calls us to be his people,

Let us pray:

Lord, you have called Andrew to serve you as Chaplain Co-ordinator in the Presbytery of Western Victoria.

We recognise that just as he has been your gift to us, so now he goes as your gift to your people of the congregations of Ballarat South and Creswick-Clunes. We pray for each other now, as our once parallel roads of pilgrimage diverge.

We thank you God for all that we have done, learned and shared together.

We pray for Andrew as, supported by Aileen, Emily and Angus, he explores and put into action the call of the Church through the Synod that takes him from here.

May he grow in your grace and in the knowledge of your love, so that he may be a blessing to others.

We pray for the Congregations of Ballarat South and Creswick-Clunes to which Andrew goes, that they will value him, learn from him and encourage him.

We pray for ourselves as we stay, that you will keep us faithful to the vision that we have shared and that you will show us what we should do and how we should be, when Andrew is no longer with us.

As we part, we re-affirm that it has been your Spirit who has brought us together, and your Spirit who has enlivened our fellowship.

It is your Spirit who goes with Andrew, and his family, and your Spirit who stays with us; your Spirit who keeps us all together in the world-wide family of your Church. Amen

The Congregation stands as the representatives of the Congregation lay hands on Andrew as he is sent forth to his new call.

Chair: Andrew, in gratitude and thanks to God and trust in him who calls us to be his people, we send you forth to your new life

All: **The Lord is with you,**

Andrew: And also with you.

FORGIVEN AND RESTORED—WE CAN RETURN CONFIDENTLY TO THE WORLD—Luke 24: 33-35

Hymn – ‘God Who Sets Us on a Journey’ (Tune TiS 217[1] “Hyfrodol”)

**God who sets us on a journey to discover, dream and grow,
lead us as you led your people in the desert long ago;
journey inward, journey outward, stir the spirit, stretch the mind,
love for God and self and neighbour marks the way that Christ defined.**

**Exploration brings new insights, changes, choices we must face;
give us wisdom in deciding, mindful always of your grace;
should we stumble, lose our bearings, find it hard to know what’s right,
we regain our true direction focused on the Jesus light.**

**End our longing for the old days, grant the vision that we lack –
once we’ve started on this journey there can be no turning back;
let us travel light, discarding excess baggage from our past,
cherish only what’s essential, choosing treasure that will last.**

**When we set up camp and settle to avoid love’s risk and pain,
you disturb complacent comfort, pull the tent pegs up again;
keep us travelling in the knowledge you are always at our side;
give us courage for the journey, Christ our goal and Christ our guide.**

Words: Joy Dine (1937 – 2001) © Revd Mervyn Dine – Methodist Church of New Zealand

Blessing (Andrew)

The Lord be with you

And also with you

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face toward you – and give you peace.

Go now to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.