

# Toorak Uniting Church

## Update 23 October 2016

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Phone: 9829 0300  
Sunday services 9am & 10.15am

### *Still Thinking – The Foundation of Prayer - Christopher Page*



Prayer is something most Christians, indeed most religious people, recognize as vital to the spiritual life, yet it is something that many find difficult and perplexing. Discussions on prayer often raise more questions than they give answers. Some will ask “What is prayer and how does it work?” For others it is a question of, to whom or what am I praying? And perhaps the most frequently asked question is, “Why didn’t God answer my prayer?” So here is my attempt to engage in this discussion.

First, prayer is about a relationship. In fact, it is primarily about the connection between my deep desires and longings and the source from which those desires and longings come. That takes prayer out of the superficialities of life and places it at the heart of living and being. In a light way this is captured in the saying, “there are no atheists in foxholes,” the sentiment being that at our limits we desire only that which is deep, true, real and significant.

Secondly, Christians have traditionally called that source of life and being GOD. And we have named God in many ways; Father, Creator, the Almighty, Yahweh, the Alpha and the Omega, the Holy One, the sacred and the divine just to name a few. But it is important to remember that God is not limited by a name. Anything that definitively names God is not God. The 5<sup>th</sup> century theologian Augustine of Hippo said, “If you think you have found God then that proves you haven’t!” And the 13<sup>th</sup> century mystic Meister Eckhart suggested that to “image” God is to lose God and embrace the image. This may sound complicated to those who just want a simple understanding of prayer, but it is essential to recognize that prayer belongs in the “mystical” dimension of life and not in the “explanational” realm. It would be simpler if prayer was asking God for something and then waiting for the answer, yes or no. But experience tells us that that is not possible. While the simple trusting prayers of children are engaging and beautiful they can never satisfy the struggles of adult faith and life.

Thirdly, prayer is not restricted to a form, content, place or a context. While we do have times when we pray, prayer is in fact a way of being in the world. Day by day, moment by moment. Our set times of prayer are helpful reminders of that truth, they are not a substitute for it. Prayer needs a reflective life for it to grow and for us to deepen our relationship with God. It needs what I call several “postures.”

1. A willingness to let go of my ego/wants/desires. Even to let go of my prayer and the desire for simple answers.

2. A longing for a relationship with the author of life and love.
3. An openness to all of life. Prayer is the act of living in relationship with God. So openness to creation/nature/others is essential to a prayerful life.
4. A curiosity about the ways of God and my own deepest desires. Prayer emerges from the depths of my being so I need some understanding of my own inner life.

But most importantly, there are not right or wrong prayers. Neither are some people's prayers better than others. There is only one criterion for prayer and that is the willingness to go deeper and a longing for a connection and relationship with the source of life and being, our loving God.

### **Courtyard Rejuvenation**

The Gardening Committee is continuing with the planned rejuvenation of the courtyard as an area that is inviting and comfortable to use for coffee after Sunday Worship and for gatherings throughout the week. Now the weather is finally warming up the Committee seeks donations to enable the acquisition of suitable furniture and plants to complement the new landscaping. The Gardening Committee will be most grateful for your support to create this special outdoor space for the enjoyment of our TUC community. Donations may be forwarded to Pamela Wilson, Nina Mumford/Jon Sennitt or the TUC Office. With our Thanks.

**Fellowship Morning Coffee** Monday 31 Oct. at 10.30am, in the Faichney Room.  
Discussion: "Childhood Holidays"

**Toorak Ecumenical Op-Shop now at 1a Carters Avenue, Toorak. Ph. 9827 3172.**

### What's On at Kinross Arts Centre

***Birds of the Air - Portraits in Feathers*** by Julie Edgar  
Until 28 October. Featuring wood block prints, drawings, bronze and stone sculptures inspired by Australian birdlife.

***Birdsong*** - Performance by Jacqui Rutten and Livia Judge  
Sun 23 Oct, 2pm - 3pm. \$20 Adults; \$15 Concession; Children Free.

**Advent House Opening:** Friday 2 December, 2.30pm - 4.30pm.

Celebrate Advent with an art and garden tour, gourmet afternoon tea and time to mingle with friends and guests at this special event.

\$50 per ticket. All funds assist 2017 outreach and creative programs at Kinross.



**CHURCH BREAKFAST** in Kinross House. Tuesday 25 October 2016 at 8:00am. DANIEL McOWAN, OAM will speak on “POPULARISM AND ITS PLACE IN THE ARTS”. Daniel is an accomplished curator and gallery director, who has had a wide influence on arts development, especially in regional Victoria. From 1988-2015 he was Director of the Hamilton Art Gallery which has a collection worth \$20 million with 8,000 objects. He was awarded an OAM for service to the visual arts through administrative roles. This is our final Breakfast for 2016. We look forward to welcoming our regular supporters and others interested in the arts. Please book early through the TUC Office. \$20 donation



  
KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
STUDY  
FOR EXAMS

**Our thoughts and prayers** are with all the VCE students commencing their examinations—in particular our own Alec Barber, Alexandra Legge and Jemima Sennitt.

We welcome Rev Peter Beale who will lead our service this morning. Christopher is leading a Melbourne University of Divinity students' Retreat in the Yarra Valley.



13 November, 10.15am

Whole Church Family **Grandparents / kids service** and special morning tea.

Please bring a small plate of sweet treats to share.

Tell your friends, everyone's welcome!

### **Welcome to Toorak Uniting Church**

We welcome all people irrespective of race, religion, political views, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, or age. Wherever you are on your faith journey, wherever you have come from and wherever you are going to; whatever you believe, whatever you do not believe, you are welcome here at Toorak Uniting Church.

Please come and join us after the service for fellowship and a cup of tea or coffee.

## Diary Dates

Sun	23 Oct	2.00pm	Birdsong concert	Kinross
Tue	25 Oct	8.00am	Breakfast with Daniel McOwan OAM	Kinross
Wed	26 Oct	6-8pm	Handbells	Wettenhall Room
Thu	27 Oct	10.00am	Prayers for Christian Unity	Swedish Church
Sun	30 Oct	10.15am	Baptism of Harry Packham	Church
Mon	31 Oct	10.30am	Fellowship Morning Coffee	Faichney Room
Tue	01 Nov		Melbourne Cup Public Holiday – Office closed	
Wed	02 Nov	6-8pm	Handbells	Wettenhall Room
Sun	13 Nov	10.15am	Grandparents/kids whole church family service	
Sat	26 Nov	10-12.30	TBC. Possible retreat “Seeing Advent with new eyes”	
Sun	27 Nov	9 & 10.15	Advent 1	Church
Fri	02 Dec	2.30-4.30	Kinross Advent House Opening	Beggs home
Sun	04 Dec	9 & 10.15	Advent 2	Church
Sun	11 Dec	9 & 10.15	Advent 3 & Communion (date change)	Church
Sun	18 Dec	9 & 10.15	Lessons and Carols service	Church
Sat	24 Dec	6.00pm	Family Carols in the Courtyard	Courtyard
Sat	24 Dec	8.00pm	Australian Christmas Carols Service	Church
Sun	25 Dec	10.00am	Christmas Day Service	Church

## Toorak Uniting Church: Hospitality Weekend

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October, saw 46 members of the Toorak congregation enjoying hospitality and fellowship with fellow members.

Last held 10 years ago, the idea of Hospitality Weekend was that people were warmly invited to partake in a mystery pairing of hosts and guests at various simple meals in private homes during the above weekend. It was envisaged to be a time for companionship and getting to know the members of our congregation.

From breakfast on the Saturday morning through morning tea, lunch, dinner, Sunday lunch and afternoon tea, members had a range of meals they could select to enjoy.

Hosts could choose the number of guests they would like to entertain. The organisers matched up the guests to hosts, doing their best to cover all preferences. Then the hosts contacted each guest to confirm the time of starting and to consult regarding food allergy issues.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with many comments from members, just appreciating the time to sit and talk, to share and getting to know fellow Church members. Consensus also shows that such fellowship could gainfully be a feature on the Church calendar.

A very big thank you to the generous hosts who made everyone welcome: Fiona and Ian Thomas, Helen and Vicki Clayton, Kerrie Cross, Carrlo, Malcolm and Edwina Jack, Margaret and Ted Billson and to Jean and Norie MacLeod for offering; and to the lovely guests who arrived: open to new conversations, chat and much laughter. But a special thank you and much appreciation to Jenny Stewardson who remembered the enjoyment from 10 years ago and had the initiative and foresight to bring the idea together in 2016.