

> Worship News

Service of Solidarity

On **Sunday 24th November** we offered a special service of solidarity with our LGBTIQ members. In welcoming us to worship and introducing the service Ian Ferguson said *'Welcome to this special service of solidarity with our LGBTIQ members, which in a way is not all that special. That's because every time we worship here in this church we affirm that all people are made in the image of God, are children of God, that all sexualities and gender expressions are part of God's good creation, that all are loved, welcomed and included as part of Christ's family, we are the one body of Christ in our diversity. That is always true. Today we just highlight it and celebrate it. And as part of that celebration, some of our LGBTIQ identifying members will lead us in different ways.'*



In celebrating our unity in diversity today we acknowledge, confess and lament that the church of Jesus Christ has not always been a place of safety and belonging for all God's beloved children. And so we want to recommit today to doing the work to ensure that this congregation of the church is a safe and loving place for you to be yourself.

We'll be hearing a number of different readings from the bible today. As we know, particular verses from the bible, taken out of their literary and historical context, are regularly used to marginalise people according to their sexuality or gender expression. Today we are not going near those verses. Rather we will hear readings that emphasise some of the overarching themes of scripture, like: the divine love in creation through which we are all equal and beloved in God's sight; justice and a central place for the marginalised; anti-legalism and the priority of grace and love in faith. All the good stuff, all the "yesses" and none of the "noes". And to begin at the beginning, let's hear that ancient affirmation of humanity's relationship with its creator.



We listened as Lucy Hardman read from the Bible to introduce each part of the liturgy and Ian responded with words that illuminated the reading for us. We were offered a song, a story, a poem, a reflection and a prayer of lament by LGBTQI identifying members in response. [Read the liturgy here.](#)



Melvin Tan shared his story of coming out and his love of music. He sang 'Sail into tomorrow', a song which has a great deal of meaning for him. Listen to his [story and song here](#). Read the words of the song in [this powerpoint presentation](#).



Caitlin and Rachel shared the joyful story of their wedding ([listen here](#)) together with a presentation of photos from the celebration ([view here](#)).





Tim Hoffmann offered a poem 'On the Edge'. [Listen here.](#)



Anthony Hinds shared his story of the suffering he experienced through gay conversion therapy. Read the story '[I am well but I am scared](#)' on Anthony's blog - [particularity.blog](#).



Clare Keogh joined Ian to lead us in a Prayer of Lament and Confession which we concluded by praying 'The Lord's Prayer'. In offering the Declaration of Forgiveness Ian sprinkled water over the congregation representing the tears of Christ.



Geoff Thompson offered Prayers of the People inviting us to pray in silence as he prayed. He concluded '*Above all we pray that our churches may be gospel communities living out the reconciling love of God, the acceptance of Christ, and a new order of righteousness and love where fear of difference is banished, where life is lived to its full, and where all can flourish as children of God. In the name of Christ, the saviour in whom all are reconciled. Amen*'



Lucy and Ian blessed and sent us on our way with these words:

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.
1 John 4:7-8

Children of God, go in peace to love as you have been loved by God in Christ Jesus. Go to love God and your neighbour, knowing yourself beloved by the one who made all things good.

And go with the blessing of God:
the Source of Life,
the Word of Love,
and the Spirit of Peace.

In the name of Christ. Amen.



Saide Cameron