

Easter 4A 3.5.2020 Order of Service

Prelude

Community (Dave Brown)

Opening verse on screen

... he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. *John 10:4*

Gathering and Call to Worship

Amelia

Good morning and welcome to our time of worship this morning.

As I light the Christ Candle, I invite you to light your candles at home and remember Jesus the shepherd, whose voice is known to us.

And also to remember the distant voices of those in our communities, as we look forward to meeting together again when this time has passed.

Light candle

Christ is Risen!

He is risen indeed!

Let's sing together.

Song

Shepherd of the night (Elaine Loukes)

1. Have you ever felt the velvet night wrap you in her warmth?
Have you known the soothing darkness lull you into calm?
Have you shared the night stars' company burning friendly light?
In the dim light God is present
Shepherd of the night

2. Have you felt strong arms embrace you when you were alone?
Has a sense of peace grown in you 'til it overflows?
Have your tears brought with them healing like a gentle rain?
In the moments of our solitude
God is doctor for our pain

*Just like a gentle breeze you come, spirit God our constant friend
Just like a song you fill our hearts
Just as a flame you light the way lamp of life our brightest friend
Just like a guide you bring us home
Hold me close like a mother with her young
Wrap me 'round with your embracing love*

*In the dim light God is present
Shepherd of the night*

SONG: [Shepherd of the Night](#), by Elaine Loukes, © 2006,
from [Tune In](#), BUC Songbook, Reproduced with permission

Acknowledgement of Country

Julie

Offered from the banks of the Merri Creek (wording adapted)
We acknowledge and respect the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation,
the traditional custodians of this land since time immemorial.
We are learning that the land is not ours to own, but to look after;
and that if we listen, we may hear in it the calling of the eternal Spirit.

**Responding to this call, we commit ourselves
to work for justice, reconciliation, and care of the earth.**

Welcome and Introduction

Amelia

Thank you Julie, it is lovely to hear from you on the banks of the Merri Creek.

Welcome to worship today, all of you who are known to this place and those that are joining us since we have been unable to meet in person. It is good that we are able to share this time together even while we are scattered far apart.

My name is Amelia, I worked on the liturgy this week with our ministers, Valentina and Dave, with wonderful contributions from many others. Thank you to everyone who has helped to make and compile our service, it is a big job made much easier by all the help that is offered.

This morning we will hear about Jesus being the shepherd and the gate, come to give us life, and Valentina will lead us in remembering the people in our communities and all those that we meet at the communion table, even though we can not meet today.

I encourage you to continue our tradition of sharing morning tea after the service by calling a friend or member of your community for a chat.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession & Declaration of Forgiveness

Amelia

Let us pray.

God, Loving Creator,
We reflect on what it means to be part of your community,
attempting to grow together in the direction of your love.
Your process is one of continual evolution,
Forgive us for any unrealistic expectations we have for others and for ourselves,
encourage us to persist and learn from our experiences,
in the hope that what we reflect will gradually move closer to your example.

Jesus, living Word,
Through you we understand God's empathy and love for us.
In this comforting knowledge, we are free to follow your call to love one another.
Forgive us from the times that, through fear or distraction,
we have not seen or listened to others with the intention of understanding.
Remind us of your example of vulnerability and selflessness
as we endeavour to nurture our love for others.

Holy Spirit, centre of our being,
Your presence calms us as the world turns,
and we are not sure where our place is to be found.
Forgive us for not giving thought to our communities and the wider world
as we allow ourselves to be swept away by our own circumstances.
Let us seek you in our despair and be guided towards good and peaceful outcomes.

Amen

As we continue onwards, day by day endeavouring to find our way as people of God, believe the Good News that comes from God: In Christ we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God

Clare will now share with us a reading from the Gospel.

Gospel Reading - John 10:1-10

Claire

Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit.

The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers."

Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

For these words of witness and for Christ the word

Thanks be to God

With the Children

Dave

Dave and Clara discuss Jesus the shepherd and what it means to be a gate.

Followed by **to a Palestinian shepherd**

John 10:11

In ancient Israel there was a practice where shepherds would lie down across the opening to the sheep enclosure at night, guarding the entrance against wolves.

Shepherd you lie prone,
wrapped in old clothing,
stretched across the opening
between sheep shelter and darkness.

I could have taken you for a beggar
Not the gate to the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is not glamorous
to lie down in the dirt
and be a door.
People might mistake you for a doormat
or deliberately walk over you.

And to think I could have completely missed you
because I was looking for a gate
neatly sprung to close back on itself.
Solid, respectable
like a church entrance.

Shepherd you lie prone,
wrapped in old clothing,

stretched across the opening
between sheep shelter and darkness.

I could have taken you for a beggar
Not the gate to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Julie Perrin (2005)

Song

Lead me on (Paul Gioia)

Though I walk through the valley
Of the shadow of death
I will fear no evil
While I feel your breath
Though I may stumble
And fall in disgrace
Shine your light and lead me on

Chorus (echoes in brackets)

(Lead me on)

Like a child (Lead me on)

Walkin' down (Lead me on)

Through the dark and shadows

Lead (Lead me on)

Lead me on (Lead me on)

Lead me to the other side

Surely goodness and mercy
Shall follow me
And I will live in your house
As long as life can be
Though I may stumble
And fall in disgrace
Shine your light and lead me on

Chorus

SONG: [Lead Me On](#), by Paul Gioia, from NCYC 07 Songbook,
© 2006 Uniting Church in Australia Used with permission

Bible Reading - Acts 2:42-47

Mal

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

For these words of witness and for Christ the word

Thanks be to God

Open with an invitation to breathe in the Spirit of God.

May God's Spirit grant us what we need for this day and for this time – the words to speak, the words to hear, words that bring life to one and to all. (Breathe) Amen.

Over the last several weeks, you may probably have seen a plethora of images on social media of people's creativity. From *TikTok* videos, to sewing creative and colorful masks, to knitting and crocheting blankets/scarves/outfits, to drawing and painting, to cooking and baking.

Some folks have received the gift of time to spare during these weeks and have been engaging in activities that many have not been able to participate in or have less time to do so. I am aware that there are many in the Brunswick Uniting community who are taking this time to continue being creative indoors and have enjoyed this time and space for creativity. Some have enjoyed creating new rather different forms of communities online. While this is wonderful, many are missing the face-to-face in person meetings, the conversations with their communities, social relationships in their wholeness which includes all the human connections beyond words such as a human touch. The communities that are being referred to here are the community of one's family and friends, the community around where you live, school communities, communities where you work, and the community of faith.

Our lectionary text of this morning from Acts 2 just read by Mal gives us a view of the evolution of a new community. It gives us a picture of social relations among those in the early church community. This was not just about communal life. This is a community where instruction is provided along with fellowship. Meals are had together and there is time of prayer. This passage is often used to understand the *"church and its mission. Reading this passage, some have suggested that the early church practiced a form of primitive communalism or socialism."* It may be so, yet at the end of the day this is about a way of being community. A community of folks that have several things in common.

What draws you to this community known as Brunswick Uniting? What do you have in common with this community of faith?

The community in Acts could be considered as migrants. They had been traveling with Jesus, had taken risks, left their homes and having found themselves in a different place were now in need of a safe space and some nourishment

Our text by Luke is a passage that comes after the story of Pentecost. We have yet to celebrate Pentecost on our church calendar, but in this story from Acts, the Holy Spirit has descended, Peter has delivered his homily and three thousand people have now joined the community. It is this community that is breaking bread together, fellowshiping with each other, spending time in prayer. This was their fundamental way of being. At quick glance one might say yeah, pretty easy and simple enough to do and be this way. The questions come up when we referred to them having all things in common - they sold off their possessions to share the proceeds with all according to their need.

Have you ever lived in a community this way? Or in this form of a community? I am familiar with such communities and I am sure you are too. I know of a couple here in Australia. The ones that I am familiar with fall within the Anabaptist umbrella – the large ones such as the the Bruderhof and the Hutterites. Some of my friends in the US lived in smaller urban intentional communities in Chicago such as the Reba Place Fellowship and its sister community in Rogers Park both in the state of Illinois. Their calling as understood by them continues to be *"to extend the mission of Jesus by being a community of love and discipleship and by nurturing other such communities as God gives us grace."* ⁱⁱ

Would you be willing to be part of such community? To sell off your possessions and share the proceeds with all according to their need? The text does not say, nor am I saying, that this is essential to a faithful way of being and living as disciples of Christ.

In our world where unemployment is high and rising, where there is economic oppression, how might we respond? When we come out of our isolation, there might be much more that we discover. It is hard to imagine selling all that you possess and sharing the proceeds with others whom you may not even know! It would be pretty radical. Such radicalness is possible and continues to be practiced.

In the Anabaptist tradition it is referred to as **Gelassenheit**. The English term of this German word is '**yieldedness**': a self-surrender.

What does a community that practices yieldedness look like in May of 2020?

I believe it is somewhat similar as it was in Jesus' time – it is a community that desires to be of service to others, it is a community that chooses to walk with the lost, the least, the marginalized; it is a community that puts others before self; it is a community that practices love over hate; a community that prefers humility over power and control. Most importantly it is a community that seeks to be in authentic relationship with others as with God.

Gelassenheit - Yieldedness is also known as self-surrender to God. The relationship with God, as articulated at the end of today's Acts passage, is worshiping in the Temple day by day. This was an extension of the **Kenosis**: the emptying of their purses was tied to the emptying of their selves.

Kenosis! Yieldedness, is kenotic. It begins with an emptying of the self, a self-surrender. The modern-day contemplatives and the mystics of our past speak and continue to teach us the practice of transformation, transforming to the mind of Christ.ⁱⁱⁱ A self-surrender.

How is our self-surrender to God going right now? I know that staying indoors is hard and we have been focusing on distracting ourselves, rather we have taken on many things as I shared earlier. Yes, many of us have taken on, but have we yielded though? What would it mean to lay aside what you have taken up in this time? What would it mean to practice an emptying of ourselves?

We are unable to spend time in this sacred space where I stand right now, but we do have the freedom to sit in our homes, to sit on our porch, in our back yard, to perhaps walk outside if able - surrendering to the sacred around us? What might you encounter if you practiced some kenosis today?

Cynthia Bourgeault, one of the core faculty members, of the Center for Action and Contemplation speaks of Centering Prayer, of "putting on the mind of Christ." She articulates that the theological basis for centering prayer lies in the principle of *kenosis*, Jesus's self-emptying love that forms the core of his own self-understanding and life practice.

This principle is explained by Paul in Philippians 2:6-11, "*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus:*

*Though his state was that of God,
yet he did not deem equality with God
something he should cling to.*

*Rather he emptied himself,
and assuming the state of a slave,
he was born in human likeness."*

The phrase "emptied himself" is the English translation of the Greek verb **kenosein**, which is where the word *kenosis* comes from.^{iv}

A regular practice of yieldedness, of kenosis may perhaps allow us to reconnect with the presence of God within and around us - even in our neighbour.

What might it take for us to practice being kenotic this week and perhaps the next and beyond?
What might it mean for us to self-surrender to God?

Sisters and Brothers, we are the faith Community known as Brunswick Uniting. We as a community continue to celebrate the season of Easter even in our scattered way of being. We as a community have encountered and continue to encounter Jesus the one who humbled himself and emptied himself. We

are a community of Christ. In our unsettled way of being, I invite us to practice some *kenosis*. To yield to God and in your surrender to God may you find the peace that passes that all understanding. Amen.

Song

Community (Dave Brown)

1. Part of a family, interconnected, this is community
Welcoming strangers, visiting neighbours, this gives us dignity
Care for the earth and sea, we need to keep them free,
So we care for the earth and sea
Care for the ones we meet, love is the face we see,
When we care for the ones we meet

2. Part of a family, interconnected, this is community
Welcoming strangers, visiting neighbours, this gives us dignity
Sharing our joy and pain, praying and keeping faith
By sharing our joy and pain
Singing a song of rights, imaging God in life,
By singing a song of rights.

CODA

Talk to the lonely, bind up the broken, this makes community
A glass of water shared with the thirsty, this makes for dignity
This makes for dignity, this is community

SONG: [Community](#), by David Brown, © 2004, from [Tune In](#), Brunswick UC,
Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE 604502

Offering

Amelia

Claire Foley offers an invitation to contribute financially to our congregation and also to share an offering of ourselves in our daily walk through life.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and daily walks with us Claire.
Let's offer a prayer for the offerings we have made this week.

Loving God, who cares for us in the night and opens the gate to the morning, receive our offerings of time, money and service. May our gifts bring goodness to the world and protection to all who need it.

Amen

Jenne will now lead us in the prayers of the people.

Prayers of the People

Jenne

Please light a candle for your prayers

Let us pray.

Oh loving Shepherd fill us with wanting to Be with you
Knowing we Always Have been with you & need reminding
That Being in you transforms us
And we Will always be with you
That we are all connected to each other and the universe, through you, at the Table.

Welcome us all with delight as we come through the Gate to the table,
into your embracing protective arms
At his table are the powerful, the decision makers, our 'enemies' - those with different values,
the foolish, for whom your love, through us, and our Divine power are sorely needed..
they are welcome, the Gate is open. Let us embrace them.
Let us embrace Those who are alone- the elderly, the refugee, the dying, the single, the distressed.
Let your Healing love wash through them.
May the healers the givers come for solace with you. At the table
May all our arms embrace each other at the table
Remind us that we are all one in You
In the Shepherds Name we pray. Amen

Song

Now to your table spread (Shirley Murray)

Now to your table spread
we come, each one in faith
that you alone provide the words of life or death:
in wine and bread,
in promised food
we find your loving heart, O God.

Hands of the world stretch out
your mystery to touch
in longing to believe a truth beyond our reach,
to sing in joy,
to cry in grief,
to know your meaning for our life.

Here is our common wealth
in sharing what is good,
as though all humankind around one table stood,
this bread to break,
this wine to taste:
one people in the name of Christ.

Words © 1987 Hope Publishing Company, 380 S Main Pl, Carol Stream, IL 60188

Holy Communion

Valentina

God prepares a table for us, a table where we gather and fellowship and where we find life.
God who delivers us from oppression sets this table.
God who protects us like the shepherd their sheep, sets this table,
God revives our drooping head, our cup brims with blessing (Ps 23, Message)
This is the God that we yield to, as simple and as complex as it gets.
As we are invited to the table prepared for us, we are to invite others.
Who might we invite to the table that God has set before us?

Around this table is where we normally gather. We gather to remember...
We gather around this table because we remember the story of Jesus, his life, his crucifixion and his resurrection.

Today this space is empty, our community has scattered.
If you are watching me, then thanks be to God for you have the ability to do so....

There are some who gather in this space with us around this table, but today they do not have the ability or the opportunity to participate in this way, remember them.

Many of us are gathered, in a warm space with a roof over our head, but there are many who have no heat for warmth or shelter over their head, remember them.

When we gather, we often gather in a small circle or a large circle.

As we gather in the circle, we often come reflective,
we come with our joys and we come with our sorrows
we come with our anxiety and uncertainty
we come lacking and we come satiated
we come to this table just as we are.

I invite you as able, to close your eyes,
And think of the circle
Remember our sisters and brothers
Young and old -
Remember one another for
we are the community of Christ!

The Lord's Supper

The Peace

The Peace of the Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Invite people to exchange a sign of the peace (if with others) by placing their hand on their hearts and a short bow or a nod as able using the words 'Christ's peace be with you.'

The Institution of the Lord's Supper (based on 1 Corinthians 11:23 – 26)

The Lord Jesus, on the night of his betrayal, took bread,
and after giving thanks to God,
he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way he took the cup, saying:
This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.

Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup
you proclaim the death of the risen Lord, until he comes.

SHARING

In this empty plate [*lift and show*],
we choose to see the world's hunger.
We remember that millions of people, this day,
lack bread for Communion, bread for breakfast, bread for life.
We acknowledge that we ourselves hunger, this day,
in ways that no earthly bread can satisfy.
Hospitable God,
**meet us in our unmet hungers –
and help us to put our abundance
at the service of the poor.**

In this empty cup [*lift and show*],
we choose to see the world's thirst.
We remember that millions of people, this day,
lack wine for Communion, fruit for juicing, water for life.
We acknowledge that we ourselves thirst, this day,
in ways that no earthly cup can quench.

Hospitable God,
**meet us in our unmet thirsts –
and help us to put our fullness
at the service of the empty.**

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.' (Matthew 5:6)

In the name of Christ, Amen.

INVOCATION

Pour out the Holy Spirit on this empty plate/basket, this empty cup, that they may be for us – even in
their emptiness – the body and blood of Christ.

... so that we may take his Life into our lives, and be taken and blessed, broken and given for the world.

LORD'S PRAYER (Invite people to recite the 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 for ever.
Amen.**

Empty PLATE and Empty CUP

We hold up the empty plate...

It is Christ who is the bread of life,
Who satisfies the hungry heart.

We hold up the empty cup...

It is Christ who is the cup of hope,
Who revives the thirsty.

The plate and cup are placed on the table...

The gifts of God
for the people of God.

In faith and hope, we hold out our empty hands...
**In these empty vessels and in our empty hands,
we celebrate the mystery and wonder of the empty tomb.**

Prayer after Communion

*God our creator,
You are our bread of life
You are our cup of hope
Sustain us on our journey
Until hunger and thirst are no more
Through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Notices

Saide

Please keep up to date with the news on our website, particularly the events Calendar and the Olive Press, our weekly newsletter. There are lots of opportunities for connection during our time of isolation. The household of God project was announced on Easter Day. Two new projects are the Community of Faces and Sharing Candles stories. Our annual church camp is being replaced with a virtual camp experience on 23rd May 'Connecting - to God, to others, to place. Amelia is looking forward to seeing your isolation hair styles on camp - so get snipping and well see you at camp. The Mulling Group for young adults 25-35ish is meeting on Tuesday this week. Please check the details for all this and more on the website and Facebook.

Over the next four weeks we will be hearing from some of the people who are creating and maintaining connections. Today Yoo Mi our Pastoral care supply minister and Gwen Arnold our Pastoral Care Elder will share with us. Thank you Yoo Mi and Gwen

Good morning, all!

I am Yoo Mi. I have been doing pastoral care ministry in our community during Ian's absence. Particularly, during this time of challenge, our pastoral care team's focus is to respond immediately and in ongoing ways to practical, spiritual and emotional needs and pastoral crises in our community so that we may keep calm and connected as the people of God. For this, our team members and many volunteers have generously offered their gifts, time, and energy with heartfelt prayers. Thank you all for your humble hearts and deeds. So, I would like to keep encouraging all not to hesitate to be a receiver and giver. We all need to support each other. Please feel free to contact Gwen or me if there are any concerns. Now I will hand over to Gwen, who is the Pastoral Care rep on Church Council. Thank you.

A message from Gwen Arnold:

As your Pastoral Care church council representative, I wish to thank everyone for the wonderful community connections and engagement happening during this time of physical distancing

People are ringing, emailing, writing, messaging, facetimeing, and zooming.

Various Face Book, messenger, and WhatsApp groups have developed using social media to aid in our remaining connected.

Those with no internet or limited media are receiving mailed copies of our worship services and various "Olive "productions to keep them up to date..... .All of these things are so great

We also have people shopping, cooking and stocking up the PCC freezer, dropping off meals and groceries, driving people to appointments, picking things up for people.

On Behalf of the Pastoral Care committee ... "Thankyou everyone."

Sending Song

Cover us with love (Elaine Loukes)

1. When our ears are closed to cries of need
Selfish ways that crush and hurt and trample
When minds are set and we don't want to know
How others stand to lose, while we look for gain.
Turning our dulled eyes from helplessness and pain. Then . . .

*Cover us with love and fill our heart with song
Change our narrow ways, give us compassion strong.
Be our vision Lord, in a world that's filled with greed.
Be our wisdom true, plant in our hearts, this seed.*

2. When we fail to see what we destroy
Gath'ring greedily from nature's treasure
Understanding little why we feel the need to take away
The future of us all, hardening our hearts
To the uniqueness of this place. Then . . .

3. When our hearts are cold without Your flame
Believing we can live without your spirit
Convenience when we can ill afford to mould You or contain
Or put you in Your place, though foolishly we try
To limit and restrain, so . . .

Chorus x2

SONG: [Cover us with love](#), © Elaine Loukes, from [Tune In](#),
Brunswick Uniting Church Songbook. Reproduced with permission

Blessing and Sending

Valentina

God who knows us by name,
God who guides in paths unknown as known
Watch over us,
Walk with us
And Fill us with peace!
Grant you peace
. Amen.

Closing verse on screen

Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts... Acts 2:46

Postlude

Cover us with love (Elaine Loukes)

ⁱ Blount, Brian, True to our Native Land – An African American New Testament Commentary (pg. 221)

ⁱⁱ <https://rebaplacefellowship.org/who-we-are/>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Jane_Hooper_Peifer_paper_LettingGo.pdf

^{iv} <https://cac.org/kenosis-letting-go-2018-12-21/>

^{iv} Acknowledgement- The Liturgy of the Empty Hands is based on the following resources:
The Sacrament of Empty Hands: written by Rev. Dr Amelia Koh-Butler, the liturgy follows the pattern for Holy Communion and allows for the absence of consecrated bread and wine/juice, written with the Easter season in mind. Find it [here](#)
And <https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/8300/liturgy-of-the-empty-hands.pdf>^{iv}