

ORDER OF SERVICE - Sunday 21st June 2020 – Pentecost 3, UCA Anniversary

'What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; ... Genesis 21:17b

PRELUDE – Grant us a wise and discerning heart, Shawn Whelan

Grant us a wise and discerning heart
Be with your people today
Grant us a wise and discerning heart
Lead us to walk in the Way

SONG: Grant us a wise and discerning heart, by Shawn Whelan, Used with permission

WELCOME

Saide Cameron

Peace, salaam, shalom

Welcome to worship from Brunswick Uniting Church this morning.

God calls us into this sacred time
To rest in the love that holds us fast
To rejoice in the freedom to worship
To pray for peace and unity and justice.

So come and worship. Come and be welcome in this wonderfully gathered and scattered community.
Today we remember the union of three faith traditions in 1977 and read Hagar's story from Genesis.
We will sing, pray and reflect on peace and unity, in the church, in all faiths, in the world, in all creation.

SONG: Peace, Salaam, Shalom

Peace, salaam, shalom,
Peace, salaam, shalom,
Peace, salaam, shalom,
Peace, salaam, shalom.

SONG: Peace, Salaam, Shalom © 2001 Pat Humphries and Sandy Opatow.
Moving Forward Music BMI www.pathumphries.com.

CANDLE LIGHTING

Today we light the Christ Candle
recalling the inauguration of the Uniting Church on 22nd June 1977, 43 years ago.

Saide

We light this candle for our heritage in the Congregational tradition
with its commitment to freedom and
to the power of the priesthood of all believers.
We will stand in that great tradition.

Natalie Sims

We light this candle for our heritage in the Methodist tradition
with its commitment to social justice and
its enthusiasm in communicating the gospel.
We will stand in that great tradition.

Glenice and Barry Cook

We light this candle for our heritage in the Presbyterian tradition
with its respect for scholarship
and its deep understanding of the nature of the church.
We will stand in that great tradition.

Vilma Collard

We light this candle to celebrate the other great traditions
with which we are called into unity including
the Baptists, Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and Salvation Army
in all their diversity and faith.
We will stand in these great traditions too.

Colin and Jenny Hunter

From these four candles we light the Christ Candle
 symbol of the One who is the light of the whole world.
 In Christ we are one.
 In Christ everything is made new.
 Thanks be to God!

SONG: Hope of Abraham and Sarah, MV 148

Hope of Abraham and Sarah, friend of Hagar, God of Ruth
 you desire that ev'ry people worship you in spirit, truth.
 Meet us in our sacred places, mosque and synagogue and church.
 Show us paths of understanding; bless us in our common search.

Root us in our own tradition, faith our forebears handed down.
 Grow us in your grace and knowledge, plant our feet on solid ground.
 Cultivate the seeds of sharing in this world of many creeds.
 Keep us open, wise in learning, bearing fruit in loving deeds.

Hope of Abraham and Sarah, sov'reign God whom we adore,
 Form in us your new creation free of violence, hate and war.
 So may Torah, cross and crescent, each a sign of life made new,
 Point us t'ward your love and justice, earth at peace and one in you.

SONG: Hope of Abraham and Sarah, by Ruth Duck, © 2005 by GIA Publications from More Voices (148),
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Koen Dubrow

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.

PRAYER OF ADORATION & CONFESSION

Saide

We offer our prayers of adoration & confession.
 Sovereign God whom we adore
 You are the One who calls us to love
 To open our arms in welcome
 To speak, act and love
 Safe and strong in your steadfast love.

Risen Saviour, Christ our Lord
 You are the One who calls us to prayer
 To pray for peace and justice
 To speak, act and love
 Confident that you hear our prayers

Holy Spirit, breath of love and prayer
 You are the One who calls us to live
 To be at work in the world

To speak, act and love
To be the new creation of joyful unity.

Sovereign God, Risen Saviour, Holy Spirit
Forgive us when we think we are alone
When we forget all that has gone before us
Point us towards the richness of all the faiths and traditions
That have brought us into this time and place.
Help us to always speak, act and love
Even in our brokenness, even in the darkness. Amen

SONG: Peace, Salaam, Shalom,
Peace salaam, shalom,
Peace salaam, shalom,
Peace salaam, shalom,
Peace salaam, shalom.

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WORD OF GRACE

Rejoicing in God's steadfast love, grace and mercy
We can be confident that in the name of Christ, our risen Saviour, our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be God. Amen

WITH THE CHILDREN –

Dave Hall and family

Building on the previous week with Abraham and Sarah, looking at Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael.

HEBREW SCRIPTURES: Genesis 21:8-21

Christine Hornby

Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away – The child grew and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, 'Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.' The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, 'Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named after you. As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.' So, Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.

When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, 'Do not let me look on the death of the child.' And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, 'What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.' Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

SONG: Standing in the need of prayer, CH493

1 Not my brother or my sister, but it's me, O Lord,
Standin' in the need of prayer;
Not my brother or my sister, but it's me, O Lord,
Standin' in the need of prayer.

It's me, it's me, O Lord,
Standin' in the need of prayer;
It's me, it's me, O Lord,
Standin' in the need of prayer.

4 Not the stranger or the neighbour, but it's me, O Lord,
Standin' in the need of prayer;
Not the stranger or the neighbour, but it's me, O Lord,
Standin' in the need of prayer. [Refrain]

African-American spiritual, Public Domain

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 22:34-40

Clare Keogh

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' He said to him, ' "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

REFLECTION – God who sees Me

Ian Ferguson

There is only one character in the bible who gives God a name – God has many names and titles in the bible, but they all come from God except one. The only person who names God in the Scriptures is Hagar the Egyptian, the slave of Sarah and Abraham. Hagar names God El Roi, the God who Sees Me. And she names the spring where she meets God Beer-lahai-roi, the Well of the Living One who Sees Me.

There beside that spring an angel appears to her. This is back before we get to today's brutal story of the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael. Back when Hagar is first pregnant, she runs away into the wilderness from ill treatment by her mistress Sarah. Yes, Hagar is a runaway slave. And there in the wilderness, an angel of the Lord appears to her and says, "Now, you have conceived in your womb and will bear a son; and you will name him Ishmael" We will hear these same words with a change of baby name, spoken by another Angel to another woman in a few months' time when we are approaching Xmas. Gabriel will say to Mary, "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you will name him Jesus." The gospel thus associates Mary with Hagar. So, who is Hagar, and how does she colour our faith?

It is worth remembering today that not that long ago in the scheme of things, the bible was used in our world as an instrument to overturn the legal acceptability of slavery – it is important to remember this because the world out of which the bible emerges, and in particular, the story of Hagar, completely assumes slavery as a normal acceptable part of life.

The angel said to Hagar beside the Well of the Living One who Sees Me, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" Hagar replied, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her."

Then Mary said to the angel, "Here I am, the slave girl of the master. Let it be with me according to your word."

You see, the gospel story uses slavery as a metaphor for Mary's faith. The image is of a slave submitting sexually to her male master. Just as Hagar is forced to be a surrogate womb to produce an heir for Abraham. And frankly, that is repulsive to me. The stories of Hagar and Mary offend me with their acceptance of literal and metaphoric sexual violence and enslavement, of gendered power, and in Hagar's case of racial oppression. They are offensive and there is no redeeming them.

Last week when our Prime Minister walked back his comments about there being "no slavery" in Australia, I realised that I too am programmed by enculturation and education to think of slavery as a thing that happened to Africans in far-away times and places. It was important for me to be reminded along with the Prime Minister that a number of Australian industries – pearling, cane growing, the pastoral industry – relied on tens of thousands of indigenous and Pacific Islander slaves including indentured workers over the course of more than a century. And that this slavery was state sanctioned and, in some places, continued until the 1960s when equal wages were instituted and the Aboriginal protection act was replaced by welfare. <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/the-signal/australian-slavery/12354292>

Hagar evokes the enslaved of the world, including the enslaved of Australia. She is the foreigner, the enemy, the outsider, the other, she is of a different race, a different religion. Her body is used and abused. And in the end, she is cast out to die because her person and presence offends. She has a claim on those with the power, and they cannot bear it. Sarah said to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.”

We are living through a time in our world when the divisions and injustices that Hagar embodies are being highlighted and protested, and there is hope for change. So, say her name – Hagar – cast out to die in the wilderness – say her name. Yes, her story offends modern sensibilities, but it also offends ancient ones. For shall the son of this slave woman inherit along with Isaac, the racially pure son of the Master? The answer is yes. For the God who meets Hagar in her distress is called El Roi, the God who sees, and Hagar’s life matters to this God. El Roi sees Hagar and her son, sees Mary and her son, sees all the children of Abraham, Sarah’s and Hagar’s, Jews, Christians, Muslims, equal inheritors of the promise. El Roi, sees all people, all the outsiders, all the othered of the world, sees every creature of the good earth and loves them. And loves them. And Friends, God sees you, whoever you are, God sees you.

Then God opened Hagar’s eyes and she saw a well of water, and she went and gave her son a drink.

May God open our eyes, that we too may drink deep from the well of grace and join God in seeing and loving all people, all creatures, all creation.

SONG: O Lord hear my prayer, TiS 741

O Lord, hear my prayer,
O Lord, hear my prayer:
When I call, answer me.
O Lord, hear my prayer,
O Lord, hear my prayer,
Come and listen to me.

SONG: O Lord, hear my prayer, by Jacques Berthier, from *Together in Song*, Harper Collins Religious, WORD OF LIFE

OFFERING

Saide

Let’s pause now and remember the richness that we are offered
From the faiths and traditions that have brought us to this place.
Remember the diversity, the complexity, the beauty of life offered
As we gather for work, play and worship, as family and community.

Let us pray

God of hope, bless the offerings of our lives, our time and our money.
May they be woven into the ever growing tapestry of your new creation. Amen

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Jim Kilpatrick

Loving God

We worship together on this anniversary Sunday
As Christians always have

We pray for those serving and those suffering in this pandemic: may they find help, and peace
We pray for those suffering, and those protesting, racial injustice: may they find justice, and inspiration
In your mercy, hear our prayers
In your mercy, hear our prayers

We worship together on this, 43rd anniversary of the Inauguration of the Uniting Church in Australia.
We pray for this church: may it be humble, vital catalyst for change. May it be a witness to Christ’s unity
In your mercy, hear our prayers
In your mercy, hear our prayers

We worship together as people in need. We pray for people in need.
We pray for hospital patients and those just out of hospital.
We pray for medical staff. We pray for depressed people. We pray for tired parents.

We pray for those enslaved by the powers of the world.
May they find in the message of Hagar and Ishmael that core truth:
all are equally honoured, equally loved by God
In your mercy, hear our prayers
In your mercy, hear our prayers

In the name of Christ born of Mary, our lover and liberator.

Amen.

SONG: Peace, Salaam, Shalom

*Peace salaam, shalom,
Peace salaam, shalom,
Peace salaam, shalom,
Peace salaam, shalom.*

NOTICES

Ray

This week's Olive Press includes an invitation to join the work on our Climate Action Plan, the next meeting is on 28th June at 11:30. See the website for a lovely story about the Olive Pesto's WorldWide Knit in Public Day adventure. Visit the Synod website to read the bi-monthly Crosslight magazine, a wealth of reading about the work being done beyond this gathered community. Table Church is on this evening and every second week, see the Events page for details about this and other upcoming events. You are welcome to join Ian for a post worship Zoom chat at 10:30 – visit our Facebook Group page for the link to join. And finally our Olive Way program will be reopening at the end of the month on Tuesdays only – volunteers to assist are welcome. Please contact Peter Blair, our Olive Way pastor.

SONG: Peace I leave with you my friends, NCH 249

Saide

*Peace I leave with you, my friends,
Shalom, my peace in all you do.
Peace I leave with you, my friends,
I give to you so you can give to others too.*

1. To share God's love is why I came
To show God's kindness without end
Go now, my friends, and do the same,
until I come again.

2. Take my hand and be at peace;
The spirit of our love I send.
And with this love you will be free,
until I come again.

3. With this love now all will know
That loneliness is at an end.
Rejoice, my friends, although I go,
for I will come again.

SONG: *Peace I leave with you*, by Carey Landry, from New Century Hymnal,
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BLESSING AND SENDING

Saide, Ian, Dave

Together Peace, salaam, shalom
Saide From the rich heritage of our traditions we come
Dave From the diversity of many faiths we come
Ian From the loving heart of God we come

Together Peace, salaam, shalom
Saide Committed to freedom and justice for all we go
Dave Dedicated to study, prayer and reflection we go
Ian Called to love, care, enfold and uphold we go

Together Go in peace with the blessing of our God
Saide The source of all life
Dave The Son of all love
Ian And the spirit of all joy and peace
Together Peace, salaam, shalom. Amen

POSTLUDE – Lord's Prayer, Dave Brown

THANK YOU

Ministers:
Rev Ian Ferguson
Dave Hall

Liturgist:
Saide Cameron

Candle lighters:
Natalie Sims
Glenice and Barry Cook
Wilma Collard
Colin and Jenny Hunter

Acknowledgement of country:
Koen Dubrow

Children's time:
Dave Hall
Rev Fran Barber
Samuel, Patrick and Clara Hall
Alistair Hunter and Colma
Voice of God: Nina van
Ravenswaij

Bible readers:
Christine Hornby
Claire Keogh

Preacher:
Rev Ian Ferguson

Musicians:
Natalie Sims (co-ordinator)
Dave Brown
Glenice Cook
Ian Ferguson
Steph & Josh Gesling
Jess & Anya Kvensakul
Catherine Leslie
Maxine, Clementine & Harriet
Loynd
Dave Miller
Kate Scull
Elaine Potter
Amelia Ware
Daniel Whelan
Shawn Whelan

Prayers of the people:
Jim Kilpatrick

Flowers
Valmai Brunlow

Notices:
Ray Cameron

Production:
Ray Cameron
Saide Cameron
Ian Ferguson
Dave Hall
Chris Magee

CLOSING VERSE: And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Matthew 22:39