

ORDER OF SERVICE – Sunday 28th June 2020 – Pentecost 4

So Abraham called that place “The Lord will provide” Genesis 22:14

Prelude

SONG: *Be still and know* (AoV.2.54)

*Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.*

SONG: *Be still*, John L Bell & Graeme Maule © 1989 WGRG, Iona Community,
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Welcome

Jenne

Good morning, welcome to Brunswick Uniting Church worship over the internet. I am Jenne your Liturgist for this service.

May Christ's peace be with you.

Our bible reading from Genesis today speaks of the trials of life, of offering, sacrifice and faith in God's provision.

Come now and prepare yourself for worship.

If you'd like to join in with the symbolic actions of this service, please have a Bible at hand, a candle ready for lighting, a glass of water. You might even like to light a fire! – a visual sign of trial, renewal and God's provision. Please gaze at the fire, see its beautiful vibrancy and life, feel its heat and hear its crackling as it transforms and evokes God's spirit of earth and life in this sacred time.

Candle Lighting

I invite you to Light your candle and bring God's spirit into your sacred space, as we light the Christ candle here.

O God, we come to worship You, responding to your call, saying, 'here I am'. We worship and thank you because you have promised to provide. You provide the eternal light of the world, the lamb for our offering, reconciliation through faith, the new beginning in love, steadfastness and generosity.

As you gaze at the flames, know we are in God's presence.

We come to meet God face to face, even in our brokenness, even in the brokenness of the world.

GATHERING SONG

Broken (Elaine Potter)

*Broken we come to meet you face to face
Into us breathe wholeness life giving grace.
Broken we come in worship you to find.
Loving rest forgiveness, bread and wine.*

- 1. Weary and dry from our journey
Your pilgrim people we are
you meet us at every corner
open arms.*

2. *In every hard place Your presence
acts as our comfort and guide.
Shown through the actions of others
Your love shines.* REFRAIN

3. *We look for You to sustain us,
Strengthening Spirit You are.
Infinite love our companion
as we share.*

4. *And when we stumble or falter
You come to sit by our side.
Never alone will You leave us –
reconciled* REFRAIN

SONG: [Broken](#) by Elaine Loukes. Used with permission

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Oscar Batch

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.**

PRAYERS OF ADORATION & CONFESSION

Jenne

Let us pray... Gaze at the fire. Gaze and invite God's Presence into your being. Breath in deeply, breath out slowly, watch and feel the power of God.

We praise you O God, for the fire of faith in us. Fire is your creation, but it can bring its trials, pain and heartache. And it has the power to transform our lives with light, life, warmth and newness, as in nature. We feel fire's passion and receive it from you, our God.

We praise you for providing for us, in surprising, unexpected and even contradictory ways. Just as father Abraham said, 'here I am', to his son Isaac, you say, 'here I am', to each of us, no matter the uncertainty, the trials and the anguish of our inhumanity to one another. You say and we say, 'Here I am'.

Gaze at the fire again. Gaze and invite God's Presence into your being. Breath in deeply, breath out slowly, watch and feel the power of God.

Our prayers of confession.

We confess, O God, that we become confused when your sacred text raises challenges, doesn't answer our questions, or brings us uncertainty. We confess we question our faith in despair, in hopelessness and helplessness, the engulfing flames drawing closer and closer.

We see fires destroying people and homes, illness destroying lives, racism that our society continues to perpetuate and benefit from, destroying future hope. God, please forgive us.

Abraham was willing to offer his son in the fire, trusting that you would provide. We confess that we forget to have faith in your provision.

Give us hope in your purpose, offering us life even in the flames. It is hard and we are frail humans so please forgive us God, through your love and compassion in all our doubts, fears and confusion. Strengthen us to say, 'Here I am', and to step forth to walk side-by-side with those racially oppressed, fuelled by our passion for justice. Help us to trust that you will provide, in the challenging flames of racism, the perplexities of disease, and nature's fires. We step into your promise claiming the forgiveness you offer through the faithful fiery giving of your only Son, who transforms us all anew and forever. Thanks be to God. Amen

Word of Grace

Jenne

God will provide.

So now let us declare and claim God's renewing, transforming love for us.

Know that in the name of Christ, our risen Saviour, our sin is forgiven.

Thanks be God. Amen

WITH THE CHILDREN

Dave

Sarah and Abraham, Episode 3. Clara and Patrick read the script – Abraham getting ready to sacrifice his much-wanted son, and they are appalled. They quit children's time, and Clara visits Ian to tell him the news.

BIBLE READING – Genesis 22 :1-14

Brad Coath

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you." Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

SONG – Psalm 13

How long must we Cry out (ATFG 563)

1. *How long must we cry out,
'til justice rolls down like a river?
How long will this night last,
And when will we all be together?*

*Teach me to do what is right,
work in the darkness, trust in the light,
and may love be the path I walk upon.*

2. *How long will these bombs fall,
And bodies get twisted and broken?
How long will these voices,
Keep shouting loud insult and slogan?*

3. *How long will your creatures,
Be trampled, degraded forever?
How long, must we cry out,
Till justice rolls down like a river?*

SONG: [How long](#), © Robin Mann, from [All together for good](#),
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GOSPEL READING: Matt 10:40-42

Nina Van Ravenswaaij

“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

REFLECTION – Faith tests, God provides.

Ian

What a disappointing week this has been! Behind the scenes here at Brunswick Uniting Church we have been planning for a gradual reopening. Our Olive Way Drop-in Centre was to start up again this week with extra volunteers to manage hygiene and social distancing; our Food Coop was going to open for distribution; plans were in train to hold some small socially distanced worship gatherings. We were moving toward the future with blossoming hope. But now, at the time of recording this, Brunswick is a virus hotspot, we are facing increased restrictions, Olive Way and Food Co-op have postponed their openings and we have slowed down on any plans to gather for worship. Yes, it’s disappointing, our immediate future is very unclear, but at least the entire foundation of our faith hasn’t collapsed as it does for Abraham in our bible story this morning.

This story is deeply problematic; not just because of the whole child sacrifice thing; not just because it suggests that God might test us just to see how faithful we are. It is problematic in its own historical context and in ours, because it suggests that God can’t be trusted, that God’s promises can easily be revoked, that God’s love is contingent and changeable. And of course, it’s not just the story of Abraham and Isaac that challenges us in this way, it is life itself. When bushfire and pandemic randomly devour life as we know it, when racism and oppression continually undermine our movement towards a more just world, when the earth strains under the weight of warming, what is there to confirm our faith in a good, loving, compassionate, liberating, creative, forgiving, renewing God? – a God who provides? Life tests faith. We know

it, people have always known it, the Bible resounds with this question, and if Abraham didn't know it before, he certainly knows it after today's story.

What do you build your faith on? What gives you hope for the future? What allows you to trust that working for a better world is worthwhile, despite the fact that faith and trust are so often tested?

When I went to minister in East Gippsland earlier this year, I went expecting devastation. In fact, early on I got in my car with my camera and drove into the bush looking for devastation. And I found it – I went to places where everything is dead. But that wasn't my dominant experience. More often what I found was regeneration. And I found that in the bush and I found it in people. I found extraordinary, resilient, hope-filled renewal. Millions of burnt eucalypts sprouting from their trunks, tree ferns and grass trees exuberantly springing back to life, fragile ferns and fungus pushing through the ash. The renewal is stunning. And it warmed my heart and brought the colour of hope to my ministry in that place of devastation.

As Abraham piles up wood for his sacrificial fire, what is in his heart? He says to Isaac, "God will provide a lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Are these just words, or does he genuinely hold on to hope for renewal out of this fire?

The bush is glorious in its resilience and regeneration. But I find I cannot easily hold on to the hope that it offers. My faith in it is tested by a concern that this might be a temporary resuscitation until the next fire comes sooner than we might hope. And that the bush, while recovering in the short term, is actually putting out fuel for future devastation.

God will provide. For Abraham that provision is a Ram caught by its horns in a thicket – an image from an ancient faith that is not sufficient to sustain hope – God provides a new way of faith. What does God's provision look like in our world?

One of the places the first Christians turned when reflecting on the life of Jesus, and how his death tested their faith, seeming to undermine their hope in the promises of a loving God, was to the story of Abraham and Isaac. They saw similarities between Jesus and Isaac, each carrying the wood of their sacrifice. The difference of course is that there was no ram in the thicket of Christ's self-offering. God did not spare Godself the suffering and loss that Abraham was spared.

And the sobering thought is that we may not be spared either. Resurrection faith does not necessarily save us from suffering. Life tests faith. But can we hold to and be inspired by the truth which Abraham experiences and which Christ embodies. God will provide. God's love is stronger than the disappointment, the devastation, the despair. God's love is stronger. And God will provide. Even through death. God will provide.

Reflective music

Be still and know (AoV.2.54)

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am God.

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OFFERING

Jenne

In response to God's renewing word of love, we bring the offering of our faith. This may be through practical offerings for the work of our church through online giving, offering our time and skill, volunteering to express the love of God through the community here or in the wider world. It may be through social activism, political advocacy for 1st Nations People, Asylum Seekers and Refugees, the Environment... Faith offered in so many ways.

These are the cups of water offered to a precious child, an offering of ourselves; 'Here I am, here I am, here I am'. Amen

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Kirsty Bennett

It has been quite a week. Many of us live in the local government areas which are hot spots and Covid has become our focus again. Many of us will have been tested in our own ways as restrictions were tightened, plans have been cancelled or postponed, and uncertainty as to what the next weeks will bring has returned. This is what has been on my heart this week as I prepared the prayers of the people.

Let us pray:

Faithful God,

In this time of pandemic we pray for the world.

For the poorer nations where people have to choose between getting sick because they are out and about, or having no food to eat.

For countries where leaders put their own self interest before the needs of the people they are meant to be governing for.

May we find a way to show the world that all lives are equal and precious, as they are to you.

Risen Christ,

We pray for your church as we speak out for justice

For people in these Covid times who need to line up for food, and have no place to retreat to.

For people who face discrimination because of their race, sexuality or gender.

May we be your voice, speaking up for justice for the outsider and the shunned.

Life giving Spirit,

We pray for each other.

For those of us who are ill, or recovering from illness,

For those of us who have lost our jobs and don't know what the future holds,

For those of us who are feeling isolated and apart from our community.

May we reach out to each other, sharing your life and hope.

In these testing times,

may we know God's steadfast love, and

celebrate the life and love that is around us. Amen.

NOTICES

Saide

Good morning. We're feeling a little sad this week at BUC. Our Olive Way program was due to reopen on Tuesday however this has now been delayed until late July. Peter Blair and the team are continuing to prepare for the day when we can welcome people back into the space. If you are interested in becoming an Olive Way volunteer please let Peter know.

This week's Olive Press includes details of Yoo Mi's call to ministry with the Eltham-Montmorency Uniting Church Congregation. Yoo Mi was our Pastoral Care supply minister while Ian was in Bairnsdale. There are also links to two articles from the July Crosslight and news from the Climate Action Group.

Join Ian after worship at 10:30 for a Zoom Chat and the Climate Action Group at 11:30. You might also like to call someone after worship for a morning tea conversation.

SONG – Save us in the time of trial.

Save us in the time of trial (Shawn Whelan)

- 1. You are the source of creation,
yet you were born as a child.
And in your flesh felt the longings we feel.*

*Save us in the time of trial.
Save us in the time of trial, in the time of trial.*

2. *For forty days in the desert,
no food or water the while,
you met the tempter and showed us the way.*
3. *When we are caught in our cravings,
when we are trapped in desire,
you show us how to hold onto what's real.*
4. *When we are sated with plenty,
and when we live in denial.
When we forget to return to your word,*

SONG: Save us in the time of trial, by Shawn Whelan,
from Tune In, Brunswick UC Songbook, Reproduced with permission

Sending and Blessing

Jenne/Ian

- 1: In the light of God's promise
Go with hope
- 2: In the warmth of Christ's love
Go in peace
- 1: In the blaze of the Spirit's power
Go to love
- 2: And go with the blessing of our God
- 1: from the Source of all life
- 2: through the Son of all love
- 1: by the Spirit of all joy
- 2: In the name of Christ.
- 1&2: Amen.

Thank you

Ministers

Rev Ian Ferguson
Dave Hall

Liturgist

Jenne Perlstein

Acknowledgement of country

Oscar Batch

Bible readings

Brad Coath
Nina van Ravenswajj

Children's time

Dave Hall
Rev Fran Barber
Clara and Patrick Hall
Rev Ian Ferguson
Voice of God: Nina van
Ravenswajj
Writing assistance:
Julie Perrin

Musicians

Elaine Potter
Bronte Potter
Julia Potter

Prayers of the people

Kirsty Bennett

Notices

Saide Cameron

Production

David Cameron
Chris Magee
Jane Allardice
Saide Cameron
Ian Ferguson
Dave Hall

*"whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple -
truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward." Matt 10.42.*