

Order of Service 14.6.2020 Refugee Week

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:2

Prelude

With images and Song: Make your home in me

Welcome

Amelia

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all.

Welcome to worship at Brunswick today, all of you who are known to this place and those that are joining us even though we can not welcome you here in person. Let us share this time of worship together as people of God's community.

Today is the beginning of Refugee Week, and you will see some wonderful artwork by refugee artists Johny Salama and Naser Moradi throughout the service. This year the Refugee Council invites us to celebrate a 'Year of Welcome.'

Our bible readings this week also invoke the themes of welcome and hospitality. We are encouraged to go out as messengers of hope as well as called to receive God's message from others.

Symbols of Worship – Water, Word and Light

Ian and Jacky

"Come Holy Spirit" said in Swahili

Njoo Roho Mtakatifu (Come Holy Spirit)

Wash away the tiredness of our souls.

Pour water into font

Njoo Roho Mtakatifu (Come Holy Spirit)

Speak the living word in us.

Open bible and place on stand

Njoo Roho Mtakatifu (Come Holy Spirit)

Shine the light of the world that we may see.

Light candle

Njoo Roho Mtakatifu (Come Holy Spirit)

Song - Our God who weeps

*See our God with the tear-streaked face
With words that heal
And arms that embrace,
See him now with his nail-scarred hands
Your Kingdom come, Lord, The Promised Land.*

*1. When people plead in far-off lands
And no-one heeds their out-stretched hands
Yet in the poor we shall find you,
Help us work in the world for you
Fill us now with your love anew.*

*2. They lock up the weak behind barbed-wire fence
And too few speak in their defence
Yet in the prisoner we find you,
Help us work in the world with you
Fill us now with your love anew.*

*3. When death has taken those held dear
When faith is shaken, despair draws near,
May those who mourn find strength in you.
Let us weep for the world with you
Fill us now with your love anew.*

SONG: Our God who weeps, by Kate Scull, © 2006, from Tune In, Brunswick UC. Reproduced with permission

Acknowledgement of Country

Ralph Eduardo

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 and Confession

Jacky and Amelia

Amelia: Creator God who sings life out of nothingness,
Jacky: teach us to sing the song of your hope for the world
Amelia: and to listen for the voice of the Spirit in those who speak for you.

Jacky: Fill our silences with listening and understanding,
Amelia: with vulnerability rather than with self-defence.

Jacky: Do not let us turn away, abandoning those we should stand beside.
Amelia: Let us doubt our own assumptions before we doubt the motivation of others.

Jacky: Loving God, help us to create a welcoming community,
Amelia: where the joy you bring can be shared
Jacky: and laughter multiplied among all who hear it.

Amen

Word of Grace

Amelia

As God said to Sarah,
Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?
Believe the Good News that comes from God:
In Christ we are forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

With the Children

Dave

Introducing the great narrative of Sarah and Abraham's descendants through a timeline animation and a backyard role play.

Hebrew Scriptures – Genesis 18:1-15

Bella

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three people standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, "My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent." Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?" The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. The Lord said, "Oh yes, you did laugh."

Song - Come with me / Sing hey for the carpenter

*1. Come with me, come wander, come welcome the world
Where strangers might smile or where stones may be hurled.
Come leave what you cling to, lay down what you clutch,
And find with hands empty that hearts can hold much.*

*Sing hey for the carpenter leaving his tools!
Sing hey for the Pharisees leaving their rules!
Sing hey for the fishermen leaving their nets!
Sing hey for the people who leave their regrets!*

*2. Come walk in my company, come sleep by my side,
Come savour a lifetime with nothing to hide.
Come sit at my table and eat with my friends,
Discov'ring that love which the world never ends.*

*3. Come share in my laughter, come close to my fears,
Come find yourself washed with the kiss of my tears.
Come stand close at hand while I suffer and die,
And find in three days how I never will lie.*

SONG: [Sing hey for the carpenter](#), from [Heaven shall not wait](#) © Wild Goose Publications, Iona Community, Glasgow, Scotland. Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

Gospel Reading – Matthew 9:35-10:1 & 10:5-15

Mal

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness... These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

Reflection – Celebrating Welcome

Ian

The Refugee Council of Australia has declared 2020, the Year of Welcome. Each month they suggest an action to help foster a more welcoming and inclusive Australia. The most recent action is to contact our leaders asking them to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees are included in COVID-19 strategies – that Nobody is Left Behind. They tell the story of Shanika who has been in Australia for 2 years on a bridging visa which allows her to work although it was hard to find a job. After working for over a year as a permanent part-time Beauty Advisor for a make-up retailer, she was stood down because of the pandemic, and has been unable to return to work. She says, “Before this, I had never felt any difference between me and the other people I worked with. I have always been treated equally by my managers and fellow employees, and my visa status has never mattered.” But unlike them, her visa excluded her from JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments. She literally has no support.

Even before COVID-19, members of our own congregation who are asylum seekers and are not able to work for various reasons, were also receiving no Government support.

These people would have every right to shake off the dust from their feet and move on taking the gift of their presence with them – that’s if they had anywhere else to go.

Today Jesus sends his disciples out with nothing. They are not refugees, but like refugees, they are to be dependent on the welcome and hospitality of those they encounter, dependent on what strangers might provide for their well-being. They are sent to be messengers of God proclaiming in word and action that the divine reign has come, the reign of healing, release, new life, and the defeat of all oppression. They are to embody this message of peace and bring it into the places that will welcome it.

Not everyone will be welcoming, warns Jesus, not everyone will be open to the gospel, the good news brought by God's messengers. In such situations, move on, says Jesus, move on to a place worthy of the peace of the gospel.

Who are we in this gospel story? Are we those sent by Jesus to throw ourselves onto the hospitality of our world embodying a message of transforming peace – called to identify with refugees? Yes indeed, that is our calling as Christians. But are we not also those called to be hospitable, to be a house worthy to receive the gift brought to us by strangers in need? As Abraham and Sarah demonstrate today, God comes to us in the stranger. In receiving refugees with warm hospitality we might receive the messengers of God as well as being those messengers ourselves. Is that us, a house of welcome?

There is a twist in today's gospel message, a paradox. We are sent to embody a message of peace and carry it into a world where we may not be welcomed. And are called to embody that message of peace, partly at least, by showing hospitality to the stranger, by receiving the peace that comes to us through them. We can only live and proclaim the message of peace in as much as we receive it ourselves. We can only receive the welcome of the world in as much as we are welcoming ourselves to the stranger who comes seeking our hospitality – the stranger in whom we might meet God. We offer only what we receive, the welcome of divine love.

And if we don't? - if we are not a house of divine welcome? Then, says Jesus, it'll be worse for us than it was for good old Sodom and Gomorrah – thanks for bringing them up, Jesus – those two cities which were destroyed for not showing hospitality to strangers – the same strangers whom Abraham and Sarah welcomed, the messengers of God. Instead people from Sodom and Gomorrah threaten acts of violence against them.

How literally are we to take this? What sort of judgement does God bring upon those who don't welcome God's messengers? Well it seems to me that something horrific is already happening to the soul of our nation through the violence done to asylum seekers and refugees by our detention regime – the fear and insecurity that prompts it and the hard heartedness that is required to carry it through scars us as a people. God doesn't have to rain down sulphur and fire on us like Sodom and Gomorrah, we're doing it to ourselves through our own lack of hospitality.

Yes let's celebrate the Year of Welcome – let's celebrate those strangers who have been received with hospitality, have found a home among us and become our friends and family. Yes let's celebrate.

And let's also cry out for Shanika and for those even closer to home who need our nation's welcome and yet who are being pushed away. Let's celebrate God's welcome of us by welcoming those who come to us in the peace of God.

Reflective Music - Isaiah 61 (The Spirit of the Lord)

*The Spirit of the Lord
Is now upon me
To heal the broken heart
And set the captive free
To open prison doors
And make the blind to see
The Spirit of the Lord
Is now on me*

SONG: [The Spirit of the Lord](#), Isaiah 61, adapted by Elaine Loukes, from [Tune In](#), UC Songbook, Reproduced with permission

Offering

Let's remember the offerings we have made this week.

Loving God, who encourages us to live in communion with others,
receive our offerings of time, money and service.

May our gifts bring your message of hope to the world,
as we work for peace and justice so that all may find a welcome.

Amen

Prayers of the People

Let us pray

Let us feel the stillness rest in our hearts

Let us open ourselves to the present God

I invite you into this time of prayer

Mother God

Who has built for us this world of miracles

Of dew that glistens on early morning leaves

Of the golden sunlight that warms our backs

Of unexpected smiles from strangers that lighten our hearts.

We bring our hopes and sorrows to you this day

We pray for the people of the world in their brokenness and confusion

For those who have lost connection with the land

For those who protect the land from the injuries of work and exploitation

We pray for those who suffer from discrimination, from violence

For those who have been hurt or killed due to their appearance or beliefs

We pray for those who suffer from ignorance

For those who shy away from reality

We ask for your strength to face the difficult truths together.

We pray for the church in this strange time

For worshipping at a distance without human contact

For compassionate and warm leadership in this time of isolation

Help us to keep the memory of community alive so that we remain connected.

We pray for our community

For those who continue to work in our homes

Who look out at the world from our bedroom windows and think

About a world we miss, and the small wonders of a normal life.

We pray for those in hardship, without work, or family, or good health.

For those who care for others

For those for whom caring for themselves has become difficult.

We ask for your love in this time of difficulty and uncertainty

To bravely continue our journeys and to reach out to others

However we are able.

We bring these hopes and sorrows to you today

In the faith that you will sit with us, quietly and eternally.

Let us now offer our silent prayers to you.

Hear us, God. Amen

Notices

Saide

Please keep up to date with events and activities on our website and in the Olive Press. This week's Olive Press includes a lovely photo of Vilma & Richard offering a virtual hello. The Climate Action News includes information about work being done on our Climate Action Plan. A Zoom meeting is being held at 11:30 after worship to discuss climate advocacy and action. Before that you can join Ian for a post worship chat at 10:30, event details are on our Facebook Group. The Synod of VicTas is meeting in November this year. Nominations for representatives are being called for and close on 19th June. And now continuing our Celebrating Care & Connection series and linking in with the Refugee Week theme of 'Welcoming the Year of Welcome' Abi and Jamie offer this update from Love Makes a Way.

Update from Love Makes a Way

Jamie and Abi

Love Makes A Way Melbourne is a grassroots, community advocacy group grounded in the Christian faith which calls for justice for all people seeking asylum in Australia. Many BUC members are a part of our group, along with members of other local churches. As Christians, we believe that God calls us to welcome the stranger, and to work to ensure freedom and human rights for all people. We engage our fellow Christians in this call to action through awareness-raising and nonviolent protest, including flash sings on trains, silent protests, and singing at the Sydney Rd Street Party.

Sending Song - Reamo Leboga

*Reamo leboga,
reamo leboga,
reamo leboga,
modimo wa rona*

*1. We give our thanks to God,
we give our thanks to God,
we give our thanks to God,
we give our thanks to God.*

*2. We give our hands to you (x3)
because you reached for us.*

*3. We give our feet to you (x3)
because you walk with us.*

*4. We give our eyes to you, (x3)
because you looked for us.*

*5. We give our hearts to you, (x3)
because you first loved us.*

*Reamo leboga,
reamo leboga,
reamo leboga,
modimo wa rona*

Blessing and Sending

Ian, Jacky, Amelia

“go in peace” said in Swahili

Jacky: nenda kwa amani (go in peace)

Amelia: give your hands to God,

Ian: because God reached for us.

Jacky: nenda kwa amani (go in peace)

Amelia: give your eyes to God,

Ian: because God looked for us.

Jacky: nenda kwa amani (go in peace)

Amelia: give your feet to God,

Ian: because God walked with us.

Jacky: nenda kwa amani (go in peace)

Amelia: give your heart to God,

Ian: because God first loved us.

Jacky: nenda kwa amani (go in peace)

Amelia: to love and to serve

Ian: in the name of God, Source, Word and Breath of Life and Love. Amen

Closing Titles – Where the spirit is

Ministers

Rev Ian Ferguson

Dave Hall

Liturgists

Amelia Ware

Jacky Magessa

Acknowledgement of

Country

Ralph Eduardo

and

Quilan Goff

Robert Sargeant

Bridie Turner

Oliver Sun

Artwork

Johny Salama

Naser Moradi

Mick Turner

Bible readings

Bella Taranto

Mal Rowe

Children’s Time

Dave Hall

Rev Fran Barber

Samuel, Patrick and Clara

Hall

Voices:

Jacob Dubrow

Oscar and Hamish Batch

Rowan and Greta Drimmell

Amelie and Matilda Brown

Owen Parris

Clementine Loynd

Josh Winkler

Prayers of the People

Simone Alesich

Michael Rigby

Musicians

Alistair Hunter

(coordinator)

Courtney Rohde

James Balsillie

Flowers

Valmai Brunlow

Notices

Saide Cameron

Love Makes a Way

Abi Benham-Bannon

Jamie Thom

Production

Jane Allardice

Shawn Whelan

Ian Ferguson

Saide Cameron

Dave Hall