

# ORDER OF SERVICE - Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2020 – Pentecost 15A

Lectionary – Exodus 14:19-31; Psalm 114; Romans 14:1-12; Matthew 18:21-35 (replaced with Matthew 8:23-27)

Preacher – Ian Ferguson

Liturgist – Saide Cameron

Bible Reading – Fiona Bottcher, Kenna Morrison

Prayers of the People – Ray Cameron

Music Coordinator – Natalie Sims

Video – Ray Cameron, Jane Allardice

OPENING SLIDE: 'Freedom is coming'

1. PRELUDE – Freedom is coming, ATOK 355

2. WELCOME & CALL TO WORSHIP

Saide

Good morning. I'm Saide and welcome back to my home in Brunswick.

Spring is in the air with her promise of new life.

The wattle birds wake me up in the morning and

I'm looking forward to the lorikeets returning to the ironbark out my kitchen window.

Take a moment and listen to the sounds of your morning wherever you are.

Look out your window and take heart. God is with us in the strangeness of these times.

So let us gather ourselves from many places into a worshipping community this morning.

Let us worship God, the source of life, voice in our hearts, companion in grief and loss.

3. SONG: A voice is heard, NCYC 99.10

*Come let us praise our God,*

*Come let us sing for joy,*

*With a heart of thanks we give honour*

*You are a mighty God,*

*You are the source of life*

*Creator God we give praise*

1. From the deepest seas (*a voice is heard*)

From the highest hills (*a voice is heard*)

From the rich dark earth (*a voice is heard*)

All creation sings! God is heard! Chorus:

2. Through the darkest night (*a voice is heard*)

Through the breaking dawn (*a voice is heard*)

Through the heart of life (*a voice is heard*)

All creation sings! God is heard! Chorus:

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SONG: A voice is heard, by Trisha Watts & Monica O'Brien © Willow Connection 1998, from It all depends, NCYC '99 Songbook, Uniting Church in Australia, Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

4. CANDLE LIGHTING

Gus Argote

We light the candle.

Eternal flame of spirit,

Divine light illuminating heaven and earth

Guide our earthly seeking ways to Christ conscience

Eternal insight ignite our soul,

Experiencing all human senses, taste, hearing, smell, touch and sight.

Awareness, self believe of intuitive trust

Light of the living Christ.

## 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Hannah Alvis

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.**

## 6. PRAYER OF ADORATION & CONFESSION

Saide

Through the darkest night, we hear your voice Mighty God.  
You speak into the sorrow and grief of the world  
In your great love we are held with all creation  
Waiting and working for a new way to live in harmony beyond the darkness.

Through the breaking dawn, we hear your voice. Risen Saviour.  
You speak our names in the early morning, calling to us.  
In your great love you sacrificed everything on the cross  
And so, we follow you, your people, the body of Christ at work in the world.

Through the heart of life, we hear your voice, Holy Spirit.  
You sing, dance, laugh, groan and pray with us.  
In your great love you demand of us that we stand up  
To be the voice of the many who have no voice and long to be free. Amen

Mighty God, Risen Saviour, Holy Spirit  
We confess our sadness, our despair in the face of so much suffering  
Hold us as we grieve and set us free to be a people of hope.  
We confess our abundance, our comfortable ordinary lives  
Hold us as we reach out and set us free to boldly follow you.  
We confess our privilege, our unwitting participation in oppression  
Hold us in our struggles and set us free to work for justice. Amen

Lydia

## 7. SONG: As the deer pants, TiS 703

As the deer pants for the water,  
so my soul longs after you.  
You alone are my heart's desire  
and I long to worship you.  
You alone are my strength, my shield,  
to you alone may my spirit yield.  
You alone are my heart's desire  
and I long to worship you.

SONG: As the deer pants by Martin Nystrom, from Together in Song, Harper Collins Religious  
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## 8. WORD OF GRACE

Saide

All creation sings! God is heard!  
Listen then. Hear these life giving, heart healing, extraordinary words of grace  
In the name of Christ, our Risen Saviour  
Your sins are forgiven.  
**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

9. HEBREW SCRIPTURES: Exodus 13 and 14  
WITH THE CHILDREN

Fiona  
Dave and Clara

When Pharaoh let the Israelites go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was nearer, for God thought, "If the people face war, they may change their minds and return to Egypt. So God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness toward the sea of reeds... And Moses took with him the bones of Joseph.

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and God's pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. <sup>20</sup>It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. <sup>22</sup>The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. <sup>24</sup>At the morning watch the Lord, in the pillar of fire and cloud, looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. <sup>25</sup>God clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty.

The Egyptians said, 'Let us run from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them... against Egypt.'

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers.'

So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. <sup>28</sup>The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. <sup>29</sup>But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. <sup>31</sup>Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word  
**Thanks be to God**

10. SONG: Freedom is coming, ATOK 355  
1. Freedom is coming, freedom is coming,  
freedom is coming, oh yes I know.

*Oh yes I know, oh yes I know,  
oh yes I know, oh yes I know.*

2. Jesus is coming, Jesus is coming,  
Jesus is coming – oh yes I know.

SONG: [Freedom is coming](#), South African, © The Iona Community, from [All together okay](#), Openbook Publishers,  
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11. GOSPEL READING: Matthew 8:23-27

Kenna

<sup>23</sup> And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. <sup>24</sup> A gale arose on the lake, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. <sup>25</sup> And they went and woke him up, saying, 'Lord, save us! We are perishing!' <sup>26</sup> And he said to them, 'Why are you afraid, you of little faith?' Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. <sup>27</sup> They were amazed, saying, 'What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?'

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word  
**Thanks be to God**

Spirit of God, speak to us now, not only through those words of scripture that effortlessly inspire, but also through those that upset our spiritual equilibrium. Speak, Holy One, your servants are listening. Amen

*Then the LORD said to Moses, "... I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go [into the Red Sea after the Israelites]; and so I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army..." [14:15-18] And so it happens. God kills them all.*

The problem for me with these verses is that they make God sound like a heavenly version of Pharaoh – just another vain and glory seeking emperor using power violently and corruptly in support of one people over another. The Israelites seem only to have exchanged one oppressor for a better one.

What do we do with stories like this? Should we leave them out? If we do focus in on biblical passages that are violent, hateful or discriminatory how does it put us on a different path to the extremists of various religions who take licence from their scriptures to act with violence and hate?

People like Khaled al-Berry whose story I found on the Forgiveness Project website – a place I go to weep over the power of grace to transform lives. As a teenager Khaled belonged to the radical Egyptian Islamist group, . . . Now he is a writer living in London. He says: *I was not attracted to the radicals' brand of religion; I was attracted to them as people. The first time I knew one of them, ... he was a very decent person who took care of people around him. We built up a relationship as human beings. Then we started talking about religion and going to the mosque. They taught us that Islam means you can't argue about text because the text is what God said. Later we were asked to think about ... changing regimes which didn't apply the word of God. We learnt that we couldn't do this except by using violence because ... we are tools of God. It was like all revolutionary thinking: you sacrifice yourself for change for the better and for all those poor and unprivileged people.*

"You sacrifice yourself for ... the poor and unprivileged" – that part sounds to me like what we seek to do at BUC – it sounds like what Jesus teaches and embodies. So, what is the difference?

Khaled was taught: you can't argue about text because the text is what God said. I believe, we must argue and grapple and struggle with the text in order to hear what God is saying to us today. Because our church teaches that the bible is not the word of God, but if we engage with it together honestly and prayerfully and with humility, we might hear the living Word of God speaking on the breath of the Holy Spirit into the space between our lives in this modern world and these difficult ancient texts.

So, how does that happen? How is it that most ordinary Xns, Jews and Muslims take from such stories imperatives towards love, peace and justice rather than justification for violent aggression against our enemies? Are we simply deluded, selective readers?

I'll give an answer for the Xns today – see if you are satisfied with it.

First, we interpret the bible by placing its stories in their ancient context. So today we remember that the story of the crossing of the Red Sea was told by people under the constant oppression of successive imperial powers – Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome – one after the other – crushing, pillaging, exiling. This story is probably recorded in the form that we have it during the Babylonian exile. Given this history, we should expect an angry, anti-imperial attitude in it.

Today Egypt represents the whole imperial project – militarization, expansionism and enslavement. The story says in explicit and graphic terms, in a language that is ancient and embedded in a foreign culture, something that is as true now as it was then – it says that God opposes violent, imperial oppression.

But more than that – it says God will bring about a new creation, a new world of love, freedom, peace, justice and hope, out of the chaos and violence that humans perpetrate. It says it quite clearly, but at this present literal minded time in history, people are inclined to miss that fact. So let's continue to make it explicit.

In the beginning, Genesis chapter 1 ... *a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"*.

So also, in Exodus 14 there is a strong wind, the waters are gathered together, and dry land appears – a clear image of new creation. The Israelites walk onto this solid ground of freedom and hope, and the Egyptians follow with horses and chariots – the latest shock and awe military technology – but there is no place for such things and the chaos they inspire in the new creation. And so the waters close over them leaving an unarmed multitude of free slaves. (This paragraph from Fretheim p159alt).

And that's great – I like where this is going. But still the picture of God painted here, violent and manipulative, is not one I'm keen to integrate into my spirituality – even when I understand where it comes from. So, I take another interpretive step. I put the stories of Jesus from the gospels alongside these strange ancient myths. Kenna read us the story of Jesus calming the storm, which makes a similar point to the crossing of the Red Sea – in this man Jesus, God is bringing a new creation out of the chaos. But there is more.

As the Egyptian army faces being swamped by the chaos of their own way of violence, they name the Israelite God conceding that God's power and authority over them. They cry: "the LORD, YAHWEH is fighting for the Israelites against us". There is a similar confession in the gospel of Mark when the Roman Centurion looks up at Jesus dying on the cross and says, "Truly this man was God's son." In both stories, the empire concedes that true power lies with the God of this oppressed nation of slaves, the empire gives glory to the God of the subjugated. But the Roman Centurion does so not in the face of a crushing military victory, but before the abject defeat of Israel's self-styled anti-king. What did the Centurion oppressor see there in Christ's dying that moved him so? It's a mystery. But is it a mystery in which we can share?

It is the opposite picture of God to the Exodus story, but it is the same God – the God of grace, liberation and new creation. Perhaps neither picture works for us. But whatever image of liberating Divine Truth we see when our hearts are alive with the power of love, how does it move us? Does our faith move us in the way the ancient Israelites were moved, towards a new world of freedom and peace – a world they often squandered but to which God faithfully returned them again and again? Does our faith move us like the first disciples of Jesus Christ, towards that same new world of freedom and peace against similar powers of oppression through great self-giving love and searing sacrifice?

What image do you see? How are you moved?

Since the Egyptians remain unredeemed in the Exodus story, upsetting my progressive sensibilities, I'm going to give the last word today to our redeemed Egyptian terrorist Khaled al-Berry. Khaled comes to question his violent indoctrination by being exposed to free thinking in literature meetings at Cairo University (and I just note in passing that the interpretation of literature is exactly what I have been doing here today). Khaled says:

*I used to think there was only one way to know truth. But now I believe that the most dangerous thing in life is to let people become convinced that truth has just one face. At the root of forgiveness and tolerance is the belief that truth has MANY different faces...*

Friends, what is the face that you see?

<http://theforgivenessproject.com/stories/khaled-al-berry-egypt/>

### 13. SONG: Bring forth the kingdom, AoV 2.4

1. You are salt for the earth, O people: Salt for the Kingdom of God!  
Share the flavour of life, O people: Life in the Kingdom of God!

*Bring forth the Kingdom of mercy, Bring forth the kingdom of peace;  
Bring forth the Kingdom of justice, Bring forth the City of God!*

2. You are a light on the hill, O people: Light for the City of God!  
Shine so holy and bright, O people: Shine for the Kingdom of God!

3. You are a seed of the Word, O people: Bring forth the Kingdom of God!  
Seeds of mercy and seeds of justice, Grow in the Kingdom of God!

4. We are a blest and a pilgrim people: Bound for the Kingdom of God!  
Love our journey and love our homeland: Love is the Kingdom of God!

SONG: [You are salt for the earth](#), by Marty Haugen, © 1986 GIA Publications, from [As One Voice 2](#), Willow Connection Pty. Ltd.  
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#### 14. OFFERING

Saide or possibly David

Bring forth the kingdom of mercy, of peace, of justice.  
This is our calling as pilgrim people.  
Take a breath now, feel your feet on the floor  
Look at the beauty of your hands.  
In your living, your loving, your playing and praying  
Take these gifts and offer them freely in love for the world.  
Mighty God, Risen Saviour, Holy Spirit  
Bless these gifts and all our offerings today and every day.  
Amen

#### 15. PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE with THE LORD'S PRAYER

Ray

*As we pray this morning I will light a series of candles.  
If you have candles in your space you are welcome to light them with me.  
Let us pray*

Mighty God we pray for the world, this earth in all her glorious complexity.  
We give thanks for the riotous beauty of flowers in Springtime  
And offer our deep heartache for people and nations bereft of joy and beauty.  
We give thanks for scientists working to create a vaccine for the virus  
And offer our deep heartache for lives lost and shattered dreams.  
We give thanks for the growing desire and call for a renewable driven economy  
And offer our deep heartache for the untold damage done to your creation.

Risen Saviour we pray for your body the church at work in the world.  
We give thanks for church leaders working tirelessly to sustain us in hope  
And pray that they may hear your voice and know that they are loved.  
We give thanks for agencies and congregations caring for those in need  
And pray that this care enfolds the most vulnerable, lonely and lost among us.  
We give thanks for the loving steadfast work of our committees and programs  
And pray that all who offer care may in turn be nurtured and sustained.

Holy Spirit we pray for our community isolated and yet bound in love  
We give thanks for the people we see as we go about our daily exercise  
And celebrate the shared commitments made to keep our community safe.  
We give thanks for phone calls, thoughtful gifts, messages and more  
And celebrate the network of care that binds people together beyond isolation.  
We give thanks for connections made in creative, joyful, surprising ways  
And celebrate these new ways of loving and caring for others in your name. Amen

*Let us pray together as Christ taught us*  
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

## 16. NOTICES

Matthew & Michael

**Good morning.**

I'm Mr Cameron

**And I'm Mr Cameron**

**And this is the BUC News**

**Um, what are you doing?**

What do you mean?

**Well we've already had breakfast. What are you eating?**

Oh this? Well it's second breakfast clearly –

Dad's bread toasted with copious amounts of Jenny's Lemon Butter.

**Oh yeah. That's right. And if you want to buy some give Saide a call soon before all the jars disappear.**

Yes – into my belly!

**And while we're on the topic of food did you know that Hannah Denison is doing the Act for Peace Ration Challenge this week?**

Yes I did and you can make a donation using the link on our Facebook Group and in the Olive Press.

**Singing – Joy to the world the Lord is come**

**Let earth receive her king ...**

Um what?

Why are you singing a Christmas carol?

**I'm practising.**

For what?

**For the recording of Christmas carols.**

**Our music coordinators will be preparing the recordings of them over the next two months.**

Ah yes, that's right. If you want to join in with the recordings respond to the Christmas Carols Survey Monkey invitation.

**And in other news**

The Season of Creation starts next week.

We'll be focussing on celebrating creation and responding to the Climate Crisis

**Mum is preparing the October & November roster. Respond to the Facebook post if you would like to offer a Bible reading.**

Table Church is on tonight.

See the event details on our website.

**And now for something completely different.**

An uplifting series called 'Riding the Waves' is being launched.

**Peter McKinnon is going to be interviewing a cross section of people to find out how we are all managing during lockdown and hopefully inspire others to keep going.**

I think it's going to be beautiful and definitely uplifting.

**See the story on our website and on Facebook.**

As always join Ian for a post worship Zoom Chat at 10:30am. The link is on the website.  
**Goodbye and thanks for all the fish.**

17. SONG: Be thou my vision, TiS 547, **recording needed**

1. Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,  
naught be all else to me, save that thou art  
thou my best thought, by day or by night,  
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

2. Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word;  
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;  
Mother and Father, thy child let me be;  
thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

3. Be thou my armour, my sword for the fight,  
be thou my dignity, thou my delight;  
thou my soul's shelter and thou my high tower;  
raise thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

4. Riches I scorn and the world's empty praise,  
thou my inheritance, now and always:  
thou and thou only first in my heart;  
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

5. Great God of heaven, after victory won,  
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be my vision, O ruler of all.

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SONG: Be thou my vision, Gaelic poem 8th cent, from Together in Song, Harper Collins Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN

18. BENEDICTION

Saide

God calls to us day after day  
Calling us to enter into the creation renewing,  
life changing, kingdom coming  
Vision of justice and peace for all.

Do we dare to be part of this vision?  
Do we dare not to?

Let's leave this time of gathered worship  
Breathing in the healing of love of God, our Mother and Father  
Breathing out Christ's passionate commitment for justice  
Breathing in and out the abundant joy of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen

19. POSTLUDE – Freedom is coming

Thank you's Sep 13

Liturgist:

Saide Cameron

Lighting of Christ Candle:

Gus Argote

Acknowledgement of Country:

Hannah Alvis

Prayer Leaders:

Lydia Jacka

David Cameron

Children's time:

Clara Hall

Dave Hall

(Pastor: Children, Youth and Young Adults)

Voices:

Hudson

Oscar

Lucas

Clementine and Harriet

Bible readings:

Fiona Bottcher

Kenna Morrison

Reflection:

Rev Ian Ferguson

(Minister of the Word)

Prayers of the people:

Ray Cameron

Musicians:

Natalie Sims (coordinator)

Simone Alesich

James Balsillie

Helen Burnham

Brad Coath

Colleen Coath

Glenice Cook

Sheryll Coulson

Hannah Denison

Andrew Dickinson

Ian Ferguson

Alistair Hunter

Colin Hunter

Jessica Kvensakul

Courtney Rohde

Kate Scull

Maggie Somerville

Daniel Whelan

Shawn Whelan

Notices:

Matthew Cameron

Michael Cameron

Images:

Flowers from Orient Grove,

Frederick, McKenzie &

Macpharland Sts. Brunswick –

Saide Cameron

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Jane Allardice

Ray Cameron

Saide Cameron

Rev Ian Ferguson

Dave Hall

Lydia Jacka

CLOSING SLIDE: 'Bring forth the kingdom of justice'