

# Season of Creation 3 – Blessing of the Animals

## 04/10/2020

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### Welcome

**Helen Burnham**

I welcome you all to Brunswick Uniting Church, whether you are old friends or new to our Congregation. This week is the third week in our Season of Creation and we bless the Animals during the Service. It is well known that the company of our pets and animals, has been increasingly important to our wellbeing during our isolation.

Last week we walked with Kirsty along the Merri Creek, so now I invite you to come, walk with me by the Yarra river and Darebin creek, traditional home of the Wurundjeri people. Where they hunted, fished and camped. By billabongs and swampland noisy with croaking frogs, kookaburras and magpies warbling and laughing. Lorikeets, Corellas, tiny red banded finches, blue wrens and bell birds, busy about their lives. Wallabies sleeping in the sun in a horse paddock on Yarra Flats. They shut the Shopping Centre, and I found your Wonderland.

### Lighting the Christ Candle

**James Clough**

I light this candle, one small part of the bounty of God's creation. As we learn more each day that creation is ours to look after, let the candle be one more ancient ritual that informs our future.

### Song

Touch the earth lightly. TIS. 668

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1.  
*Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently,  
nourish the life of the world in our care:  
gift of great wonder, ours to surrender,  
trust for the children tomorrow will bear.*
  2.  
*We who endanger, who create hunger,  
agents of death for all creatures that live,  
we who would foster clouds of disaster,  
God of our planet, forestall and forgive!*
  3.  
*Let there be greening, birth from the burning,  
water that blesses and air that is sweet,  
health in God's garden, hope in God's children,  
regeneration that peace will complete.*
  4.  
*God of all living, God of all loving,  
God of the seedling, the snow and the sun,  
teach us, deflect us, Christ re-connect us,  
using us gently and making us one.*
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### Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Helen Burnham

Holy One, creator and designer God.

This tiny blue planet, spinning around the Sun is a miracle of your Creation. You have created oceans, mountains, grasslands, glaciers, deserts and forests, in infinite variety. From majestic whales to fragile butterflies, from polar icepacks to tropical seas. And because we are an island, and isolated, our animals, and plants are unique on this Earth. We are all part of your continuing creation.

So God of great imaginings, I am speechless at your generosity and overwhelmed by the knowledge that we have not valued your great gift as we should.

We have destroyed great Aboriginal sites for the sake of profit. Forgive us Lord

We have destroyed the habitat of our animals, clearing land that now becomes prone to bushfires. Forgive us Lord.

We have not learned from the wisdom and knowledge of our First Peoples or treated them with the respect they deserve. Forgive us Lord.

We are filling the skies with smoke from fossil fuels and some are still denying climate change. Forgive us Lord.

We have not treated the animals which provide our food with the care and dignity they deserve. Forgive us Lord.

Forgive and inspire us, for ours are the hands that do your work in the world.

Amen

### Word of Grace

Faithful and generous God. We are part of your continuing creation, and although we sometimes wander far away, you are a light in our darkness, showing us the way home. And so in the name of Jesus the light of the world, we can say, our sin is forgiven. Thanks be to God.

### Hebrew Scriptures – Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-17

Jamie Thom

Then God spoke all these words:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.

Six days you shall labour and do all your work.

Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

### With the Children

Janet WK

Janet explores the Ten Commandments through Godly Play.

## Song

All Creation Sings (AOV2. 45)

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*1. All creation sings of the glory of the Lord.  
Birds and crickets sing to the glory of the Lord.  
Kookaburras, magpies, cicadas, frogs and bees,  
sing a joyful song to the Lord.*

### *Refrain*

*Sing, sing, glory to the Lord.  
Praise, praise, let his name be heard.*

*2. Let us lift our voices, children of the Lord.  
Join with God's creation in praising the Lord.  
God has given life to ev'ry living thing.  
He has given life so let us sing.*

### *Refrain*

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## Reflection – The Communion of all Creatures.

*Reflection Words by Julie Perrin. Images by Ian Ferguson. Music by Peter Blair, Catherine Lesley, Matthew Lees, Shawn Whelan, Natalie Sims and Daniel Broadstock. Prayer of the Empty Hands from Uniting Earth Climate Worship Liturgy May 2020*

I went down to the church this week for the first time in two months (here's my permit), and I discovered that fittingly for the week of the blessing of the animals, our worship space had been taken over by a pair of pigeons – they'd built a nest in the chapel space light fitting. It was a little bit of a mess (although not anymore, thank you Laurie), but it's good to know that the space has been appreciated and used. Thank you, pigeon 1 and pigeon 2 for looking after and enjoying our holy gathering place for us – and for reminding us of the communion of all creatures there.

Today is another Holy Communion Sunday in which we are unable to be in our church building together to share the bread and wine. And so, I invite you now into a more meditative time of reflection on our fast with images, words and music. The words are written by Julie Perrin, I took the images, and Peter, Catherine, Matthew, Shawn, Natalie and Dan made the music. And the prayer of the empty hands is from the Uniting Earth Climate Worship Liturgy.

### Reflection 1

Now that we cannot gather  
How do we remember our gathered feast?  
In our separate places we hold out hope,  
We hold the cup, we hold the bread, we hold out hope.

### Gospel Reading

#### Matthew 26:26-30

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

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

### Reflection 2

Jesus said, "Remember me."  
Now we remember remembering.  
How can we stay present in this emptiness?

### Empty Hands 1

Creator God, in the beginning you lifted the dust  
and breathed your life into it,  
creating all that was from all that is and all that will be.  
From the very first moment an eternal dance-  
life from death  
new creation from what once was something else.

### Reflection 3

One day in a prison men gathered for eucharist.  
With empty hands these words were spoken:  
"The bread we do not have today  
Is the bread the world does not have."

### Empty Hands 2

And in that eternal moment  
From the dust of what was  
you formed the universe and all that is-  
plants, animals, flowers and trees,  
the deepest valleys, and widest of oceans  
all of it made in your image  
unique and connected,  
independent -yet co-existent and interdependent.  
Chaos to a wonderful dynamic order.

### Reflection 4

Absence is our experience.  
Will wine and bread nourish us?  
Is the empty cup  
or the cup that is filled  
the symbol that we need?

### Empty Hands 3

*Hold plate*

Here is Sylvester's empty snakeskin, shed so that he can grow. I place it here on this empty plate to remind us that our emptiness also points to life and growth.

In this emptiness we act in solidarity with our earth,  
As we remember that the bread that we lack today  
comes from the bounty of our broken world.  
We take time to acknowledge the effects of our overcultivation,

rainforests cleared for farmland,  
and forests for housing  
destruction of food sources and habitats for animals,  
oceans devastated as they are plundered for food and resources.  
Hills and valleys mined and left bare.

God may you meet us in this empty plate,  
**and help us to bring healing to your starving creation**

### *Hold Cup*

In this empty cup we seek to remember  
and reaffirm our covenant promise to care for God's creation  
We acknowledge our complicity in the melting ice caps,  
the rising seas, bushfires, floods, and drought-  
your creation that is crying out in thirst and hunger  
for the simple right to live as whole beauty and wonder.

God may you meet us in this empty cup,  
**and help us to bring living water to a thirsty world.**

### Reflection 5

We long for rituals that feed us  
Drink this wine, eat this bread.  
We hunger and thirst – to be met, to be fed.  
Meet us, feed us, gather us to yourself.

### Offering

**Gwen Arnold**

When it comes to acting on climate change we sometimes feel powerless.  
We ask "what can we offer?" Well we can each make an offering  
of ourselves and look at our personal carbon footprint – and together all our small actions can  
make a big change. FROM LITTLE THINGS BIG THINGS GROW

This is part of our overall BUC Climate Action Plan. You can find our Climate Action Plan on  
the BUC website. Just go to the website and press the Earth button. So today we are  
encouraging you to commit to taking action – start small and do the best you can. During the  
week you will be sent an invitation to make a Climate Action Commitment - and we would like to  
get children involved too. Take a moment to reflect on your: energy use, travel, eating and  
consumption habits, the efficiency of your household appliances and where you invest your  
money

Think about three or four actions which could reduce your carbon footprint. The ABC TV  
program "Fight for Planet A" has a "Carbon Counter" with some great ideas, including many  
child-friendly challenges. You might want to have a shorter shower and save energy. You can  
then record this challenge on your Climate Action Commitment Sheet.

Another really effective action that you can take is to purchase "Green energy". Details can be  
found on our BUC website. Or you can contact your current energy provider and switch to  
Green energy. You can record this too - on your commitment sheet

List all your household actions down on the Commitment sheet provided and keep it for your  
own reference. Let Richard Arnold know so we can see how many people are making a  
commitment. You can also take a photo of your action and paste it on the same form. If you  
wish you can send a copy of your commitment sheet, with photo if you like, to Richard. In

sending this copy you are agreeing that it can be shared on BUC media posts such as the website and worship

We would love you to give this commitment a go – and just try your best. Remember that not only humans depend on us taking action – all God’s creatures, including the animals we have blessed today need us to take action. Together we can make a difference

*In this Season of Creation we offer ourselves to care for God’s creation –  
God has blessed us with beauty and wonder.*

*God provides for our needs from the Earth and through the gifts we have been given  
We will strive to reduce our personal carbon footprint and care for creation.*

*Amen*

### **Season of Creation Prayer (edited) by UCA President Dr Deidre Palmer**

Offered by Abi Benham-Bannon

Creator God, in Christ Jesus you come to bring renewal and reconciliation to the whole of creation.

Guide us into the way of respect and care for the Earth and all living things.

We pray that you will renew our resolve to participate with you in the healing and renewal of our earth.

May your Holy Spirit strengthen us with courage,

to be bearers of your creative and life-giving presence in all the Earth.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Bread of Heaven,

Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

**Beth Shelton**

Let us carry into this time of prayer all the concerns of our hearts.

Lost loved ones and grieving friends.

Our families, communities and our church.

Our nation and the world.

Animals and plants and the very earth itself.

As I pray, we will see images of animals who are much in need of our prayers – creatures facing extinction from here in Victoria.

Let us pray.

Creator God, continue to uphold us amidst this pandemic. And help us to stay energised and focused on our work with you for climate justice, equality amongst the diversity of humanity, and dignity for your non-human creation.

We pray for people who are currently suffering from the effects of climate change, particularly communities who are still rebuilding after the bushfires and people in the Pacific. As we move closer towards the end of our isolation and long for normalcy again, we acknowledge those whose lives will never be the same, whether it be because of lost homes or lost loved ones.

We pray for the animals who are threatened by our lifestyles. Give us hearts to care and the will to act to preserve their habitat.

We thank you that birds continue to sing, mountains continue to stand, and rivers continue to run. We eagerly await a time when we can return to wild spaces and reconnect with your presence in the non-human world.

In the name of Jesus, healer, renewer and reconciler. Amen

## Song

Make Me a Channel of your Peace. TIS. 607

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*1. Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there is hatred let me bring your love;  
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;  
and where there's doubt, true faith in you.*

*O Master, grant that I may never seek  
so much to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

*2. Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;  
where there is darkness, let me bring your light;  
and where there's sadness, ever joy. Refrain*

*3. Make me a channel of your peace.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
in giving of ourselves that we receive,  
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.*

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## Blessing of the Animals

Blessed are you, our God, creator of all living things.  
You called forth fish in the sea, birds in the air and animals on the land,  
and made them our sisters and brothers.  
God bless the animals who are our companions.  
God bless the animals who live around us, sharing our city.  
God bless the animals who feed us.  
God bless the animals whose very existence is threatened.  
God bless all your beloved creatures.  
By the power of your love, enable them to live life in its fullness.  
and bless us to value them and praise you for their wonder.  
Blessed are you, our God, in all your creatures! Amen.

## Notices

**Saide Cameron**

Good morning. I'm Saide.

Last week Ian shared the news of Klaus Fiedler's tragic death. On Thursday this week at 7:30pm Ian will host an online gathering to remember and celebrate Klaus' life.

The Olive Branch will be published this afternoon. Lots of photos and lots to read as always. This month's edition includes:

- A tribute to Klaus written by Alistair Macrae
- A reflection on 'Committing to Climate Change', following on from today's offering story together with a link to the invitation to make our own commitments

- Plans for an All Saints Day and an Anniversary celebration in November as well as our preparations for Advent and Christmas worship
- Stories of two Olive Way people loved and lost - Trevor Silverwood and Mark Harper
- A celebration of art through the first Art for Wellbeing session and presentations being offered in the Olive Arts Zoom platform
- The exciting news that we have received a Moreland City Council Thrive Community grant which will be used to support our artists to connect
- A review of the 'Too Much Lip' from Claire Foley. I've bought and am already reading this book based on this review.

We continue to gather for conversation and creativity.

- On Monday the First Nations Awareness Group is meeting
- Julie Perrin will be presenting at the Olive Arts online
- Knit & Knatter sessions are lots of fun
- Daily meditation sessions offer a time apart from the activities of our day
- The Olive Pips, SMP, YUCY and Student House gatherings continue to offer support to our young people and their families

Next Sunday we welcome Geoff Thompson as our preacher while Ian enjoys a quieter week. He has deferred his planned week off until November.

Thank you to everyone who sent in photos of their pets, it has been a delight to celebrate the part they play in our lives during worship today. Join Ian after worship for the regular weekly Zoom Chat.

Read the Olive Branch, check out the Olive Press and our Facebook Group for details of all this and much much more.

## Sending Song

Made in God's Likeness (TIS. 671)

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*Made in God's likeness, moved by the Spirit,  
called to create a new world for the Lord,  
called to create a new world for the Lord.*

*1. Birds in the mountains sing of your praises,  
called in the morning to tell of your love;  
bell-birds and whipbirds sing of creation,  
celebrate always that Christ is the King.*

*2. Summoned at noontide, come now and follow,  
joyfully marching wherever you lead;  
roller birds stuntmen, kingfishers' laughter,  
clowns of creation in the circus of God.*

*3. Called in the night-time to act in your drama,  
to take on the Christ role, your script in our hearts;  
masked owl and bowerbird teach us to study  
the part we must play in the gifts we can share.*

*4. Called now at all times to wait on the Father,  
follow his lead as he partners our dance;  
brolga bird dances, retreats, and, returning,  
bowing at last to his partner, the Lord.*

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## Blessing

In your ongoing isolation may you know  
the blessing of friendship and peace  
the blessing of heart connection  
the blessing that moves you towards justice  
towards fullness of life  
towards profound joy in communion with all creatures.  
May you know the blessing of God  
Creation's Deep Source  
Creation's Companion  
Creation's Breath of Life  
Amen

## Thank You

### Liturgist:

Helen Burnham

### Lighting of Christ Candle:

James Clough

### Acknowledgement of

#### Country:

Smith Kirkwood

### Children's time:

Janet Watson Kruse

### Bible readings:

Jamie Thom

Clare Keogh

### Reflection:

Images - Rev Ian Ferguson  
(Minister of the Word)

Words - Julie Perrin

Musicians - Peter Blair

Daniel Broadstock

Matthew Lees

Catherine Leslie

Natalie Sims

Shawn Whelan

Prayer of the Empty Hands

from Uniting Earth Climate

Worship Liturgy May 2020

Music - Cantilena de los

Bosques by Leo Brouwer.

Noel Nouvelet, French

Traditional Melody. Public  
domain.

God's Mercy by Sheree  
Anderson.

Gather Us by Monica  
Brown.

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### Climate Action Offering:

Gwen Arnold

Richard Arnold

Abi Benham-Bannon

### Prayers of the people:

Beth Shelton

### Musicians:

Elaine Potter

(Co-ordinator)

Helen Burnham

Alistair Hunter

James Balsillie

Courtney Rohde

### Notices:

Saide Cameron

### Images:

Photos and Videos offered  
by the congregation

### Production:

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