

Order of Service, 22/11/2020, Christ the King

“just as you did it to one of the least of these my siblings, you did it to me”

Welcome

Welcome to worship with Brunswick Uniting Church today. My name is Julie Perrin and right now I am speaking to you from the north east of our state, near Wangaratta on Bpangerang country. I am visiting my cousin who lives on this beautiful farm.

Today we celebrate Christ the King, recognizing there are fresh and challenging ways in which to name that title. The Old Testament reading brings us the anointing of an unexpected kingly candidate – the shepherd boy David who later became the celebrated and flawed King David. The Gospel of Matthew brings us both harsh judgement and a bewilderingly beautiful vision of a world where what matters most is the care for the poor.

Opening prayer

Let us Pray:

Holy One who breathes through us,

We praise you for your Son Jesus of Nazareth, for the way he was so deeply at home with you.

We thank you for the courage and inspiration of the radical pattern of life that he lived.

We give thanks for the influence of Jesus' life and death, on a cloud of witnesses, both humble and magnificent.

May we hear your word today, and be restored in hope and faithful action.

May we know *God with us*.

Amen.

With the Psalmist we say:

Serve the LORD with gladness

and come before God's presence with a song.

Enter God's gates with thanksgiving; go into the holy courts with praise.

Song

ATW487 Make your home in me, Fay White

*Make your home in me
As I make my home in you
I am everywhere that you can be
Make your home in me*

*If you fly to the point of the day's sunrise
Or westward across the sea
If you travel to the uttermost ends of the earth
There I will be*

Make your home in me. . .

*I knew you and loved you before you were born
As a child in you mother's womb
I have seen your struggles in the secret place
I know you through and through (and still I love you)*

Make your home in me. . .

*You will find me in the faces of the broken ones
In the sick, the troubled and the poor
You will find me in the wounds of your very own soul
I am knocking at your own heart's door*

Make your home in me. . .

SONG: Make your home in me, by Fay White © 1998, from All together whatever, Open Book Publishers,
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Candle Lighting

Deb Blackmore and Mike Denison

May this light shine that me may see
May this light of Christ shine on those in need
And burn in us to be the hands that
Feed, welcome, clothe, heal and visit.

Acknowledgement of Country

Robert Sargent

Robert reads from a site where Yorta Yorta people resettled after the Cummeragunja walk-off of 1939.

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 Confession

Great God,
sometimes we confess we would rather have a ruler and a set of rules
than a Lover of freedom like you.
We want someone who will sort us out, sheep from goats, right from wrong, this side, that side.
Our ancestors sought this too. When they were oppressed, they wanted their oppressors
punished.
And your word keeps telling us it is all about how we treat each other, here, now, on earth.

It is easy for us to hide from oppression. We turn away from or do not see the gouged earth, the
ruined rivers the razed forests that are the cost of our consumption.
We do not see the slave labour that provides the goods at prices we find attractive.
We do not see the dispossessed First Peoples and we are not ready to pay the rent.
We take belonging to our home, this country, Australia, as a right.
Our government repels refugees in dire need.
And then, we are so crushed at the thought of what is done in our name, that we fall silent,
overwhelmed, defeated.

Holy One, we ask you to forgive us, to stand us up again when we fall down
and to blow gentle and strong through us the winds of change,
of new understanding, of courageous action. Amen.

Word of Grace

This is the best of all:
when we are empty, God fills us;
when we are disheartened, God is compassionate;
when we are wounded, God brings healing;
when we confess our sin, God forgives.

Through Christ, in Christ, because of Christ
Our sin is forgiven
Thanks be to God

With the Children

Dave Hall, Dave Miller, Clementine and Harriet

A couple of David's talk about King David's life – born in Bethlehem, took on Goliath, captured Jerusalem and brought the Ark there to make it the holy city.

Hebrew Scriptures: Selected verses from the books of Samuel **Quilan Goff**

The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have found a new king among his sons."

Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, "Do you come in peace?" Samuel said, "I come in peace, to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." Samuel sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is now before me." But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; God does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but I look on the heart."

Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one."

Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one."

Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And Jesse said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Bring him here; for we will not sit down until he comes here."

Jesse brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.

... later, King David and his men marched to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here, even the blind and the lame will turn you back"—thinking, "David cannot come in here." Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion, which is now called the city of David.

David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the angels.

They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill... David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their

might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals, as they brought the ark in to Jerusalem.

Song

When I needed a neighbour (TIS629)

1. *When I needed a neighbour, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour, were you there?
And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there.*
 2. *I was hungry and thirsty, . . .*
 3. *I was cold, I was naked, . . .*
 4. *When I needed a shelter, . . .*
 5. *When I needed a healer, . . .*
 6. *When they put me in prison, . . .*
 7. *Wherever you travel, I'll be there, I'll be there,
wherever you travel, I'll be there...*
-

SONG: When I needed a neighbour, by Sydney Carter, from Together in Song, Harper Collins;
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Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:31-46

Meg Orton

Matthew 25:31-46

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

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

Reflection

Then the King said, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these my siblings, you did it to me.'

This is Natalie, the youngest member of our congregation who in the future will say, "Sure I was born in 2020 the year from hell but look how cute I was." Yes, friends, today I am going to make a flagrant assault on your hearts by playing the cuteness card.

Natalie was born in Australia, but is she Australian? Her parents came here by boat seeking refuge after July 2013 and 7 years later are still having their asylum claims processed. So while Natalie is very cute, is she not also one of the little ones, the least of these whom Jesus calls his siblings – a stranger in need of welcome?

The same is true of Natalie's proud mother (who is very happy for these photos to be shown today) – she spent years detained on Christmas Island, in Darwin, on Nauru and in the community here in Melbourne – a prisoner in need of liberation, another of the least of these Christ's siblings. And so too, Natalie's grandmother who underwent a medical transfer from Nauru to Melbourne: "I was sick and you visited me," says Jesus, "when you did it to one of the least of these my siblings."

This important passage about the sheep and the goats clearly says that there is a cosmic imperative upon everyone, upon all nations, all the people of the world, to show radical hospitality to the hungry, the thirsty, the refugees, the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned. It says that there is a radical divine identification with those who are marginalised, excluded and oppressed.

Unhappily, this passage also contains a harsh judgemental note of division – perhaps the opposite of what we need in our divided world right now. But among the sheep and the goats the separation made is not between left and right, or black and white, male and female, gay and straight, Xn and Moslem, city and country, rich and poor, native born and immigrant, but between those who care and those who don't, those who love and those who don't.

And of course, that division is one that cuts through the hearts of us all. For none of us are perfectly caring, completely unselfish, unfailingly loving – at least I'm not. This story says, in the end, our love for neighbour brings us into eternal communion with the one who is perfect love. And does it also say that the failure of our loving eternally separates us from that one? The Epistle to the Romans asserts the opposite: "nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus," declares Paul. That's a relief! – I'll take Paul's grace over Matthew's judgement anytime.

And by God's grace, Natalie is a part of our community, a member with us of Christ's family the church. Natalie and her family are subject to the extremely harsh judgemental divisions that have taken hold in our society and wider world. And as a result, in the light of today's gospel reading, her place in our community is vital and central – all our members are equally beloved, but Natalie brings something special. Because biblical scholars offer the uncomfortable and perhaps unwelcome insight that in this passage, those whom Jesus calls the little ones, the least of these my siblings, are his disciples. Whenever these phrases are used – "the little ones...the least of these" – in other places in the gospel of Matthew they always explicitly refer to the followers of Jesus, his disciples, the church, us.

Perhaps, like me, for you the poor and the church are mostly separate categories. Perhaps like me you think the church is called to care for the poor. If so, then according to Matthew, we have a problem, because in his vision, the church, Christ's followers are not just called to care for the poor and needy, but to identify with them – to be where they are and as they are. For the kingdom, the divine reign of love, draws near among those whom Jesus calls blessed, the blessed poor and needy, the blessed marginalised and persecuted. And since we the church, Christ's followers, are called to embody his reign of love on earth, we are called to be NOT a

church for the poor, but a church of the poor, a church of the beatitudes, the blessed poor in Spirit to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs.

What does it mean for us to embrace poverty, to identify with the excluded, marginalised and needy right here and now, today when we may in fact be numbered among the middle classes of a wealthy nation?

What can Natalie teach us in her happy innocence, knowing nothing yet of the divisions she is subject to? I think she can guide us well, because there is another place in the gospel of Matthew where Jesus teaches a very similar lesson to that of the sheep and goats (18:1-5). Back in Matthew chapter 18 the disciples come and ask Jesus, "Who is the greatest, the first, in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus puts a child among them and says, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes ME."

"...welcomes ME." says Jesus. "Just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to ME." says Jesus.

We see and understand children very differently today in our society than people did in the biblical world – the meaning of a child is different. Back then, while parents doubtless loved their children, they weren't seen as the first and most precious among beings. High infant mortality rates meant that their very existence was tenuous, and they had no social status, no value in the world until they could work or reproduce. They were the last and least among beings – status-less, powerless – and Jesus says, "Become like them. Because that is where and how I am. Humble like a child, the least of these."

And it makes no sense. Really Jesus? We are to transform the world with you not by embracing worldly power, but entering into your radical humility? By loving? Yes, by loving like an infant loves – tenaciously, unreservedly, unconditionally.

Sadly, the coronavirus will prevent Natalie from appearing in person as the baby Jesus in this year's Christmas Pageant. But she was born to play that role. For in welcoming her we welcome Christ himself. And in loving her we come that little bit closer to being a place ourselves where the world might come to love Christ even without knowing him.

Song

Our God who weeps (Tune In 50) by Kate Scull

*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

Offering

With the songwriter we say : Help us work in the world with you
With the Psalmist we say: we belong to the LORD, who made us,
we are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture.

May these gifts serve your work in the world
May we know that we are to be your presence in the world,
Help us work in the world with you.

Prayers of the People

Geoff Thompson

For our prayers of the people today, I invite you to recall our prayers of confession. Those prayers were offered and heard; forgiveness has been declared. Some of the themes from those prayers have surfaced in other parts of the service.

As forgiven people, our vision is turned outwards towards the world. Prayers of the people are part of that turning outwards. As we do, we know that the very realities we confessed remain forces that effect us and others.

So today, echoes of our prayer of confession will be the basis of our prayers of the people.

Let us pray:

We pray, loving God, for those whose lives are subject to unjust rulers.
Open our eyes to our own comfort with injustice and our tolerance of unjust rulers.

We pray for those entrusted with ruling: in government, institutions, businesses, churches
Open their hearts, minds and actions to fairness and humility.

We pray for those who rule with justice and compassion.
Open our hearts and voices to support, encourage and uphold them.

We pray for Australia's First Peoples as they seek to be liberated from the rule that has dispossessed them of their cultures and their lands.
Open our ears to their cries that we so easily ignore.

We pray for those who have sought refuge in this land but who have been imprisoned by heartless rules.
Opens our lives to their need for justice and freedom.

We pray for our own other churches that we might discover and live by the compassionate rule of Christ and stand with him amongst those we so often are unwilling to see, hear or touch.

As people forgiven by him, we pray in his name. Amen.

Notices

Matthew and Michael Cameron

Good morning.

I'm Matthew Cameron

And I'm Michael Cameron

And this is the BUC News

Lots to talk about today

There definitely is

- Advent worship packs
- Mulling in the Park
- the Pastoral Care Review
- Christmas Bowl Catalogue
- Coming out of lockdown
- And the pageant

Ok let's start with the Advent Worship Packs

The worship committee has organized these packs to bring us together during the advent.

There are two bags and the first one contains candles.

The second has a poster, Advent and Christmas postcards, a prayer for each week and a song.

The pack can be used as part of worship or on its own any time during the week.

The postcards have details of all the worship services.

Now how do people get these packs?

There are a couple of options – delivery or pick up from the manse.

Let Saide know if you can help with delivering packs.

See the Olive Press and Facebook for all the details.

The Mulling Group (for youngish adults) is meeting at Princes Park next Sunday 22nd November

They'll be discussing Climate Change, BUC and theology with Richard Arnold as the guest speaker.

And you can collect your Advent Pack.

The Pastoral Care review with Ann Mallaby is continuing.

You are invited to join an open meeting on Zoom on Thursday 3rd December at 7:30pm.

Questions to be explored include:

How do you experience care in our community?

What is there to celebrate?

What could we do better?

Today is the last day to order biscuits from the Christmas Bowl Catalogue.

But it is still possible to order preserves, gifts and Christmas Craft

And you can definitely still place a bid on Ann's watercolours.

The order form is being updated regularly. Download the latest version from Facebook.

As restrictions ease the worship committee is providing opportunities to gather for worship onsite.

This week's service is by invitation only for people who have not been able to access our online services.

But in the weeks to come we will open up to more people. See weekly updates on the website, Olive Press and Facebook.

The COVID reference group is meeting this week.

If you have any questions for the group please send an email to Helen Rowe.

Calling all angels, calling all angels

What are you doing?

Well the Christmas pageant is being filmed online this year, and our Director Caitlin would love a few more "angels" to join in one scene.

Right so if you want to be an angel contact Dave, our Children & Youth Pastor to find out more.

[Join Ian Ferguson for the post worship Zoom chat](#)

Check out the Olive Press on our website for full details of all the news.

Goodbye and thanks for listening.

Sending Song

TIS728 Jesu Christo reina reina ya!

(Jesus Christ reigns!)

1. *Jesucristo reina, reina, ya!*
Jesucristo reina, reina, ya!
Jesucristo reina, reina, ya!
Aleluya, amen! Aleluya, amen! Aleluya, amen!

(Jesus Christ heals)

2. *Jesucristo sana, sana, ya!*

(Jesus Christ loves.)

3. *Jesucristo ama, ama, ya!*

(Jesus Christ lives.)

4. *Jesucristo viva, viva, ya!*

(Jesus Christ saves.)

5. *Jesucristo salva, salva, ya!*
-

SONG: [Jesucristo Reina Ya](#), Anon. (from Argentina),
from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins *Religious*, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Blessing

May you make your home in God, as God makes her home in you,
She is everywhere that you can be. God says, 'Make your home in me.'

Jesus says 'You will find me in the faces of the broken ones,
in the sick, the troubled and the poor.

God has seen our struggles in the secret place.
God says, 'Make your home in me.'

May the blessing of this Holy One be upon you
in your heart, in your home and among the poor where Christ meets you.
Amen

Thank You

Liturgist:
Julie Perrin

Lighting of Christ Candle:
Deb Blackmore
Mikul Denison

Acknowledgement of
Country:
Robert Sargent

Children's time:
Clementine and Harriet
Loynd
Dave Miller
with assistance from
Clara Hall and Dave Hall
(Pastor: Children, Youth
and Young Adults)

Bible readings:
Quilan Goff
Meg Orton

Reflection:
Ian Ferguson
(Minister of the Word)

Prayers of the people:
Geoff Thompson

Musicians:
Natalie Sims (co-ordinator)
James Balsillie
Courtney Rohde
Dan Whelan
Shawn Whelan

Special thanks to Faye
White for her recording of
'Make your home in me'

Notices:
Matthew Cameron
Michael Cameron

Production:
Jane Allardice
David Cameron
Saide Cameron
Ian Ferguson
Dave Hall
Lydia Jacka

Images:
Title photos taken by
Jessica Kvansakul

Farm photos taken by Julie
Perrin
Locations, Sheep, Goats
and Hospitality:
Heather and Glen Miles, on
Bpangerang country near
Wangaratta, members of
Wangaratta Uniting Church
who have been joining us
in worship online during the
lockdown.

Samuel and David images:
www.freebibleimages.org
<http://myartblogcollection.blogspot.com/2018/03/a-pictorial-history-of-jerusalem.html>
<https://meetinggodinthemargin.com/2018/08/14/dealing-with-david-2-the-shepherd-boy/>

“just as you did it to one of the least of these my siblings, you did it to me”