

Welcome

Welcome to worship with Brunswick Uniting Church on this second Sunday of the Advent Season, with a focus on peace, shalom. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you...

Call to Worship

We breathe deeply of God's loving Spirit, and listen to the words of the Psalmist: "Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for God will speak peace to the people, to the faithful, to those who turn to God in their hearts. Surely... God's glory may dwell in our land."

Let us worship God together, remembering that God's future is a future of peace and God's future is not distant, it is here with us today.

Song: Prepare ye the Way of the Lord

Prepare ye the way of the Lord
Prepare ye the way of the Lord

SONG: [Prepare ye the way of the Lord](#)

Acknowledgement of Country

Stephanie Dykes

Speaking from Seattle, Washington, acknowledging the Duwamish people of the Coast Salish nation, and the Wurundjeri people.

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.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Let us pray:

We breathe. Slowly. Still our minds. Letting go of the cares of the week. They can wait. This is our time with you, God. Kairos time.

We breathe, we wait.

You come among us, huddled in our locked rooms, and say shalom, peace be with you, God's peace I leave with you. You breathe God's loving Spirit in to us, life-giving oxygen. It is enough.

In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord
In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord
In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord

Make straight in the desert a highway for our God
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God

Every valley shall be lifted
And every mountain and hill be made low
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together

This is your hope, O God
This is your shalom.

We give you thanks and praise.

Refrain (one time only): Peace Salam Shalom – Dave has underlaid

We confess O God, that this seems miles off
Ages away. We want your future now.
We are impatient for your reign to come
For your shalom.

We don't always live as if it is already here
In fact, we rarely live as if it is already here.
We are sorry, God.
We confess.

Word of Grace

Hear again these words of hope. God keeps coming. Energising us from the past, encountering us in the present, meeting us from the future.

In Christ, through Christ, and because of Christ, our sin is forgiven. Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Hebrew Scriptures: Isaiah 40: 1-11

Bella Taranto

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

A voice says, 'Cry out!' And I said, 'What shall I cry?' All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear say to the cities of Judah, 'Here is your God!' See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Advent Candle Lighting with the children

Dave H

December 6 is the feast day of St Nicholas. Dave will be near the chimney at home, with stockings, re-telling some of the life of Saint Nicholas.

Candle Lighting Jacob Ly and Tonia Beggs

The psalmist declares
Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each other

We pause, we wait, we hope.

We walk together through the wilderness of loss.
We listen for the voice of peace.
Help us to work for peace
for all people and all creation.
God's future is a future of peace.
We light this candle for peace.

Photos and artwork: PEACE

Candle Lighting Song - Flame of Love

1. Flame of love come
Holy Spirit
Make in us your
Cradle home
For the Christ child
Who will meet and
Walk with us til
We are grown

Flame of love
Holy Spirit
Make in us
Your cradle home
2. Light of laughter
Balm in sorrow
You have been our
Cradle home
Called our names in
to the Silence
Flame of love by
You we're known

Flame of love
Holy Spirit
Make in us
Your cradle home

SONG: [Flame of Love](#), Words: Julie Perrin, Music: Helen Burnham & Julie Perrin,
Arranged: Julia Potter & Elaine Potter. Used with permission

Gospel Reading: Mark 1: 1-8

Jamie Thom

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" ,

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

I've been listening to a podcast lately where people have recorded audio diaries of their COVID lockdown experiences. And I have to say it makes challenging listening, I can only take it in small doses. One woman, Sonia, described what it was like to be a café owner. She said that when she was young she wanted to be either a chef or an astronaut or Indiana Jones, and she reckons she chose the hardest one of the three. In the past 12 months, the smoke from local fires impacted her Christmas bookings and then as the COVID restrictions escalated, her business was broken down to the point where she wasn't earning enough to make one seventh of break-even. Eventually she decided to sell up for the sake of her own physical and mental well-being. Sonia had lost her peace and had to let go of her business to find it again.

Peace in the time of pandemic. Where are you in relation to that? What do you know of peace right now?

As we reflect on peace today, we are met in the gospel by John the Baptist someone who is not obviously a peaceful figure.

In the Scriptures Peace or Shalom in Hebrew, means a state of wholeness, the building up into completeness of what has been broken down. More than just the end of a war it is active cooperation between peoples and nations, more than just calm depths within, it is a heart in harmony with all life. Shalom is a vision of God's creation in loving unity, with compassionate communion between all creatures and their creator – a vision of wholeness. And the grand narratives of the Scriptures describe a movement towards this wholeness, this Shalom, through all their stories of brokenness and violence and injustice and their offer of healing and forgiveness and restoration.

And in the Christian story, John the Baptist is a small but significant figure in that movement towards Shalom. He is an embodiment of biblical prophecy. And one of the main tasks of prophets in the Scriptures is to point people to their brokenness and impel them towards the growth of shalom.

Here is an example. Let me introduce you to King Ahaziah of Israel – we find his story in 2 Kings 1. It is a story not often told because it's full of judgement and violence and death, it's the kind of story that gives the Bible a bad name but stay with me for minute. When we meet him, King Ahaziah is lying injured after an accident. And in lieu of medical treatment, he sends messengers to an oracle to find out whether he will recover or not. Unfortunately for him, he sends them to the oracle of Baal-Zebub god of Ekron (a foreign idol). And as I've mentioned before, there are only two sins in the bible, idolatry and injustice, and Ahaziah has just flagrantly broken that first commandment about not having other gods. So Yahweh the God of Israel, understandably offended, enlists the aid of a very special person ... it's Elijah the Tishbite.

Having sent off his messengers, Ahaziah is surprised by their quick return. "Why are you back so soon?" They reply, "A man met us on the way and said, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and tell him, 'Thus says the LORD: Is it because there is no God in Israel that you're running off to consult Baal-Zebub god of Ekron? Don't bother, for you shall not leave that bed – you're as good as dead already.'" The King is shaken but goes on the offensive. "What sort of man was it who dares to say this?" And they reply, "It was a hairy man, with a leather belt around his waist." The king gasps, "It is Elijah the Tishbite!" The story goes on from there with a lot of killing by fire, but I won't bore you with that because the moral of the story is already clear. Don't commit idolatry and look out for a hairy man with a leather belt around his waist.

And so back to John the Baptist. Just look what he is wearing as he enters the gospel story today – Mark writes: John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist (1:6). And as he gives these odd little details Mark expects his readers to be familiar with the moral of Ahaziah's story and to exclaim, "Gasp! It's Elijah the Tishbite!"

And Mark would also expect his readers to be familiar with the words of the prophet Malachi, the closing words of the Old Testament: 4:5 Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes.

So look out, John is Elijah! He stands in that great prophetic tradition crying out against the brokenness, the idolatry and injustice of the world.

Idolatry is the misapplication of power – it means giving ultimate authority to those people or powers who cannot bear it. It means making gods of money or race or nationality or the body beautiful or a political ideology or leader or any of the many other things that ultimately do not lead us to peace. Idolatry is a failure to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. And injustice is a failure to love our neighbour as ourselves.

John is there at the opening of the story of Jesus to draw our attention to the brokenness of the world Elijah style. But that is not all, because he also embodies another great prophetic theme. He is the messenger, the voice crying out in the wilderness. Mark opens his gospel with a quote part of which comes from our first bible reading this morning Isaiah chapter 40. I mentioned earlier that biblical prophets not only cry against the brokenness of the world, but also impel us towards the building of shalom. And Isaiah 40 is one of the key places where the latter happens. In that passage Isaiah speaks the people out of exile.

The Babylonian exile is interpreted in the Bible as God's punishment for Israel's idolatry. I don't take this literally – I'm not a big fan of interpreting global events (like the pandemic for example) as God's judgement – that's normally a horrible abuse of religion. And if you're someone who has been told that God is judging and punishing your lifestyle or your sexual orientation or your moral choices, then you know that only too well. Isaiah 40 is saying that God makes a way back from that kind of brokenness – the abuse of power and religion – a way back to our true home of Shalom. The voice crying out in the wilderness says prepare that way of peace through the mountains and valleys, the rough terrain of the world's brokenness.

John the Baptist stands in that rough place, that wilderness, he stands there embodying Elijah and Isaiah indicating brokenness and declaring restoration. John points to Jesus and says here is the way, the way from brokenness to peace.

When Sonia decided to sell her beloved business, her café, she acknowledged that it would be difficult to find a buyer in this challenging time. But she said having made that heart-breaking decision, "I feel this big sense of relief that I'm going to be free of that responsibility..." – responsibility for her staff and her loan and her own unmet expenses. She still has great challenges ahead, but she says she's looking forward to making a wage again. She's still journeying through the wilderness, but she feels herself to be on the way of peace.

What do you know of peace right now? Where are you on that wilderness way?

Reflective music: Peace Salam Shalom

One of the great symbols of Shalom is a feast, a wedding banquet, where all creation communes together with God at a great celebratory meal. When we share holy Communion, that's what we are doing – we are prefiguring that feast and being fed for the journey through the wilderness to Shalom.

As we continue to fast from the feast during the pandemic, I place this empty plate and cup in our Advent garden – a sign of our hope, a sign of peace.

Maranatha, come Lord Jesus. Fulfil our hope of peace for all creation. Amen

Offering

During Advent we will focus on the Christmas Bowl Appeal. Each week we will hear from people in different parts of the world to whom offerings from the Christmas Bowl are extended. This week we visit Rohingya people in the Jamtoli refugee camp in Bangladesh.

[Christmas Bowl video included in Offering Video](#)

Dedication of the offering, Christmas Bowl Worship Resource

Let us pray. We give thanks for the prophetic voice of John the Baptist, and others whom God, has sent to point our feet along the path of true peace. May our giving contribute to the peace-building work of Christ as we take our place as co-workers with him for the healing of God's world. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Jim Kilpatrick

God of the growing forest

Who pushes trees up from the earth through ash-strewn undergrowth

We pray for the world: may the world wait, expectantly. May the world find peace after war, health after illness, renewal after destruction. May the turning of the seasons remind us of nature, yet also, the eternal.

In your mercy, hear our prayers. We watch. We wait.

In your mercy, hear our prayers. We watch. We wait.

We pray for the Church. May the Church wait, expectantly. May the Church heed that voice that cries in the wilderness "Prepare the way of the Lord". May the Church find the strength to rebound, rebuild, reconnect. May the Church celebrate a new liturgical year: as in nature, dynamic, yet eternal.

In your mercy, hear our prayers. We watch. We wait.

In your mercy, hear our prayers. We watch. We wait.

We pray for those in need. May they wait, expectantly. May they welcome the shepherd who feeds us and gathers us. May they find the strength to rebuild after a harsh season of fire and destruction. May they find creative ways to celebrate, or to mourn. May they celebrate Advent: as in nature, a time of growth, yet eternal.

In your mercy, hear our prayers. We watch. We wait.

In your mercy, hear our prayers. We watch. We wait.

In the name of Christ the sky, wind, growing trees, leaves that sprout praise

Amen

Notices

Michael and Matthew Cameron

Good morning.

I'm Matthew Cameron

And I'm Michael Cameron

And this is the BUC News

Did you read the December Olive Branch this week?

No I haven't. Why do you ask?

I heard Mum talking about some of the committees looking for new members in 2021

That's right so she did. Do you remember which ones?

Hmm - the Justice & Mission Committee, the Olive Way Steering Group and the BUC Arts committee.

Oh and what about the Children, Youth & Young Adult Committee? I heard that Anita is retiring from chairing the committee.

Yes and they are looking for new members for both the CYYA & Student House Committees.

Sounds like great ways to get involved in supporting the ministries of our congregation.

Check out the December Olive Branch for details.

And on a different topic I saw an email this week about worshipping on-site.

Yes there was. What was it all about?

The 2pm worship service on Sundays is now open to anyone who wants to come along.

What about the 80 person limit?

The email said for people to call or email Ian if they are planning to come along.

When is the deadline for this?

Midday today.

And there will be a QR code to make signing in very easy when you arrive

Look for 'Moving towards COVID normal' for all the details.

What else do we need to know about?

Julie Perrin's new book 'A prayer, a plea, a bird' has been published by MediaCom.

Lovely title. How do people order the book?

Go to the MediaCom website and if you place your order by 11th December it will arrive in time for Christmas

Great Christmas gift idea.

The Climate Action Group continues to keep us informed about ways we can make a difference

That's right - Green Faith International has a Sacred People Sacred Earth campaign

And there is a Living the Change event this afternoon from 3-5:30.

This is interesting too - Moreland City Council has launched the new Zero Carbon Moreland website and we have a profile on it.

See Climate Action News in the Olive Press for details

Anything else?

Fiona has lots of donated university books free to a good home.

That's right - there's a list in the Olive Press. Fiona invites you to make a donation to the Indigenous Literacy Foundation.

Speaking of donations remember that our congregation is continuing our tradition of supporting the Act for Peace Christmas Bowl appeal.

Use the link in the Olive Press to make your donation through the BUC page.

Time is running out if you want to contribute to the Christmas Carol recordings.

If you've lost the links give Shawn a call but don't delay. There is lots of production work to be done to get the songs ready for worship.

I think that's nearly everything.

Definitely. Just a reminder that our Blue Christmas service is on ...

Wednesday 16th December at 7:30pm.

Please see the Events calendar on the website for more details.

And I think we're done - for this week!!

Join Ian for the post worship Zoom chat

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

And if you go to worship this afternoon you can pick up a copy of the Crosslight magazine.

Goodbye and thanks for listening.

Sending Song: A voice is heard

1. Refrain

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.

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. Refrain

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.

Refrain

SONG: [A voice is heard](#), by Trisha Watts & Monica O'Brien © Willow Connection 1998, from [It all depends](#),
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Blessing

Go to be part of God's reconstruction effort,
levelling mountains of prejudice and lifting boulders of fear.
Prince of Peace, make us partners with you in building peace.

May God, Creator, Redeemer, and Life-giving Spirit strengthen and guide you always,
to declare God's reign of peace.

In the name of Christ.

Amen

Thank You

Liturgist:

Dave Hall (Pastor: Children,
Youth and Young Adults)

Advent Candle Lighting with the Children:

Tonia Beggs and Jacob Ly
Patrick Hall
Prayer by Saide Cameron

Acknowledgement of Country:

Stephanie Dykes, Seattle
Washington

Bible readings:

Bella Taranto
Jamie Thom

Reflection:

Ian Ferguson
(Minister of the Word)

Prayers of the People:

Jim Kilpatrick

Musicians:

Alistair Hunter
(co-ordinator)
Simone Alesich
James Balsillie
Glenice Cook
Ian Ferguson
Steph Gesling & Josh Whitty,
Joel Hallinan
Jess and Anya Kvensakul,
Maxine, Clementine & Harriet
Loynd,
Dave Miller
Charlotte Pitt
Elaine Potter
Courtney Rohde
Kate Scull
Natalie Sims
Daniel Whelan
Shawn Whelan

Advent Song - Flame of Love
Julie Perrin
Helen Burnham
Julia Potter
Elaine Potter

Notices:

Matthew Cameron
Michael Cameron

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<https://bellemorgen.wordpress.com/2013/12/19/sinterklaas-in-the-netherlands/>
<https://charlotteriggle.com/st-nicholas-and-arius-at-the-council-of-nicea/>

Production:

Ray Cameron
Saide Cameron
Ian Ferguson
Dave Hall
Lydia Jacka
Lauren Reader

... and thank you for joining us for this worship service.

God's future is a future of peace.