

Order of Service 17/1/21

Opening verse on screen

“...you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man’ John 1:51

Gathering,

- *Before we begin, may I remind you of a few housekeeping things...*
- *Please make sure you have signed in, either using your phone or on the pieces of paper at the entry.*
- *The yellow squares have been placed on the pews to help us keep 1.5 metres apart (unless we from the same household.) Please sit near a yellow square.*
- *Please keep your masks on, unless you are leading worship.*
- *And now let us take a moment ... pause and prepare yourself to focus on worship.*

Greeting and Call to Worship

Kirsty

Come to worship God!

God who knows us before we know ourselves

Son of God who calls us to follow

And the Spirit, whose presence is among us.

Song

Kirsty

O God, you search me and you know me AoV2-031

1. O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down you are before me:
Ever the maker and keeper of my days.
2. You know my resting and my rising.
You discern my purpose from afar,
and with love everlasting you besiege me:
In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are.
3. Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
you have know its meaning through and through.
You are with me beyond my understanding:
God of my present, my past and future, too.
4. Although your Spirit is upon me,
still I search for shelter from your light.
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight.
5. For you created me and shaped me,
gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonders of who I am I praise you:
Safe in your hands all creation is made new.

SONG: O God, you search me, © 1993 Bernadette Farrell, from As One Voice, vol 2, Willow Connection Pty. Ltd.
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Acknowledgement of Country

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.

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to worship this morning! It is lovely to be here together in Brunswick and to have people joining us on-line too.

My name is Kirsty and along with Elaine and the musicians, Meredith and Tim, I will be leading worship this morning. We are delighted to have one of our own congregation members Graeme Garrett preaching for us, while our minister Ian takes some leave.

Today is second Sunday of Epiphany, a time which focusses on the revealing of God, the manifestation of God. We will be reflecting on the grace and love of God, and how we respond to God's call.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Lord, Son of God, King of Israel,

You search us and know us
Our thoughts, our ways, our paths.
From our mothers' wombs to our lying down
You lay your hand upon us.

Son of God, King of Israel,
You call us to follow you
You see us before we know you
And prepare to receive us.

Your spirit is always with us, no matter how far we roam.
You light up the darkness
So that night is as bright as day
And you hold us fast.

We adore you.

Forgive us when we stray from your way, from your path,
When we do not feel your hand and your presence with us, and instead we doubt.

Forgive us when we do not follow you, when we head off in our own direction,
Making judgements and letting pre conceived ideas influence us.

Forgive us when we give in to the darkness,
When we do not see your light and we forget that we are always held by you.
Amen.

Declaration of Forgiveness

Kirsty

Jesus is with us and calls us.
Jesus knows us and holds us in God's vision, always.
And so we can say with confidence
Our sin is forgiven
'Thanks be to God'.

Song

Kirsty

I Was There to Hear Your Boring Cry ATOK 320

I was there to hear your boring cry,
I'll be there when you are old.
I rejoiced the day you were baptized,
to see your life unfold.

I was there when you were but a child,
with a faith to suit you well;
In a blaze of light you wandered off
to find where demons dwell."

"When you heard the wonder of the Word
I was there to cheer you on;
You were raised to praise the living Lord,
to whom you now belong.

If you find someone to share your time
and you join your hearts as one,
I'll be there to make your verses rhyme
from dusk 'till rising sun."

In the middle ages of your life,
not too old, no longer young,
I'll be there to guide you through the night,
complete what I've begun.

When the evening gently closes in,
and you shut your weary eyes,
I'll be there as I have always been
with just one more surprise."

"I was there to hear your boring cry,
I'll be there when you are old.
I rejoiced the day you were baptized,
to see your life unfold."

SONG: [I was there to hear your boring cry](#), by John Ylvisaker, from [All together okay](#), Openbook Publishers, ;
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Bible Reading-John 1:43-51

Meredith

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' When Jesus saw Nathanael coming

towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you,* you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

With the Children

Joel

Song

Come with me / Sing hey for the carpenter Iona (HSNW)

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.

4. Come leave your possessions, come share out your treasure,
Come give and receive without method or measure.
Come loose ev'ry bond that's resisting the Spirit,
Enabling the earth to be yours to inherit.

SONG: Sing hey for the carpenter, from Heaven shall not wait © Wild Goose Publications, Iona Community, Glasgow, Scotland.
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Bible Readings-Psalm 139:1-18

Meredith

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night',
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end*—I am still with you.

Sermon - A trinity of angels?

Graeme

Listen to Graeme's sermon here: <https://soundcloud.com/user-395259634/20210117-epiphany-2-gg>

When authorities want to alert us to some significant change in the Covid-19 situation, they often talk epicentres. 'The *epicentre* of the pandemic has moved from New York to Los Angeles.' 'The epicentre of the virus is now in the northern beaches of Sydney.' That puzzles me. Why not just 'centre'. Why *epicentre*?

Epi is a prefix, a little qualifier attached to another word. There are lots of examples: epidemic, epidermis, epigraph, epithet. Its origin is Greek. Track it down, and you discover that *epi* is amazingly versatile. It can mean a dozen things: upon, near, above, against, in the neighbourhood, and so on.

In geology, *epicentre* has to do with earthquakes. We speak of the *epicentre* of an earthquake being, say, Auckland, or Manila. Again, why not just 'centre'? The answer is that earthquakes occur deep in the Earth's crust, 5, 10 kilometres below the surface. Down there, out of sight, is the true centre of the event; the heart of the disturbance. Great tectonic plates suddenly shift. The shock of that movement radiates out in all directions; some reaching the surface of the earth kilometres above. The greatest surface shock is felt at the point directly above the deep centre of the quake - the *epi*-centre. The centre *above*, but in the *neighbourhood* of, the originating source of the disturbance.

That parallels coronavirus. The heart of the Covid-19 event is the migration of the virus from the animal realm to the human. We can't see that, any more than we can see the movement of tectonic plates. But that migration is the critical upheaval that occurred in early 2020. Its radiation impacts different places and circumstances. These become the *epi*-centres; local manifestations of an originating eruption.

Well, all that because today is the second Sunday in Epiphany. And epiphany is one of those *epi* terms, made up of two Greek words: *epi* – that prefix; and *phaneros*, which means ‘make manifest’, or ‘show’.

In the Gospel of John, the central revelation (*phaneros*) of God is the coming of Jesus. The Word, which John says was in the beginning with God; the Word which was God; this divine creative energy became flesh in Jesus, ‘and dwelt amongst us’ (Jn 1:14). And, says John, ‘we have seen his glory ... full of grace and truth.’ That’s the gospel. The great revelation of God’s love.

We can’t see it directly, just as we can’t see the origin of the earthquake or the coronavirus. What we *can* see is local manifestations; eruptions in this place and in that. These are the *epi-phaneroi*; the epiphanies, which this season highlights.

Exactly that is what the story of Nathanael is about. Phillip, along with Andrew and Peter, had already been drawn into the orbit of Jesus. ‘We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.’ But when he tries to share his enthusiasm with Nathanael, he meets robust scepticism. ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth!’ Phillip answers simply: ‘Come and see’.

And Nathanael goes. But before he can speak, Jesus identifies him. ‘Here is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!’ Nathanael is taken aback. ‘Where did *you* get to know me?’ Jesus replies, ‘I saw you under the fig tree *before* Phillip called you.’ Remember that. That is a major feature of any genuine epiphany. We may think we take initiative in coming to see Jesus. But we discover, like Nathanael, that Christ already sees us prior to any seeing we may catch of him. Our local meeting with God’s grace and truth is always made possible by that wellspring revelation we call Christmas. No *epi-phaneroi*, without the originating *phaneros*.

Nathanael is convinced. ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God!’ Jesus says, ‘Do you believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree?’ Then he makes a strange promise to Nathanael. ‘You will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’

Jesus is described in the NT in many ways. Sometimes pictures: lamb, lion, door, bread. Or titles: Lord, Christ, King. Or abstract ideas: Son of God, Son of Man, Redeemer, Word. But this identification is unusual. Jesus as a ladder – even ‘escalator’ – upon which angels ride up and down, between heaven and earth!

We tend to be coy about angels. Okay perhaps for the kids at Christmas. But not something to take too seriously. And yet, angels are really nothing more than *epi-phaneroi*. Local manifestations of grace. Jesus promises Nathanael, ‘You will see, through me, a series of *epi-phaneroi* – local manifestations of God’s presence.’ Angels.

Is that true? Did angels ascend and descend on Jesus? Well, yes. The gospel highlights three major points where angels appear in the life of Jesus.

First, his birth. Jesus’ mother had no idea what was in store. But Mary discovered, like Nathanael, that she was already held firmly in God’s gaze. In Luke we read that an angel was sent by God to Mary: ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High.’

Second, his death. For Mary Magdalene the cross seemed an absolute disaster; the crushing of life and hope, for Jesus; for herself. But she, too, discovers that God’s prior vision enfolds all this tumult within its gracious horizon. An angel of the Lord appeared to Mary at the empty tomb: ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised ...’ And echoing Phillip’s words to Nathanael long before, the angel goes on ... ‘Come and see the place where he lay.’ (Mt 28:5-6).

Third, his temptation. At the outset of his ministry, just after his Baptism, Jesus enters a wilderness; a place of isolation, hunger, and danger; of spiritual confusion, moral threat and self-doubt. There he undergoes a lonely battle against demonic attack. After a gruelling 40 days and 40 nights, the darkness lifts. The devil left him, the text says, ‘and suddenly angels came and waited on him’. (Matt 4:11)

Birth. Death. Struggle. These three moments in Jesus’ life, were moments of the coming of angels.

What about us?

If anything is certain in this uncertain life – birth, death and struggle *will* shape *our* lives as they shaped his. Could these hold for us, also, the possibility of angelic appearances, if only we could see it?

A lot in Scripture suggests this to be the case. Psalm 139 is a famous case in point.

Remember how the psalm begins. We are held by God's gaze long before we ever come to any *epi-phaneros* of our own. 'O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away ...' That's Nathanael under the fig tree. That's you and me in this church. God holds the initiative in any epiphany of God's grace, glory or truth. Not us.

Then our *birth*; indeed our conception, according to the psalm, is already an expression of God's gracious intention toward us. 'For it was you [God] who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.' That's the angel's message to Mary about Jesus. The psalm invites us to see *ourselves* belonging to that same dynamic. Our birth is not merely a function of accidental operations of blind molecular forces. It is also a gift of God. 'In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.' What a remarkable thing to say to us. Your life, my life, is an intention of God; an invitation to become co-creators in God's creation. God's first call to us is the call to be. Our first response to God's call is to be here. (Jean-Louis Chrétien)

Second, our *death*. At the empty tomb of the crucified Jesus, the angel said to Mary Magdalene, 'He is not here; for he has been raised ... Come, see the place where he lay.' Psalm 139 draws us into that angelic manifestation. 'If I make my bed in Sheol [that is, the place of the dead] you [God] are there.'

I know we Christians sometimes speak rather glibly about death. The famous hymn of St Francis, which talks so beautifully about the epiphanies of God in creation; in the sun, moon, stars and so on, comes finally to death. You remember the words. 'And thou most kind and gentle death, waiting to hush our latest breath, O praise Him.' At first blush that sounds trite, even callous. How many of us have experienced the death of those we love as anything but kind and gentle.

But St Francis wasn't some theological romantic. He knew what he was saying. The poem goes on: 'Thou leadest home the child of God' ... and here's the crucial bit ... 'And Christ our Lord the way has trod.' Francis knew, as Mary knew, Jesus' path to death was anything but kind and gentle. And yet, the hidden grace and truth of the matter is: that seemingly godforsaken end was Jesus' pathway home to God. 'Come and see', said the angel.

Finally, struggle. Angels, we are told, came and waited on Jesus in his dark struggle in the wilderness. Again, the psalm concurs on our behalf. 'If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.'

We have just been through a year of horrible darkness – threat, fear, isolation and death. A wilderness experience of global proportions. Of course, it is terrible; and of course, we need to work to find ways to protect ourselves from it. But is it possible that this, our wilderness experience, is not just something to abhor; an enemy to defeat? Is it possible that this wilderness, like the wilderness Jesus endured, might also be a place of angels; a place of epiphany, which recalls us to the implications of the great *eruption* of the grace and truth that dwelt amongst us at Christmas?

If we stop for a moment and face it, isn't it true that we been delivered a message in the midst of the uproar of Covid-19? A message that erupts from the depths of the Word that was in the beginning with God? Is it not challenging us, right now, to wake up to the urgent need to change our human dominance, greed and unbridled devouring of God's creation all around? Is it not showing us, in this very darkness, the devastating consequences of exclusion, injustice and inequality in our human societies and politics?

Jesus said to Nathanael, 'truly, I tell you, you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

The crucial question is: Will we have the courage to open our eyes to their presence and respond to their epiphanic message?

Reflective Music

Song and Offering

Kirsty

We offer our gifts to God. Today Amelia and Chris will stand with the offering bowl in the space in front of the table. Please bring your offerings forward or you may like to place them in the bowl after the service. Please remain seated as we sing and make our offering.

The God that I Know Tune in

1. He comes with his arms open wide,
a sheltering place I can hide
and my deepest fears, questions and tears
I can face with his strength as my guide.
2. She comes with a smile on her face,
loving kindness my wrongs to erase
and my company she keeps, for the pleasure it reaps
my life she will renew with her grace.
3. Both father and mother to me,
more loving than parents can be
the God that I know, is a stranger no more,
but the place where I find myself free.
4. As I walk this earth on my own,
I carry a promise that I'm not alone
a gift that is mine, for all of my time,
love that lets me know that I am home
love that lets me know that I am home
love that lets me know that I am home

SONG: The God that I know, by Sheree Anderson, © 2004,
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Let us pray...

God who knows us before we know ourselves and calls us to follow
We offer ourselves, our time, our talents, our resources to you,
In the name of Christ. Amen

Prayers of the People

Tim

Let us pray.

We can never travel too far from you, dear God. You are in the galaxies and in the depths of the sea, in all of history and in the arc of the future. You never leave us for you are the ground of our being. You invite us to live our true lives, to leave behind those things which hold us back and hold us down. You invite us to follow you in new and challenging ways, to keep working for your kingdom, to keep serving you in the world.

Help us to be the people of God. In order to do this, help us to put aside old hurts, bitterness and regret. Help us to forgive – ourselves and others. Give us strength to move past the comfort of familiar ways, in order to embrace new opportunities, new perspectives and hope.

In this New Year, may we look for signs of your Spirit at work, that we may find new life. Where are you leading us God, as individuals and as a church? What would you have us do, how are you calling us? Help us to have the courage to take on new challenges and may we have the wisdom to know the leading of your Spirit. We know already those things which are close to your heart: a sense of justice; a love for creation; a dedication to peace; a commitment to reconciliation. How would you have us pursue these things in this year, what is the work that you would have us do?

We pray that as individuals and in our life together, that we may know you better in this year ahead. May our lives be open to new ways of seeing you and growing closer to you and to each other. Help us to seek you in prayer, in community, in service to others, in creation. May our minds be open to new understandings, to new insights, open our hearts that we might learn more about your love.

Loving God, we bring our personal concerns and prayers to you, knowing that you are already sharing in them. We remember friends and loved ones who need a sense of your healing spirit, your peace and a sense of your presence.

We think of them now. We think of loved ones and those dear to us who are absent, travelling, unwell, lonely or overwhelmed with life. Touch their lives we pray, may they know your love and may we know better how to support them.

We pray for our nation. We pray for justice and we pray for our leaders. May they be men and women who care about the welfare and wellbeing of all people, here and around the world. May their decisions be guided by a desire for equality, for the welfare of those who are marginalised and oppressed, and for the restoration of our damaged environment. May they be motivated by justice rather than greed and may they be people who seek peace. Help us too to be influencers and to never give up working for the values of your kingdom.

We pray also for nations and places around the world. For those countries reeling from the impact of the coronavirus, we pray for policies and practices which will offer healing, hope and comfort. May this virus mark a turning-point for our world, an opportunity to think again about what is important, a renewed commitment to good health systems and greater control over greed and financial markets. We pray for countries where poverty, oppression and war still rage. Dear God, we pray for peace, for a change in the hearts and minds of those leaders who seek power without justice, who refuse to listen to voices of peace. And we pray for all global leaders, including Australia, in their deliberations on climate change and climate justice. Forgive them and forgive us for being slow to change our ways. May they have the courage to repent of policies which are destroying the world, may there be a turning; a commitment to honour this planet and a change in values and priorities. Again, help us to know how to influence for change.

Loving God, sometimes we feel overwhelmed by our calling as your people. But we know that you are with us, that you are present among us and in this world and that you guide us, always offering hope and a new future. Help us to embrace this future, to know that you are there and that you seek to welcome us to a different way of living. Help us to keep discovering what it means to be the people of God. Amen.

Notices

Kirsty

It's time now for notices. Please line up to my right, say your name and share your notice in a sentence or two. Please also take note of the weekly newsletter, the Olive Press and check out our website as well.

There won't be morning tea after today's service but please, stay and chat either in the worship space or outside ... and remember to keep your distance.

Song

Kirsty

We are the dream that's longing / Jesus is waiting Tune in

We are the dream that's longing always to be free

we are the story not complete

we look for healing from paralysis of fear

we are the ones who know defeat,

we are the ones who know defeat

But Jesus is waiting, Jesus is listening,

Jesus is present, Jesus creating

We are the lame who look for ways to walk anew

we are the blind who cannot see

we are the friends who watch the sick from on the roof

we want to interrupt the scene, we want to interrupt the scene

while Jesus is working, Jesus is healing,

Jesus forgiving, Jesus is leading

Come be our liberator, bless and make us free

come be the light upon the shore

come be the freedom for the prison of our time

come now and open up the door,

come now and open up the door

and Jesus is knocking, Jesus is saving,
Jesus is working, Jesus is waiting
Jesus is knocking, Jesus is waiting,
Jesus is healing, Jesus creating

SONG: Jesus is waiting, by Dave Brown, from Tune In, Brunswick UC Songbook, Reproduced with permission

Blessing

Kirsty

Go,
Knowing that you are held in God's vision
God has seen each of us,
God holds us and loves us.
And so may we go and love others.
In the name of Christ, Amen.

Song

Kirsty

Send me Jesus / Thuma mina TiS 749

1. (*Thuma mina*) Thuma mina, Thuma mina, thuma mina Somandla.
- 1a. (*Send me, Lord*) Send me, Jesus; send me, Jesus; send me Jesus; send me, Lord.
2. (*Lead me, Lord*) Lead me, Jesus, lead me, Jesus, lead me, Jesus, lead me, Lord.
3. (*Fill me, Lord*) Fill me, Jesus, fill me, Jesus, fill me, Jesus, fill me, Lord.
4. (*I will go, Lord*) I will go, Lord; I will go, Lord: in your name, Lord I will go.

SONG: Thuma mina from Together in Song, Harper Collins Religious; copyright uncertain

Thank you

Liturgist:
Kirsty Bennett

Prayers of the People:
Tim Budge

Welcomers:
Glenice Cook
Chris Emmanuel
Amelia Ware

Children's time
Joel Hallinan

Musicians:
Elaine Potter (co-ordinator)
Helen Burnham

Production:
Jane Allardice
David Cameron
Ray Cameron
Saide Cameron
Mal Rowe
Oliver Sun
Shawn Whelan

Bible readings:
Meredith Budge

Joel Hallinan
Bronte Potter
Kate Scull

Sermon:
Rev. Graeme Garrett

Closing verse on screen

"...you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man' John 1:51