

Opening verse: *Do not worry I am with you. Do not fear you're not alone.*

Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship

Dave

The God of rainbow hope, peace and promise be with you all.

And also with you.

God said to our spiritual ancestor Abraham,
*I will establish my covenant between me and you,
and your offspring after you throughout their generations,
for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.*

Let us worship the God of Abraham and Sarah, the God of Jesus Christ,
who gathers us in love and unity, and promises a future of peace.

Song

Praise with Joy the world's Creator TIS179

- 1. Praise with joy the world's Creator,
God of justice, love and peace,
Source and end of human knowledge,
Force of greatness without cease.
Celebrate the Maker's glory -
Power to rescue and release.*
 - 2. Praise the Son who feeds the hungry,
Frees the captive, finds the lost,
Heals the sick, upsets religion,
Fearless both of fate and cost,
Celebrate Christ's constant presence,
Friend and Stranger, Guest and Host.*
 - 3. Praise the Spirit sent among us,
Liberating truth from pride,
Forging bonds where race or gender,
Age or nation dare divide.
Celebrate the Spirit's treasure -
Foolishness none dare deride.*
 - 4. Praise the Maker, Son and Spirit,
One God in community,
Calling Christians to embody
Oneness and diversity.
Thus the world shall yet believe, when
Shown Christ's vibrant unity.*
-

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Acknowledgement of Country

Ralph Eduardo

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

Dave

Welcome to those present in person, those joining us on the live-stream, and those in the overflow space.

Today is the Second Sunday in the season of Lent. 40 days leading up to Easter Sunday. Throughout this season we will be exploring the big theme of covenant, God's promise of faithful love. Last Sunday, it was God's covenant with Noah, and the rainbow that spans, all the way around. Today, it's God's covenant with Abram and Sarai – not just promised land, but the promise of descendants.

So, children of Sarah and Abraham, children of God's promise, welcome to worship today, wherever you are joining us. The Christ Candle remains unlit through Lent, awaiting the day of resurrection. I'm Dave, and together with our preacher for today, Peter Blair, our musicians, and a number of our Student House community, we worship God.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

(including The Lord's Prayer) Matilda McClintock, Oliver Sun, Jungwoo Choi

Matilda: During our prayers of Adoration and Confession there will be a sung response, *Longing for you*.

Through the 40 days of Lent we remember the 40 days Jesus spent being tested in the wilderness, hungry and longing for the guidance of God's Holy Spirit. Let us enter prayerfully into that experience of longing with him now.

*Longing for you in wilderness wasting.
Call to us lead us on.*

SONG: [Longing](#), by Elaine Loukes, from [Tune In](#), Brunswick UC Songbook, Reproduced with permission

Oliver Sun: God of Abraham, God of Sarah,
God of promise, God of fruitfulness,
you give birth to life
even in the most unlikely places.
We long for you...

*Longing for you in wilderness wasting.
Call to us lead us on.*

Matilda: God of Jesus Christ, God of the cross,
God in darkness, God in abandonment,
our endings are new beginnings in you.
We long for you...

*Longing for you in wilderness wasting.
Call to us lead us on.*

Oliver Sun: God of Spirit presence,
God of surprises, God who rises,
you come to us in our wilderness places.
We long for you...

*Longing for you in wilderness wasting.
Call to us lead us on.*

Matilda: God of future fullness, God of present possibility,
you are our God, we are your people.
Call to us, lead us on ...

*Longing for you in wilderness wasting.
Call to us lead us on.*

Oliver Sun: In the silence,
we hold before you,
all that we are,
all that we have failed to be,
and all that we might become.

Silence

Oliver Sun: Holy One, weep the healing tears of your mercy
to mingle with the tears of our hearts' longing.
By the power of your renewing Spirit,
let your Christ-love be our life.

*Longing for you in wilderness wasting.
Call to us lead us on.*

Jungwoo Choi: We pray with the words Jesus taught his people to say.
Please join me in the Lord's Prayer, in the language of your heart:
(*Jungwoo in Korean from here*)

***Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.***

Word of Grace

Dave

Then Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be rejected ... and be killed, and after three days rise again.

He gave so much that we might live.

Receive, again and again, his word of grace:

Our sin is forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

Bible Reading – Genesis 17:1-7, 15-17

Owen Sun

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.” Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, “Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?”

With the Children

Dave

Brief chat about the three prompts. Sarah and Abraham, covenant = promise.

Covenant Song

I will set my bow in the clouds (verses 1&2 only)

- 1 *I will set my bow in the clouds
as a sign of my love for you;
as a sign of my promise to all the earth,
visible where gray sky meets blue.*

 - 2 *I will place my child in your womb
as a sign of my love for you;
when you laugh at the wonder, remember this:
Abraham and Sarah did, too.*
-

SONG: [I will set my bow in the clouds](#), Words & Music: Daniel Charles Damon,
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Student House Blessing

Dave and James B

Children stay on the cushions. Dave invites members of the Student House to come down the front – as fellow children of Sarah and Abraham – as we all are.

Dave also invites the Student House Committee members, too. James, Courtney and Kenna. Special thanks to Amanda Lees, finishing up after a couple of years on the committee, and Bonita Best who has moved to the outer eastern suburbs. And offers acknowledgment Valentina – special blessing for her later in the service.

James Balsillie

As chair of the Student House Committee, it gives me great joy to welcome the 'class of 2021' this morning – our student house community. You've met some of them already, but I invite each of you (*students*) to come and say hello, introduce yourselves.

(your name, and any nickname or other name [prompted by Abram/Abraham, Sarai/Sarah], where you're from, the course you are studying, a Bible passage that's resonating/inspiring at the moment).

Responses (Dave)

To the students:

Will you faithfully live in Christian community with your fellow residents of the Brunswick Uniting Church Student House, exploring faith with them, and alongside the other members of this congregation?

Response: with God's help I will

To the congregation:

Will you support and walk with these students on our shared journey of discipleship?

Response: with God's help I will

To the students:

Will you take part in the ministry of this Church, joining in our community as part of God's mission of love, justice and peace in this time and place?

Response: with God's help I will

To the congregation:

Will you welcome these young people as part of Brunswick Uniting Church, encouraging them in living the Christian life together?

Response: with God's help I will

Prayer: Dave

Let's pray,

God of Abraham and Sarah, God who dares to make promises that we laugh at in response, we ask that you uphold and embrace these humble promises, commitments, we have made today. That your own desire for community, triune God, may inspire our living, here in this congregation, and the communal living in our Student House. We pray your blessing, God, on Bridie, Ralph, Benjamin, Oliver, Jungwoo, Robert, Owen and Matilda, and on our lives together. In Christ, we pray, Amen.

Students invited to kneel, children and SH C'tee to gather around and place a hand on their shoulders.

Blessing Song

May God's sheltering Wings MV214

*May God's sheltering wings,
her gathering wings protect you.*

*May God's nurturing arms,
her cradling arms sustain you.*

*And hold you in her love,
And hold you in her love.*

SONG: [May God's sheltering wings](#), by Judith Snowdon, from [More Voices](#),
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Children / youth exit for SMP

Gospel Reading – Mark 8:31-38

Kirsty Brown

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Reflection

Peter

You might remember that over the past few weeks Dave has been describing the three pillars of Mark's gospel. These are the three affirmations or declarations of Jesus' divinity; those being the voice from heaven at Jesus' baptism, the confession of Peter in the middle of the Gospel, and the declaration of the Roman Centurion at the cross. Today's passage occurs immediately after one of these pillars, Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah. It takes us to the heart of Mark's Gospel, the moment of transition from the exuberant beginnings to the slow and steady road trip towards Jerusalem.

Perhaps one or two of you may also remember me talking a while back about the apocalyptic worldview. I have drawn this little diagram to help illustrate what I mean by the apocalyptic worldview. In my interpretation of this worldview, it is not really about the end of the world as such (as many people would presume) but imagines this moment in the world, the present moment, on a continuum of ultimate beginnings and ultimate endings. In Revelation Jesus appears as the alpha and the omega (or the 'a' and the 'z' in the English alphabet), the beginning and the end, from outside time and space in the heavenly realm. In apocalyptic discourse, the prophet is drawn up in the heavens and given a vision that reveals the God's Eye point of view. Apocalypses invite the reader/disciple to be similarly drawn up into that God's eye point of view and share the vision of the prophet, and to see the world as God sees it, the way it truly is.

A couple of weeks ago, Dave, Ian and I were catching up together and the topic of Rainbows came up. I think it was in relation to the rainbow covenant that God gives to Noah. It's a little known fact, it turns out that Rainbows are round. Ian mentioned a rainbow that he saw from a cliff top a while back that arced, not just above, but below. Dave also mentioned a news article he saw, of a flight over Lake Argyle in Western Australia that captured the amazing sight of a full round rainbow. Amazingly there is a picture of this. We don't usually see this from our human vantage point, but travel a little higher and view it from the right angle and you will. This is kind of what is happening in the apocalyptic worldview, we are invited to view the world from a different vantage point, a different angle (God's), and to see what God sees.

This world view invites hearers to consider the impermanence of all things and challenges us to consider what we put our faith and trust in. Do we put our trust and faith in buildings, institutions or leaders, or do we put our faith in God? Later on in Mark's gospel the disciples discuss the magnificence of the temple buildings, but Jesus (ever the party pooper) reminds them of the transitory nature of the buildings and that they too would crumble and be destroyed, if not by war or violence, then by the passage of time.

The same thing occurs here in our Gospel story. Jesus in declaring the path that the messiah must take, reveals a path that leads to his own execution and death. Peter, of course, will have none of that death and dying business. That's not what Messiahs are supposed to do according

to the script. Peter's eyes are fixed to the moment. He wants this moment to last forever. In the next chapter we see him, once again seeing Jesus for who he is in the moment of transfiguration, and seeking to preserve that moment in perpetuity, and no doubt his own role. Peter doesn't have the apocalyptic worldview that Jesus does. This is Jesus' rebuke of Peter, his failure to view the world the way God sees it.

There's a curious little play happening here. It's a bit confusing as to whom Jesus is speaking to, in fact Jesus seems to speak to everyone:

He teaches 'them' 'openly'

Peter rebukes Jesus,

Jesus turns to face his disciples

Jesus rebukes Peter

He calls the crowd and teaches the crowd in response to Peter's error.

It doesn't seem like a private conversation anymore. It's as if Peter has stuffed up and Jesus has called the crowd around to say 'Hey, guess what this clown just said!' It's no longer about Peter, it's 'anyone', and 'whoever' follows me. This call to discipleship is not limited to Peter or the twelve, it seems to break the fourth wall and speaks directly to us, here in this place, and out there on the internet, and beyond.

Jesus' exclamation to 'get behind me satan' is perhaps a little harsh. It's the third time Satan has been mentioned in Mark's gospel, once at the beginning where Jesus is tempted by Satan, and in the parable of the sower. What do we make of it? One commentator suggests that Peter is more concerned with Jesus' messianic *title* [and no doubt, his share in the glory] than his life-giving *mission*. It seems to me that for Jesus, so singularly set on this path that leads to the cross, any deviation or temptation to forgo that would be a denial of God's mission. That same voice of temptation in the desert is the same one here that tempts him to abandon his mission. At the heart of what Jesus foretells is his impending death and execution, it is something that he tells his disciples *must* happen. It is clearly at odds with what Peter thinks that a Messiah *must* do.

The call to take up our cross invites all of us who follow Jesus to follow in a way that costs. In the crucifixion narratives Jesus carries the instrument of his torture and death in the humiliating walk to the execution grounds. The cross, the ubiquitous symbol of Roman execution, used throughout the empire, was intended to humiliate its victims and serve as warning to all who might follow in their footsteps. It was a symbol of Roman power over its enemies. But in inviting his followers to take up their crosses, figuratively, literally, Jesus not only transforms the meaning and symbolism of this instrument, but transforms it as a challenge to Roman power. What does that challenge to power look like for us today? In other words, how is power used in our world today in a way that humiliates, silences opposition, and threatens would-be adversaries.

So where does this leave us today? We read this story many years on, and still Jesus' rebuke to Peter echoes down the years to us. To me, to you, to the church, to those who have gone before us, to those who will follow. Jesus' call to 'take up our cross' implies sacrifice and pain, and the unusual call to go against the grain of our world. Jesus' three fold call to deny ourselves, take up our crosses and follow puts us at odds with the world. It calls us to consider the world from the God's eye point of view, recognising the impermanent and transient state of all things, and the permanence of God who wraps us in covenant.

Reflective Music

Offering Song

Peter

As we sing together now you are invited to make an offering of faith to God. This is a time to reaffirm our commitment to living as God's people in response to Christ's call upon our lives. It is an offering we all make in our hearts, a sacrifice of thanksgiving. You may also choose, if you can afford it, to make a financial offering towards the ministry of our church in its worship and care for the poor and marginalised, a physical sign of our heartfelt response to God. During the song, please take your offering to the bowls beside the baptism font. You may like to dip your hand in the water there as a reminder of Christ's blessing of new life that we are called share. Many of us give by electronic direct debit and if you would like to do so also you will find our Bank Account details by following the "direct giving" link on our website homepage.

God of Abraham lead us (ATOK403 – verses as follows)

*God of Abraham lead us
lead us to your kingdom.
Into fruitfulness lead us,
lead us together, lead us to freedom.*

*God of Sarah be with us...
Through our laughter and labour...*

*God of Mary, be with us...
into trusting you, lead us...*

*God of Jesus Christ, lead us...
Into your new creation...*

*Guiding light for our journey...
Out of shadows and darkness...*

*By the waters of healing...
Into life everlasting...*

*Through the word that is spoken...
through the bread that is broken...*

*God of all living people...
into unity, lead us...*

*Last verse:
Lead us now and forever
lead us to your kingdom.
Give us now a new future
lead us together, lead us to freedom.
Lead us to freedom now.*

SONG: [God of Abraham \(Litany\)](#) © 1990 Bernadette Farrell, from [All together Okay](#), Openbook Publishers, Reproduced with permission under license # 604502, [LicenSing - copyright Cleared Music for Churches](#)

Offering Dedication

Peter

Welcomers bring offering bowls forward.

Please join in the response at the end of this dedication.

We long for the time
when the meek shall inherit the earth
and all who hunger and thirst after justice
shall be satisfied,
and we believe that, despite the persistence of evil,
now is always the time
when more good can be done
and we can make a difference.

***May it be so, through the offering of these gifts
and the offering of our lives. Amen.***

[Source: Prayer for Justice and Peace, Iona]

Prayers of the People

Jenne

Good morning I'm Jenne..... bat Avraham v' Sarah in Hebrew (daughter of Abraham and Sarah)

"Count the stars...So shall your descendants be" (Gen 15:5) God, we call upon you Holy Name to be here as you have promised in your covenant, in our church, in all worship communities, in the community of Brunswick and in the wider world. These all need the promise of your ever-present Spirit. We can find You walking before us, leading us to blamelessness, offering this promise to those oppressed by sexism, racism, capitalist greed, the egos that drive the World and suffering through a pandemic

You say to us in your Torah... *And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous..... Like stars in the sky ...*

Where are we creating those stars in our church? God challenge us with this covenant of love in mind, reminding your Church as Synod meets. May that covenant be strengthened.

What stars shall we spread to the next generations? Will we set our minds to the divine and see that we need to suffer, be humble & sacrificial as we go to the unconventional not acceptable places and people? To the locked in refugees, the First Peoples still incarcerated? the women violated by those in power? The mine owners who desecrate the sacred?

Jesus, descendant of Abraham and Sarah you promised us your suffering & your rising again to enable us to follow the Divine way as the new Covenant .Help us to deny ourselves and take up the cross and follow you. Help us to fulfil that covenant in ourselves and offer it to others in need, in despair even if it seems impossible? These are the stars to come.

Help us when we forget you O God, to stop and remember the covenant ..

Look to the cross at the front, to the altar see and feel the covenant God makes with you through Jesus. Re-member it, the promise of love we are called to enact by your sacrifice and renewing of life. Feel the blamelessness, see the multitudes of stars and descendants from it as we walk this path of covenant of justice & love to others. God Help us and the world to know that only a pure-souled dying-into-Love can uncover its amazing rapture and loveliness....
(Rumi)

God, please drive us as a Church with this covenant of love. May the stars shine as reminder of this need in the world. May a new re- covenanting & healing be offered & found by all people, healed through yours & our actions for those in need and as a reminder to those in power.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Farewell Valentina and Tom

Meg

Meg offered an acknowledgement and thanks for Valentina and Tom’s contributions to the life of our congregation in Valentina’s time as our Student House worker (2018-19), a member of the Discipleship & Education committee and most recently (2020) as Supply Minister for Worship and Discipleship & Education.

Blessing *For you Deep Stillness* ATW494

*For you, deep stillness of the silent inland;
 for you, deep blue of the desert skies;
 for you, flame red of the rocks and stones;
 for you sweet water from hidden springs.
 From the edges seek the heartlands,
 and when you’re burnt by the journey,
 may the cool winds of the hovering Spirit
 soothe and replenish you.
 In the name of Christ, in the name of Christ.*

SONG: [For you, deep stillness](#), by Julie Perrin, from [It all depends](#), NCYC '99 Songbook, Uniting Church in Australia, Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

Blessing and Sending

Peter

Jesus said,
 If any want to become my followers,
 let them deny themselves,
 take up their cross and follow me.

Friends in Christ,
 as you go on that way with him,
 know that God’s Spirit is there to encourage and guide you.

Walk softly.
 Speak truthfully.
 Love gently.
 Breathe deeply.
 Live wisely.
 And go in peace.
 With the blessing of our God
 The Promise Maker,
 the Cross Bearer,
 and the Birth Bringer.

In the name of Christ. Amen

[source Elaine Gehrman]

Let us bless one another in song...

Sending Song

Reprise: *For you Deep Stillness* ATW494

*For you, deep stillness of the silent inland;
for you, deep blue of the desert skies;
for you, flame red of the rocks and stones;
for you sweet water from hidden springs.
From the edges seek the heartlands,
and when you're burnt by the journey,
may the cool winds of the hovering Spirit
soothe and replenish you.
In the name of Christ, in the name of Christ.*

Thank You

Liturgist:

Dave Hall (CYYA Pastor)

with

Jungwoo Choi

Ralph Eduardo

Matilda McClintock

Oliver Sun

Children's time

Dave Hall

Student House Blessing

James Balsillie

Dave Hall

Bible readings:

Kirsty Bennett

Owen Sun

Reflection:

Peter Blair (Olive Way

Pastor)

Prayers of the People:

Jenne Perlstein

Musicians:

Elaine Potter (co-ordinator)

Helen Burnham

Clare Keogh

Bronte Potter

Maggie Somerville

Shawn Whelan

The Promise (recording)

Elaine Potter

Julia Potter

Farewell:

Meg Orton

Valentina Satvedi-Leydon

Tom Leydon

Notices:

Saide Cameron

Welcoming:

Kirsty Brown

Linda Wannan

Miriam Siddel

Production:

Jane Allardice

Martin Brown

Ray Cameron

Saide Cameron

Ben Hon

Dave Miller

Closing Words: *Do not worry I am with you. Do not fear you're not alone.*