

Opening verse on screen

When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. *John 20:22*

Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship

Amelia

Welcome to worship this morning.

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

As we prepare to worship God, take a breath together in this place where God appears among us, breathing life into us and through us.

Let's stand and sing together.

Opening Song

TiS 409 O Breath of life come sweeping through us (Elizabeth Porter Head)

1. O breath of life, come sweeping through us,
revive your church with life and power;
O breath of life, come cleanse, renew us,
and fit your church to meet this hour.

2. O wind of God, come bend us, break us,
till humbly we confess our need;
then in your tenderness remake us,
revive, restore: for this we plead.

3. O breath of love, come breathe within us,
renewing thought and will and heart;
come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,
revive your church in every part.

4. Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating
while harvest fields are vast and white?
Revive us, Lord, the world is waiting,
equip your church to spread the light.

SONG: [O breath of life](#), by Elizabeth Ann Porter Head,
from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins *Religious*, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Acknowledgement of Country

Amelia

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

Amelia

Hello, I'm Amelia, I worked on the liturgy for this morning with Peter, Joel and Natalie coordinating the music and Saide always helping us in the background.

Today we are glad to welcome Peter Blair, Pastor of our Olive Way drop in centre, as our preacher, and Joel Hallinan with the children while Ian and Dave are away.

I hope you feel welcome to stay for a chat after the service, tea and coffee will be served out in the hall.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Amelia

God of the wind and the great breath of life,

You move constantly through us and the world of your creation.

Help us to follow the seasons, bending and growing to fill the spaces in between,
And understanding that the flow of life can not always be defined.

Forgive us for expecting instant perfection from others and ourselves,
encourage us to persist and learn from our experiences,
in the hope that what we reflect will gradually move closer to your example.

Jesus, who gave his breath that we may have life,
Through you we know God's empathy and love for us.

Free us to follow your call to love one another.

Forgive us from the times that, through fear or distraction,
we have not seen or listened to others with the intention of understanding.

Let us remember your breath of peace and forgiveness,
as we endeavour show your kindness to others.

Holy Spirit that is breathed deeply into our beings,
Your presence calms us as the world turns,
enabling us to keep our balance.

Forgive us for thoughtless words and actions
as we allow what matters to be swept away.

Let us seek your quiet centre in the tumult of life, guiding us towards peace.

Amen

Declaration of Forgiveness

Jesus comes bringing us peace and life in abundance,
Do not doubt but believe: In Christ we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God

Iona (Love From Below) Jesus is risen from the grave

SONG: [Jesus is risen from the grave](#)

1. Jesus is risen from the grave,
Jesus is risen from the grave,
Jesus is risen from the grave,
ALLELUIA

5. Jesus will meet his people

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Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

Tonia

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe."

Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.

But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

With the Children

Joel and Amelia

Packing for the journey.

What does Jesus give to us that we can take with us on our journey?

Jesus gives the disciples:

- peace
- evidence (scars)
- more peace
- a mission (so I send you)
- supplies for the mission (holy spirit)
- instructions? (forgive)
- questioning minds

Song

MV103 Ka mana'o 'i 'o (Joe Camacho)

Kamana'o 'I 'O ko kakou Akua

Faithful, faithful is our God

Kamana'o 'I 'O ko kakou Akua

Faithful, faithful is our God

In love there is no one more faithful than our God

Who brings the light into our darkness

The God who shares the breath of life with you and me

All living things upon the earth

In quiet moments God whispers tenderly

The mystery of unending love

For God is good and holds us as we sleep

To wake us to the morning light

The mercy of our God we seek to share each day
To help each other on our way
To be God's hands and heart with tenderness and care
God's faithfulness is always there

When we share love, we seek to share each day
To help each other on our way
To be God's hands and heart with tenderness and care
God's faithfulness is always there

SONG: [Ka Mana'o 'I 'O](#) (Faithful is our God), Joe Camacho ©1999 Used by permission
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Bible Reading: 1 John 1:1-2:2

Jamie

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life-- this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us-- we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

Reflection

Peter

This week when I was preparing the message for today and reading the text, I had a strange sense of déjà vu. I realised that this time last year (of the church calendar) I was speaking on this passage when Valentina was away. And a lot has changed since that time; last year we were in the midst of our first lockdown. The covid numbers, while falling, were still stubbornly holding on; Ian was away in Bairnsdale assisting the church in the bushfire recovery. Brunswick Uniting church was closed, save for the odd camera crew (assisted magnificently by the Cameron clan) who were coming in to film, and a whole range of norms were being upended. It was a strange year.

Our gospel reading begins in familiar territory for us in Victoria; with the disciples locked away behind closed doors. Of course these doors were locked for different reasons, we are told; for fear of the Judeans. Now, you may notice that your texts will most likely read 'Jews'. However, this is a somewhat unhelpful translation for reasons I won't bore you with now. Suffice to say that these Judeans represent the ideological opponents of Jesus and the discipleship movement, from the power centre of Judea in the South. Having had the leader of this movement killed, the powerful elite from this centre were on the hunt for any die-hard hangers-on. Although, they were pretty confident that the public execution of its leader would do the job, they wanted to be sure to get all of them. So they were on the lookout for any loyalists. This is

the scenario our disciples find themselves in today's reading. Renegades locked away and afraid.

Whilst in the preceding verses Mary Magdalene has already seen Jesus in the garden and has been sent by him to report the news to his disciples, in today's episode the news appears not to have made it through, or else it has been heard but disbelieved by the male disciples (That's a whole sermon for another time).

So we find the devastated disciples, having already seen Jesus breathe out his last breath on the cross, hidden away in a safe house in an unspecified location. To them Jesus' final expiration of breath was the moment their hopes, whatever they may have been, ended. With that last breath this discipleship movement was supposed to end, to be forever a footnote in the history books. In typical Roman fashion the cross served as a warning and threat to any would-be usurpers or those perceived to be a threat to the infamous 'peace of Rome', which is clearly what Jesus and his followers were at risk of becoming. Seeing Jesus breathe his last on the cross in that moment would have crushed the disciples' spirits. That last breath represented everything coming to an end.

It's at this moment that the impossible happens. The dead and crucified Lord appears right amongst them. "Peace be with you", he says. The very thing the disciples had struggled to find at this time, he offers to them now in this traditional greeting; שלום

Needless to say this changes everything! This statement takes us back to an earlier point in John's Gospel, at the farewell discourse, where Jesus says to his disciples, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives." (14:27)

But not all the disciples are present at this first appearance of Jesus in John's Gospel. We don't know why the others are not present, nor do we know which ones were absent, except for Thomas. The famous 'doubting Thomas' who demands to see the empirical evidence of Jesus' resurrection. Thomas, the rationalist (perhaps) who needs to see the scars on his hands and his side that prove his identity once and for all. And ironically, it's probably Thomas we can relate to most. It reminds me of a conversation my wife, Sharm, had with my daughter Ashlyn at the age of 3 one Christmas. Sharm said something along the lines that Jesus was with us all the time. Ashlyn, ever the rationalist, said 'Where is Jesus?' To which Sharm replied, pointing to Ashlyn's chest, 'He's here, in your heart'. Ashlyn, ever the rationalist, looked down her top, looked back at Sharm and said, 'No he's not!'

Thomas' (and Ashlyn's) experience is not an unfamiliar one for us. We live in a pretty rationalistic society, where science and empirical evidence are paramount. And for good reason. We instinctively distrust miracles, or unproven theories. Again, for good reason. But what Thomas experiences here is not faith, as such, it is knowing. Thomas doesn't *believe* that Jesus is alive. He *knows* it because he has touched his wounds and seen and heard his lord. Thomas may well, after this point, build his faith upon what he knows; after all, there's not much room for doubt after what he has seen. It's certain. But what John's Gospel is at pains to point out is that we who do not have that privileged opportunity that Thomas and the early disciples had, must *believe*, in order for the story to live out of us. With Jesus' commission to his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (20:21), John's Gospel takes us back to the beginning and invites us to follow Jesus along the same journey of discipleship. And so the story begins again and lives itself into the world. But this time it is us, the believing church, that must follow that same path, not those privileged few who were present at the start of all things. In John's Gospel, the resurrection is the true beginning of the journey of discipleship, nothing else really makes much sense without it.

In the following verses Jesus' act of breathing upon the disciples represents the incoming of the Holy Spirit. This is the fulfilment of Jesus' earlier promise where he pledges the gift of the Holy Spirit so that the disciples will not be left as orphans in the world (14:15-16; 26). The very thing that had been robbed of them in the moment of his crucifixion and final expiration, he gives his

disciples at this moment of *inspiration*. From *expiration* to *inspiration*. The departure of the spirit to the coming of the spirit.

Needless to say, our Gospels were never intended as rational scientifically-reasoned treatises on the mechanics of resurrection. They are an invitation to follow, and to breathe in that same breath that Jesus shares with his disciples in that post-resurrection encounter.

But what does that mean for us? What does it mean for us to breathe in that same breath that Jesus imparts to his disciples? Before attempting to answer that, I will have to acknowledge that my answer will be incomplete. Because I believe that discipleship is about asking that question every day.

John's Gospel gives us some sense of what this means. The word repeated over and over in the Gospel is the word 'abide', or 'remain'. It calls us to ground ourselves in the life of Christ, to be faithful to our understanding of Jesus, be open to being challenged by him, but in a way that is dynamic, not static. Wes Howard Brook writes, "If...Jesus *is* risen, then his words *must* be obeyed as the very word of God that the Gospel claims them (and him) to be. If Jesus truly is risen, then his community cannot avoid its confrontation with the hostile world, cannot deny the call to love one another intimately and fully." (*John's Gospel and the Renewal of the Church*, p.156). This does not suggest an easy, simple path for us, but a path that may lead to conflict with injustice, a path that may put us at odds with what John's Gospel calls 'the World'. Indeed Thomas' proclamation of Jesus' identity in his moment of recognition as 'my Lord and my God', steals a title typically due to a Roman emperor (Domitian), pitting his commitment to Jesus against that of the powers of the world.

John's story of Jesus centres around the nature of the beloved community. The community of disciples called by Jesus from the world, from business as usual to the marginal places. It calls the beloved community to be as children, born of God, in a hostile world. It calls us to die with Christ, and to rise with him, breathing in the breath of his Spirit and abiding and being faithful to him in a hostile world. But this is only possible if we can commit to 'love one another as I [Jesus] have loved you'.

Reflective music *Musicians' choice*

Offering Song

BUC Song Project Tower of Mercy (Dave Brown)

During this song we will offer our gifts to God, remembering the work we have done and things we have given to bring God's goodness to the world.

You are welcome to place your offerings in the bowls up the back by the baptismal font.

Creator God, with us today,
we wait again for your fire
send down the rain, ripen the grain,
burn up the waste we conspire
blessed be you, blessed be we,
blessed your incarnation,
fill us with joy, merciful song,
move us to our salvation

*oh, sweep us into your great breath of life,
oh lift us up so we can see
your tower of mercy's height*

Let us express all our surprise,
and sing our adoration,
new from the old, warming the cold,
now we can see redemption,

birds in the trees, hairs on our head,
all of it sacred to you,
turn us around, open our ears,
so we can follow truly

*oh, sweep us into your great breath of life,
oh lift us up so we can see
your tower of mercy's height*

Deep in your heart, safe in your grace,
covered by this compassion,
endless your hand, timeless your span,
praise to your holy action,
as we awake, ready to serve,
we know your love and laughter
dance with us here, all through the years,
and to the unknown after

*oh, sweep us into your great breath of life,
oh lift us up so we can see
your tower of mercy's
oh, sweep us into your great breath of life,
oh lift us up so we can see
your tower of mercy's height*

SONG: [Tower of Mercy](#), © Dave Brown 2015, used with permission

Offering

Amelia

God of life, we offer our gifts of money and service
as a sign of our commitment to follow you and bring peace to the world.
May they be used to end suffering and create welcoming places. **Amen**

Prayers of the People

Jenne

Shalom Jesus you are miraculously here with us

Breathing your Holy Spirit of life, after death

Feel Gods Spirit Gods breath Neshamah here touching your skin, moving in out of your lungs

Breathe it deeply in

PAUSE

God, through us send this breath out as your Holy Spirit of peace.

It is in our heart. We trust. We have faith that you are with us.

God send this breath of Spirit to the male leaders of this nation and all men of the World, to see the wounds they inflict on women, acknowledge their sin, turn and see their actions and take responsibility.

God send your breath to the politicians, industries, scientists, the health networks to speedily send the hoped-for vaccine, equitably to the world. Especially to the poor, less powerful nations such as our neighbor Papua New Guinea and may they know your calm and healing peace, the warmth of your Spirit.

God send your Spirit to the hearts of miners, farmers, and all of us colonists, to feel the Ancestors spirits on the lands of First Nations Peoples to stop, pause and feel the sacredness of the paintings, images, the sacred rocks and caves of the Dreaming, before they destroy. To be truly repentant and in the spirit of Makarratta (*olngu language*) *come together after a*

struggle, face the facts of wrongs and live again in peace. Breathe your Spirit so that we as the Church and Community stand beside. PAUSE

God, please send your Breath of Spirit through to our Government, and community, for all to take action to free the refugees. We see and feel their wounds. Enough. It has been too long.

Spirit breathe life into the silence, the shame, the burial of our racism that lets First Nations peoples die in places of custody..... too many, for too long, with 30 year old reports gathering dust. Breathe life so that recommendations are enacted, and Spirit breathes a storm to waken the politicians and our communities' heart to make it so.

O God, May your breath stir us all, our governments into knowing we are all part of the land, the sea, the air and to love it and prevent its' destruction before the majestic live giving ice blocks melt away.

O God we pray, that your breath & Spirit will embolden us as a Church to keep faith that the wounds are real. That we must keep inhaling, filling ourselves with your loving Spirit to heal ourselves, to keep bringing the healing breath of Spirit to all in our community who are grieving, sad and alone.

For the Church, the Community, the World for all these we pray, O God. Inhale and breathe out the breath you sent to free the captives from slavery in Egypt, the Spirit through your Son Jesus who you gave to us, to free us from slavery to our shadow, our deaths and gave us life, freedom forgiveness and peace. PAUSE

Breathe feel Spirit in you, around you, with you, between us all and flowing into the lives of the powerful to move them, the lives of the oppressed to heal them .

Through your Son Jesus.

Amen

Notices

Sending Song

NCH249 Peace I leave with you my friends (Ray Repp)

*Peace I leave with you, my friends,
Shalom, my peace in all you do.
Peace I leave with you, my friends,
I give to you so you can give to others too.*

1. To share God's love is why I came
To show God's kindness without end
Go now, my friends, and do the same,
until I come again.

2. Take my hand and be at peace;
The spirit of our love I send.
And with this love you will be free,
until I come again.

3. With this love now all will know
That loneliness is at an end.
Rejoice, my friends, although I go,
for I will come again.

SONG: [Peace I leave with you](#), by Carey Landry, from New Century Hymnal, Reproduced with permission under license # 604502, ONE LICENSE

Blessing and Sending

Peace I give to you my friends
 And now breathe in the spirit given to us by the risen Lord
 Go knowing the resurrection power of Jesus,
 the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit with us
 Breathe deeply the breath in the breath of Jesus that binds us in loving community
 Breathe in that same love into the world. Amen

Thank you

Liturgist: Amelia Ware	Recording - Breath of God: Tom Wuest Used with permission	Welcoming: Kirsty Brown Faye Findlay Ben Hon
Bible readings: Tonia Beggs Jamie Thom	Recording - Peace, Salaam, Shalom: Shawn Whelan (co-ordinator) Glenice Cook Ian Ferguson Steph Gesling & Josh Whitty	Flowers: Valmai Brunlow Faye Findlay
With the Children: Joel Hallinan Amelia Ware	Jess and Anya Kvensakul Maxine, Clementine & Harriet Loynd Dave Miller Elaine Potter Kate Scull Natalie Sims	Images: Ian Ferguson
Reflection: Peter Blair (Olive Way Pastor)		Production: Martin Brown Ray Cameron Saide Cameron Alistair Hunter Shawn Whelan
Prayers of the People: Jenne Perlstein		
Musicians: Natalie Sims (Coordinator) Mikul Denison Anthony Hinds Alistair Hunter Catherine Leslie Melvin Tan		

Closing verse on screen

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." *John 20:21*