

# Order of Service 9/5/2021 Easter 6B

---

## Opening verse

“I have called you friends” John 15:15

## Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship

Jenne

Let us Gather together to worship as beloved friends of God embraced in Her arms.

Christ is Risen!  
**He is risen indeed!**

Let us sing.

## SONG: O God, you search me and you know me, AoV2.31

---

- 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.  
Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

## Acknowledgement of Country

Jenne/Video

During our worship during this Easter season, we are hearing recorded acknowledgments of country from all around Australia from places where our members live or travel. As we gather here on Wurundjeri Country and acknowledge the original custodians of this place, let us remember all the peoples of this land now called Australia.

Valentina, Tom and Helen. Launceston Tas

## Welcome and Introduction

Jenne

Welcome to Brunswick Uniting Church those present in person, those joining us on the live-stream or watching us later. All are welcome in this place.

I am Jenne along with Ian and others, we will be leading this service. This morning, we continue our Easter journey on the sixth Sunday of Easter leading up to Pentecost. Today we will reflect on the God as loving Friend who frees us all, to be equals with each other.

After the service, there will be tea & coffee and food! Please join us in the hall.

## Prayers of Adoration and Confession including Declaration of Forgiveness

Jenne

Praise to you O God for your love that brings equality, and you want to be our loving Friend. You know us more than we know ourselves. Through Jesus Your Son, our friend, You radically free us from being slaves of oppression, freeing us and the world from status and social positions of power. We praise you O God for your Son's radical teachings, for the love of equality and friendship He brought. You are the one who empowers us as your friends, loves us truly and comforts us regardless of our position or what we deserve. We praise you for this Wisdom and Love.

God we know too that we do not always reflect this friendship in our treatment of each other or in standing up to challenge ego and power. Rather we prefer others to remain in the slavery of oppression (racism, sexism, profit, homophobia, gender stereotypes, ableism) so that we can keep our freedom or keep ourselves enslaved to ego, isolation and hardened beliefs. By not offering our hand to our kin and community, nor to our Beloved Friend and Comforter, we forget to abide.

We ask for your forgiveness though your offering of Comfort, Your seeing and knowing of us, rooted in the Love and Joy of the Gospel, that you are delighted to give. Thanks so much dear friend, Our God.

Amen

Like a dear beloved friend would do, through Christ in Christ and because of Christ our sin, our frail humanity, is truly, deeply forgiven.

Let us stand and sing Alleluia for this grace.

Song: Brunswick Alleluia

---

*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.*

*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.*

---

## Bible Reading – John 15:9-17

James Tapueluelu

Dave to invite children down the front now. Listen to the John reading, listening out for the word starting with F that Jesus uses to describe his connection with us.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what

the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

James: For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

**All: Thanks be to God**

James: Let us stand and sing Alleluia in celebration of the gospel of friendship

---

*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.*

---

## With the Children

Discussion about friends.

Did anyone hear that word Jesus used? The one starting with F? Jesus as a **friend** for us.

How do you go with friends? Absolutely perfect, happy all the time? No dramas at all?

Kids share here, briefly. Qualities of really good friends?

Adults / older kids, when you were a kid, pop your hand up if you had any friendship challenges at school? Take heart, kids, everyone has had challenges...!

Has anyone seen this film? (**Show Children's time 1 image, loaded in Dropbox/liturgy/9 May liturgy**).

Get the kids to share about it. Incredible film exploring friendship, kindness, courage.

Based on the life of Nathaniel Newman. (**Show Children's time 2 Nathaniel image, loaded**).  
Traicher Collins disease.

So, here's the scene where Augie makes his first friend at school.

(**Show Childrens time 3 Wonder movie clip, loaded in Dropbox**)

So, where is Jesus when Augie goes to school? When we go to school?

Is Jesus in the Principals office? ... Is he the teacher? ... Is he the cleaner?... the parent waiting at the gate....? Well, in the Bible reading we've just heard, Jesus is with us in the playground. A friend. Encouraging us to be kind, to love, to share the joy – even if other friends let us down.

## Song – A new commandment, TiS 699

---

*A new commandment I give unto you  
that you love one another as I have loved you,  
that you love one another as I have loved you.  
by this will others know that you are my disciples  
if you have love one for another;  
by this will others know that you are my disciples  
if you have love one for another.*

---

SONG: A new commandment, from Together in Song, Harper Collins Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN

SMP Primary and Secondary exit here. Candles lit from the Christ candle.

SONG: Like a child rests (refrain only) AOV1-85

---

*Like a child rests in its mother's arms,  
so will I rest in you.  
Like a child rests in its mother's arms,  
so will I rest in you.*

---

SONG: Like a child rests, © 1988 Christopher Walker, published by OCP Publications. All rights reserved. From As One Voice, Vol. 1, Willow Connection Pty. Ltd. Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE #604502

HOSEA 11:1-4

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.  
The more I called them, the more they went from me;  
they kept sacrificing to [other gods], and offering incense to idols.  
Yet it was I who taught [my people] to walk, I took them up in my arms;  
but they did not know that I healed them.  
I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love.  
I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks.  
I bent down to them and fed them.

---

*Like a child rests in its mother's arms,  
so will I rest in you.  
Like a child rests in its mother's arms,  
so will I rest in you.*

---

ISAIAH 66:7-13

Before she was in labour she gave birth  
before her pain came upon her she delivered a child...  
Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her;  
rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her—  
that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast;  
that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom.  
For thus says our God: I will extend prosperity to her like a river,  
and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream;  
and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm, and dandled on her knees.  
As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you;  
you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

---

*Like a child rests in its mother's arms,  
so will I rest in you.  
Like a child rests in its mother's arms,  
so will I rest in you.*

---

**Reflection****Ian**

Jesus says, "I have called you friends."

May the words...

I want to reflect on our friendship with Jesus today by reading you a couple of extended passages from the novel Damascus by the Australian writer Christos Tsolkas. Damascus is

ostensibly a story about the Apostle Paul who wrote many of the letters in the New Testament and is majorly responsible for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to the non-Jewish world. Tsolkas gives us a historically accurate but very confronting picture of the New Testament world – a starkly divided society with rigid class hierarchies and gender roles, extremes of poverty and wealth, and regular brutal violence. I found the novel hard to read at times, but appreciated the insight it gave me into how different that world is to mine and the subversiveness of the good news of Jesus within it.

The passages I going to read (and don't worry, I'm avoiding the graphically violent parts) are narrated by a woman named Lydia – you may know Lydia from her brief appearance in the book of Acts where we learn that she is a gentile, a non-Jewish Greek woman, who nonetheless worships the Jewish God. She is a businesswoman, who sells expensive purple died cloth, and is therefore well off with a high position in her society. And she becomes a follower of Jesus being baptised by Paul. With this meagre biblical background Tsolkas gives free reign to his imagination. In his telling, Paul is employed in Lydia's household as a labourer. And Lydia herself carries a horrible burden of grief. Her first born child, a girl, is taken from her and killed by her extended family. Her mother-in-law explains: *'... you will have another child. You will have a son ... In a little time we will be wealthy and we can indulge in daughters.'* Lydia is a broken woman through her loss.

In the passage I'm going to read to you now, 3 classes of people are represented, a wealthy woman, Lydia, her labourer, Paul, and Lydia's two slaves Salonikos and Psyche. Lydia is the narrator. She is out for a walk by the sea, nursing her grief, when she encounters Paul. Her faithful slaves are there to protect her.

*I was standing on the edge of the world, looking out to the churning sea. The water was grey and black. Winter had come.*

*'The sea is calming, isn't it, my lady? Even in its most savage aspect it cannot help but soothe.'*  
*Behind me Salonikos released an incensed gasp at his temerity in addressing me.*

*Our labourer, the half-blind easterner, was also looking out to sea.*

*Insulted, I did not deign to speak.*

*'Our Lord's Creation,' he continued. 'All one has to do is look into it and thereby come to know His truth and His power and His grace.'*

*I knew that he had turned to face me. A further outrage.*

*'You know this. You have found peace that way.'*

*My slave stirred, as if preparing to strike him on my behalf.*

*I lifted my hand and Salonikos drew back.*

*My eyes were locked on the sea, my palm out to indicate my disdain for the man's impudence. 'I will have my husband whip you for your insolence. If I could I would lash you myself.'*

*He inclined his head slightly. 'Forgive me, my lady. I saw you at our meeting house and thought you were a believer in the Lord, in the one God. I apologise a thousand times for my disrespect.'*

...

*I kept my eyes fixed firmly on the sea. If he had any sense of decency he would take his leave.*

*He didn't, he stayed there right beside me.*

*'Forgive me,' he said. 'I thought you were a friend.'*

*Psyche hissed. 'Shame on you, shame on you,' ...*

*No man had ever before spoken to me so directly: not my father, my brothers or my husband. It was as if the veil separating men and women had been torn away; as if we were man and man and not man and woman. His familiarity, his use of my name, his disregard for the boundaries of caste and honour, all of that should have made me turn away from him, should have brought a thousand curses to my lips. But I was transfixed. ...*

*He spoke gently. 'You know that the Lord is just, Lydia. Let me show you that He is also loving. Will you allow me to bring you to His love?'*

*Behind us, outraged gasps from the slaves.*

*'Shut your mouth,' I snapped at Psyche.*

*And then another obscenity, a further shattering of the world and its laws. He turned to her, a slave, as though she was his equal. 'The Lord created you as well, sister, and He loves you too.'*

*Psyche made no answer. She had turned away to face the sea. But I sensed her distress. Her hands, folded together and clasped against her belly, were trembling. From the shame and the rage. Was he touched, was he mad? Since friendship between a slave and a freeman was impossible, she thought he was mocking her. ...*

"I thought you were a friend." says the labourer Paul to his employer, Lydia. He speaks to her and the slave Psyche as if they were both his friends, his equals, he speaks to women as if they were men, and they think he is mad.

Friends, I call you friends – and I do it all the time – and when I do, I am thinking of today's gospel passage. Most of us are on friendly terms, but some of you I don't know at all or not very well, and by calling you friends, if I am serious about what Jesus says in our gospel reading today, then I am saying I am willing to lay down my life for you.

When Jesus says, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends," he is not actually offering a new teaching, but echoing the accepted wisdom of his world. In that ancient world, your friends were like your allies in the battle of life. Ancient friendship was about reciprocity, loyalty and obligation among members of the same social class. A man's duty (and I stress man because women's friends were confined to members of their household) was to aid his friends and to damage his enemies. And the principle of reciprocity meant that his friends would similarly "lay down their lives" for him.

What is new in the teaching of Jesus here, is who is included among our friends. "You are my friends if you do what I command you," he says, that is if you love one another. Friendship with Jesus is to be about love not obligation, which is a radical departure from the norm, but the truly subversive part is yet to come. "I do not call you servants any longer," says Jesus in our translation. The word translated servant here, *doulos*, also means slave like Salonikos and Psyche. "I do not call you slaves," says Jesus, "I call you friends."

And I find that a beautiful idea, that Jesus sees me as his friend, that through him my spiritual relationship with the divine is like being friends with a loving God rather than a slave in bondage to a judging, punishing God, friends with a God who is willing to lay down her life for me. I like the feel of that. But I am not a slave or a servant, and I never have been. I inhabit that privileged middle class position in the world from which I can only hear Christ's words metaphorically.

But in our world today there are more than 40 million slaves, a quarter of them children, more than ever before in history. How might Christ's words speak to them? How might those words be heard by those with little or no recognised social status or dignity in our society?

In the picture painted by Christos Tsolkas, Paul lives out this teaching in a literal and dangerous way. Lydia could have had him flogged for his expression of friendship towards her – he is not her equal, in social class, gender or ethnicity – but he treats her as an equal through faith. "I thought you were a friend," he says to her when there could be no possible friendship between such as them.

Despite the extreme offence Lydia takes from Paul's behaviour, he speaks to her grief and she is so intrigued that she decides to accompany him to the meeting house of his sect. Here now is how Christos Tsolkas describes this gathering of the early church, the first followers of Jesus Christ, that world changing society of friends.

Lydia goes with Paul to the poorest neighbourhood in the town where they stop not at a temple, but in front of one of the most degraded dwellings there.

*... the old man bowed and gestured for me to enter.*

*Even though she remained behind me I could sense Psyche's disdain. So these were the followers of the Judean god? She would be scornful at the paucity and weakness of such a deity.*

*I pushed aside the hide over the door and entered.*

*There were five of them, three of them women, and of them one a slave with shaven head. There was also a slave youth and an older man, dark-skinned but with a thick tawny beard. I was shocked anew to see that the freeman had his hand on the boy's shoulder, a gesture that I immediately perceived as being gentle and paternal, as though they were father and son, not man and slave.*

*The eldest of the women bowed. 'Welcome, sister,' she said. 'Welcome to our home.'*

*I could not contain my anger. 'I am not your sister!'*

*The woman recoiled. I was glad she could see my fury.*

*Paul was beside me. 'We are all believers here, Lydia. We are all brethren together.' ...*

[Paul then tells her about Jesus and she asks]

*... 'Where is he now? Where is this Jesus?'*

*The younger girl spoke up. 'He is returning.'*

*And as though in prayer, all answered, 'Truly, this season or the one next, he is returning to us.' 'From where?'*

*Paul hesitated. He was looking at his young companion. And for the first time, Timothy spoke. 'He died, sister. He was killed, but on the third day of his interment he rose from the dead.'*

*My head ached. None of it made sense. I tried to understand. 'How did he die?'*

*I waited. And I waited. Would no one answer?*

*Paul's voice, for once, was deep and clear. 'He was crucified by the Romans.'*

*And then I laughed. I laughed so hard I nearly fell off my stool. The old man attempted to fix my gaze once more with his serpent stare, but all I saw before me was a deluded and ridiculous old fool. ...*

*I felt fury for how they'd mocked and deceived me.*

*'What nonsense,' I spat out. 'What idiocy is all of this? Men who die on the cross are criminals and bandits. They are filthy slaves. How can such a man be a god? How can such a man avenge the death of my daughter?'*

They speak to her about her own child's death, and how that little girl died an innocent debased death like Jesus. Lydia weeps and Paul dares to insult her once more by touching her, taking her face in his hands.

*... Paul was stroking my cheek. 'Don't try to make sense of it all now, Lydia. It will come. But ask yourself: what other gods would weep for your child?'*

*... Was I to believe in a god nailed to a cross?*

Eventually Lydia does find peace in that hovel. She does believe, in the sense of trusting and following. She becomes their friend and lays down her life in love for the most needy, for other abandoned children.

Who are your friends?

Christos Tsolkas shows us a vision of the community of Christ's friends as it first came into being – mostly women and slaves, with people of different ethnic backgrounds from across the social classes all sitting together in transgression of their world's social laws to worship the most debased and shameful manifestation of the divine imaginable – a crucified God.

How thoroughly the Christian Church failed to embody that vision through the subsequent 2000 years, and yet here we are in world remade. Yes, there are still social divisions, we still have a long way to go to realise Christ's vision of friendship, but we live in a much more egalitarian world now, and is that not in part at least because of what Jesus Christ brought into it. So what might it mean for us to continue his work, remaking the world in love, by the power of his spirit in us, laying down of our lives in love for our friends?

Who are your friends?

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philoj>

## Reflective Music

### Offering Song: Kneels at the feet of his friends, TiS 640

---

1. *Kneels at the feet of his friends,  
silently washes their feet:  
master who acts as a slave to them.*

*Yesu, Yesu, fill us with your love,  
show us how to serve  
the neighbours we have from you.*

2. *Neighbours are wealthy and poor,  
varied in colour and race,  
neighbours are near us and far away.*

3. *These are the ones we should serve,  
these are the ones we should love;  
all these are neighbours to us and you.*

4. *Loving puts us on our knees,  
silently washing their feet,  
this is the way we should live with you.*

---

SONG: [Kneels at the feet of his friends](#), by Thomas Stevenson Colvin & people of Ghana, Hope Publishing Co., from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins *Religious*, Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

## Prayers of the People

**Kirsty Bennett**

God of love,

We pray for the world, a world where love is often lacking.

We pray for places where wealth and privilege determine outcomes, and justice is absent.

A world where vaccines are available for some people but not others,

Where some people can return home and others cannot.

A world where countries look to their own, rather than seeing the world as interconnected, as members of a family, where the wellbeing of all is important for the wellbeing of each of us.

May we reach out in love, advocating for justice and equality.

We pray for the church.

That it may speak out for people in need,

For people who are disenfranchised, who are preyed upon by credit sellers and gambling venues.

We pray that women may be valued in the church as equal partners, recognising the gifts that we each bring, regardless of our gender.

Jesus treated all people as equals, not preferring one over another.

May we in the church live out this love.

We pray for our community.

For those of us who have a special bond with our mother,  
and for those of us whose relationship with our mother was difficult

For those who wanted to be mothers but weren't able to be

For those who found motherhood hard and testing.

We pray for mothers who grieve the loss of their children

For mothers who are unwell

For mothers who are lonely and feel unloved.

For those of us who cannot be with our mothers in person, either through distance or death.

May we live out your love, loving one another as Christ loves us.

Risen Jesus,

In you we find love and friendship,

we find open arms welcoming us all, including everyone and urging us to work for justice for everyone.

May we know and abide in this love that you give us.

In the name of Christ, Amen.

## Notices

Jenne

Now time for Notices please come up to the side and speak at the lectern

Jenne Prayers for India and giving to Oxfam etc

## Sending Song: What a friend we have in Jesus, TiS 590

---

- 1. What a friend we have in Jesus  
all our sins and griefs to bear,  
what a privilege to carry  
everything to God in prayer;  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
all because we do not carry  
everything to God in prayer!*
- 2. Have we trials and temptations,  
is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged:  
take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful  
who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness:  
take it to the Lord in prayer.*
- 3. Are we weak and heavy-laden,  
cumbered with a load of care?  
Jesus is our only refuge:  
take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Do your friends despise, forsake you?  
Take it to the Lord in prayer;*

*in his arms he'll take and shield you,  
you will find a solace there.*

---

SONG: [What a friend we have in Jesus](#), by Joseph Scriven, from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins *Religious*,  
PUBLIC DOMAIN

## Blessing and Sending

Ian

### Thank yous

Closing verse on screen: "You are my friends" John 15:14

Liturgists:

Jenne Perlstein

Prayers of the People:

Kirsty Bennett

Welcoming:

Kirsty Bennett

Lucy Hardman

Amelia Ware

Acknowledgement of

Country:

(recording)

Tom Leydon

Valentina Satvedi-Leydon

Helen Rowe

Musicians:

James Balsillie

(Coordinator)

Michael Cameron

Mikul Denison

Courtney Rohde

Melvin Tan

Bridie Turner

Images:

Saide Cameron

Ian Ferguson

Claire Foley

Elaine Potter

Natalie Sims

Bible readings:

Lucy Hardman

James Tapueluelu

Recordings:

Daniel Broadstock

Natalie Sims

Shawn Whlelan

Production:

Jane Allardice

Ray Cameron

Saide Cameron

Dave Miller

Mal Rowe

With the Children:

Dave Hall (CYYA Pastor)

Ian Ferguson

Reflection:

Ian Ferguson

(Minister of the Word)