

Order of Service 30/5/2021 Trinity Sunday

Opening verse

Christ be our light

Welcome

Joanne

Good morning and welcome. Jesus said wherever people are gathered in His name, He would be there in their midst. It wouldn't be conditional on us feeling peaceful, spiritual, or being our best selves. His promise was simply that whenever we came together, He would be here.

However you've shown up today, whatever the week you've had, whether you've been attending for a while or are joining us for the first time, I hope you sense God's presence here with you today.

Let us acknowledge the First Australians, the traditional custodians of the land on which our church is built.

Acknowledgement of Country

Andy Calder

Hello I'm Andy Calder and I'm on Mount Donna Buang near Warburton in the Yarra Ranges National Park

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.**

Meditation

Joanne

At Brunswick Uniting Church we like to hold a more contemplative service on the 5th Sunday of the month. So as your liturgists today, Dave Hall, Ian Ferguson and I will be holding space for moments of silence and meditation during the service.

Today being Trinity Sunday, we'll be exploring the many ways we experience the presence of God. Dave will be inviting us to meditate on the person of Nicodemus, his conversation with Jesus in the dark hours, and our own place in that story.

Even when we're in dark places, we can still encounter God, in the beauty of nature, in music, in relationship with others, in the still small voice.

I know for myself, it's hard to feel God's presence when life is hectic and things are going pear-shaped. And what a week it's been. In Melbourne, we're reeling at the announcement of a snap lockdown, and new Covid cases just as it seemed we were back to normal.

We can get so caught up in the stories running in our heads that we miss what's unfolding around us. We don't notice the autumn leaves on trees, the subtle shifts in a person's energy during a conversation. Our thoughts can hijack our attention so that we fail to pick up on the emotions building up inside us, on the tension in our body.

Yet paying attention to our spirit and the physical world are powerful gateways to God's presence.

Let's take a moment to center ourselves and be grounded here and now. I'm going to lead us for a few minutes in a body-based meditation, where we'll focus our attention on the physical body. Based on the understanding that the mind can only do 1 thing at a time, so while it's focusing on the body, the thinking will slow down and quieten, all by itself.

So if you'd like to join me, I invite you to find a comfy spot in your seat, and close the eyes. Let's begin by taking 3 deep breaths. With each breath, allow the body to become more and more relaxed.

Bring the attention to the top of the head. Forehead, eyes, cheeks, jaw. Entire head. If the attention wanders, that's totally normal and fine. When you notice you've been distracted, just come back to the voice.

Attention to the neck. Shoulders, arms, hands, fingers. Upper back – lower back. Weight sinking into the seat. Chest and stomach. Legs, into the feet.

Enjoy the sensation of the relaxation in the body. The body resting, the mind quieter.

Guided Rhythmic Breathing & Sensing What Is.
Silence

Call to Worship

Joanne

Eternal God, we come before you
Seeking, hoping, longing to feel your presence

ALL: We come in need of encouragement

In need of rest

In need of forgiveness

In need of light in our darkness

You know our innermost thoughts
You know the secrets in our hearts
We come drawn by a desire too deep for words,
With longings too infinite to express.
We come confessing our need for your grace.
We come weary in body and mind,
And some of us are tired in spirit.

**ALL: We come with hopes, dreams, joy and a light heart,
And we come with fears, anger, sorrow and darkness**

We come with pride that needs piercing,
And with broken confidence that needs repairing.

**ALL: We come with deep hurts that need healing,
And we come feeling held and loved**

Loving God, you have promised us your eternal presence,
Open our hearts to hear your voice,
And to see through your eyes
A world forgiven and loved

**ALL: In the name of Christ Jesus,
We come to you now.
Amen.**

Song of Praise: Canticle of Daniel

1. *And you sun and moon and stars - Oh bless the Lord*
And all you showers of rain - Oh bless the Lord
And all you breezes and winds - Oh bless the Lord
And you fire and rain - Oh bless the Lord

Refrain: *To God be highest glory and praise forever more*

2. *And you dew and frosts and snow - Oh bless the Lord*
And you night time and day - Oh bless the Lord
And you darkness and light - Oh bless the Lord
And you lightning and clouds - Oh bless the Lord **Refrain**

3. *And you mountains and hills - Oh bless the Lord*
And you all plants of the earth - Oh bless the Lord
And you fountains and springs - Oh bless the Lord
And you rivers and seas - Oh bless the Lord **Refrain**

4. *Let all the earth bless the Lord (repeat to fade)*

SONG: Canticle of Daniel, Words and Music: Don Stewart © 1980, from It all depends, NCYC '99 Songbook, Uniting Church in Australia; Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

Bible Reading – John 3:1-17

Kirsty Brown

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews.

He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God."

Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."

Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?"

Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.

What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.'

The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"

Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony

If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?

No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

With the Children

A conversation about challenges - no birthday party due to lockdown, missing out on getting onto the netball team, tests and exams, being ranked and judged against certain things.

Followed by some time looking at the painting of Jesus and Nicodemus. Dave shared with Clara that Nicodemus is a judge, a religious lawyer and he comes to Jesus at night in secret with a lot of questions. Dave explained that Nicodemus is open to what Jesus has to say about God. Jesus shared the most famous line in the whole Bible 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son'. Dave affirmed that God loves the whole world, he doesn't judge. Jesus says that love is the most important thing.

Clara and Dave



Reflection

Dave

A meditation on Nicodemus meeting Jesus at night

For today's reflection, hopefully you are sitting in a comfortable position, your shoulders relaxed, jaw loose and unclenched, eyes resting in the eye sockets. Nice steady breathing, slowing, mind relaxing...

Allowing your thoughts to drift, drift back to that time and place. Back to Jesus... in Jerusalem, at the time of Passover. It's late at night and you can't sleep. The large crowd, all the visitors for Passover, are back outside the city walls. Campfires flickering in the night.

Your eyes catch a glimpse of someone moving.. walking from the Temple precinct.. someone you vaguely recognise... a strange thing to do at this time of night. So cold, chill in the air. The moon almost full.

You quietly get up off your mat, put on your coat, and follow this person, at a distance, careful not to trip, or make any noise.

They're walking slowly, yet deliberately. Heading towards the North Gate. What are they doing...?

You can see by the way they are dressed, by the way they walk, that they are a person of stature, of power. And yet, they are going outside the city walls. You pass through the gate, too, and out in to the unprotected land.

They are walking quietly, eyes fixed on one particular tent up ahead. There's a candle flickering inside the tent, and a campfire burning lowly outside. The man stops now... a few steps away from the tent flap... hesitant... you can see his chest and shoulders rising, and falling. Taking deep breaths...

Then very quietly he walks up to the tent, takes off his sandals, and pulls back the flap – just a peak... there's a muffle of words... and to your amazement, the person inside greets him, and comes out to the fire. They both sit on a mat near the campfire, the young man putting more wood on the fire. They haven't noticed you. You find a spot nearby, in the shadows, and sit down, trying not to breathe too heavily.

Gradually, they lean in closer and closer to each other, speaking in very quiet tones. You gain courage, and listen in. They can't see you, but you can hear them...

"Rabbi..." the first word you hear. "Rabbi, teacher, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God..."

Shivering with the cold, you find yourself wondering, What is going on here? Who is he talking to? You listen...

“No one can do these signs that you do, apart from the presence of God...” Who are they? Who’s speaking? Could it be one of the temple leaders...? What are they doing out here...? You lean in.

The person tending the fire speaks. You recognise his voice from somewhere...” Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above...”

There’s a pause, silence. You’re holding your breath, trying not to make a sound.

The older man is thinking... eventually he asks: “How can anyone be born after having grown old? ... more silence... “Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb, and be born?”

The person with the fire light leans in closer, places his hand on the old man’s shoulder. “Born from above, born from water and the Spirit. The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes... so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

The old man pulls back a little, looking at the fire light... “How can these things be?” How can these things be...? You ask yourself the same question.

The person tending the fire continues speaking, you don’t catch all his words, but his voice is familiar. You focus in on the tone of his voice, and realise where you’ve heard it before – at Cana, at that wedding... and in speaking to the children about the temple – just after he’d gotten angry. What a thing to do in the temple – disrupt everything so much, overturn everything.

With your mind wandering, you realise that they have stood up, and are exchanging shalom with each other. Shalom be with you Nicodemus... Shalom be with you, Jesus.

Then quickly, and silently, Nicodemus puts on his sandals, and walks off in to the night, back to the city.

You’re left there, with Jesus outside the tent. The fire is still burning... you think, what to do next... then you decide to quietly stand up and walk towards him. He looks up, and welcomes you. You take off your sandals, and sit, where Nicodemus was.

This is your time, with Jesus. What is he saying to you? Listen, let him speak.

(silence)

After a time, you both stand, and exchange shalom. Shalom be with you, Jesus, and you slip back in to the night.

Nicodemus is a character who appears only in John’s Gospel. He was probably part of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, the religious lawyers who sat on the tribunal in the city. He appears only three times in John’s Gospel – in today’s reading, later, in chapter 7 where he defends Jesus right to speak before being judged, and at Jesus’ burial after crucifixion. To prepare Jesus’ body for proper Jewish burial, Nicodemus takes 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes to the tomb. Mary of Bethany had earlier poured 1 pound of myrrh and aloes on Jesus feet, to prepare him ahead of time for burial. Judas had scolded her, asking: why was this perfume not sold for 300 denarii (one year’s wages), and the money given to the poor? Nicodemus has poured out not just one year’s wages, but 100 years wages, to prepare Jesus body for burial – the sort of expense reserved only for royalty.

Nicodemus, despite his elevated status, is a person working in the shadows – when he first meets Jesus at night, and in the darkness of Jesus’ tomb, a person working in the shadows who has seen a great light. He is a person who, much to John Calvin’s chagrin, (Calvin did not speak kindly of Nicodemite’s) Nicodemus would be right at home here at BUC, with his questions and his open-mindedness, and his desire to grow more fully in to faith and love. Amen.

Song Christ be our light – ATO 313, verses 1, 2 & 5

1. *Longing for light, we wait in darkness
Longing for truth, we turn to You.
Make us Your own, Your holy people
Light for the world to see.*

*Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.*

2. *Longing for peace, our world is troubled
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice.*

*Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.*

5. *Many the gifts, many the people
Many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another
Making Your kingdom come.*

*Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.*

SONG: [Christ be our light](#), by Bernadette Farrell, from [All together okay](#), Openbook Publishers; Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

Prayer of Confession and Reconciliation

Ian

I invite you now into a time of reflection and prayer for reconciliation week - a time of confession, lament and commitment. Last week a group from our congregation went on the Fitzroy Aboriginal Heritage Walk. Here are Claire's reflections on that event.

Claire

Added introduction for printed OOS - Last year, the Victorian government announced it would establish a Truth and Justice process. This truth-telling commission will be run by the Yoo-Rook Justice Commission – Yoo-Rook meaning truth.

Why?

To move forward, we need to answer for the legacies of colonisation.

National Reconciliation Week is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures, and achievements, and to explore how each of us can contribute to achieving reconciliation in Australia.

Victoria's 'Half-Caste Act' of 1886 was intended to force Aboriginal people of mixed descent to assimilate into white society. This had far-reaching consequences on the state's Aboriginal population, effectively breaking up families and communities, and reducing the number of Aboriginal people on missions and reserves.

This is one reason why using words like 'Half-Caste' is so hurtful to Aboriginal people.

From 1920s onwards, the Aboriginal community began to steadily increase in and around Fitzroy. By walking the Fitzroy Aboriginal Heritage Trail people have an opportunity to engage and read about this history. There are 16 markers, mostly along Gertrude Street, that show significant sites and buildings.

Upon personal reflection it felt great that around 30 of us non-Aboriginals engaged in this hands-on learning of Fitzroy's Aboriginal history. However, how could it not also feel quite devastatingly sad. To glimpse some of the upheaval experienced by the First Peoples of this nation.

Today I focus on the optimistic view – That I am learning more: that I see my community learning more; and that many of us have a willingness to listen deeply to these stories.

Added paragraph - We do, however, have a long way to go. Reconciliation must live in the hearts, minds and actions of all Australians as we move forward, creating a nation strengthened by respectful relationships between the wider Australian community, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I finish with what Aboriginal people have asked of us, in the last sentence of the Uluru Statement from the Heart:

'We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.'

Ian

Let us pray a prayer from the Common Grace Community

Great Creator Spirit, Lord God, Papa Jesus,
We pray together to you.

From nation to nation
Right across these lands now called Australia
From north, to east, to south, to west.
From coast, to forest, to desert, to city.
We are tuning in together on country.

For land and waters and sky,
For trees and plants and flowers,
For animals and fish and birds,
For hills and rocks and mountains,
For all peoples...
For country...

Jesus, we lament the injustice of the past
Jesus, we lament the ongoing injustice in the present

Jesus, we confess we have contributed to injustice
Jesus, we confess to having not loved our Aboriginal neighbour as you have called

Jesus, we thank you for the resilience, survival, and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Jesus, we thank you that we have the opportunity for relationship and friendship

Jesus, we know we must do better
Jesus, we know we must make things right

Jesus, we ask for your guidance as we seek justice in our lifetime
Jesus, we ask you
 To open our eyes to see as you see
 To open our ears to hear as you hear
 To open our minds to truth as you know
 To open our hearts to love as you love

As a movement of people pursuing Jesus and justice
We come together for the common good
We discover common ground
We share in common grace
We long to embrace unity with diversity

May the beats of many hearts create a beautiful symphony
In tune
In rhythm
With each other, with all of creation, and with Jesus,
As we pray for justice to roll like the waves of the oceans that surround these lands now called
Australia
We pray to #ChangeTheHeart of Australia.
Amen.

Prayers of the People

Ray

Let us continue praying, reaching out to all the world.

Sing: O Lord hear our prayer...

*O Lord, hear my prayer,
O Lord, hear my prayer:
 When I call, answer me.
O Lord, hear my prayer,
O Lord, hear my prayer,
 Come and listen to me.*

SONG: O Lord, hear my prayer, by Jacques Berthier, from Together in Song,
Harper Collins Religious, WORD OF LIFE

Jesus, shine the light of your healing love on all creation from the skies above to the depths of
the oceans below... *Light candle*

Jesus, Shine the light of your healing love on all nations and all peoples, especially in places of
war and disease... *Light candle*

Jesus, Shine the light of your healing love on us and on all who seek to faithfully follow the way
of the cross, fill us with faith, hope and love... *Light candle*

Sing: O Lord hear our prayer...

*O Lord, hear my prayer,
O Lord, hear my prayer:
 When I call, answer me.
O Lord, hear my prayer,
O Lord, hear my prayer,
 Come and listen to me.*

Notices

Good morning.

I'm Matthew Cameron

And I'm Michael Cameron

And this is the BUC News

So we're back

Yes, not necessarily a good thing

Agreed, but let's get started

Okay first up - lock down. What does it mean for BUC?

Well, this service has been pre-recorded and there is a Sunday chat with Ian at 11.

Great where can people find the link?

It's in the Olive Press and also on the Events page.

Sounds good. What else?

The usual - doors are closed, meetings are all on Zoom

And I guess the Olive Way and Olive Arts will not be happening this week.

Correct and if you need any support contact a member of the Pastoral Care Compassion Team

See the email sent on Thursday and the Olive Press for all the details.

Now let's talk about the Annual General Meeting being held after worship next Sunday.

Yes, well it's on the calendar and we hope that it will be going ahead.

In any case the agenda and profiles of the people nominated for Elder will be sent out this afternoon.

The Olive Harvest, collection of Annual Reports was emailed last Sunday

Lots to read and celebrate.

Definitely and in other news a review of the BUC Food Co-op is under way.

What's that all about?

The review has been set up to explore the future of the Food Co-op. It's called The Story so far - the next chapter.

Interesting, what if we want to have something to say about the Food Co-op.

Easy - anyone can make a submission. Check out the details in the email sent out last week or see the Olive Press.

One last big item is the World Wide Knit in Public Day.

Oh yes we did that online last year, the only group in the Pacific region to do so I believe.

Indeed well this year the Olive Pesto is looking forward to knitting in person on Saturday 12th June.

Are there any changes to the big event compared to previous years?

Sadly yes. Numbers are limited to 70 and people need to book using the Trybooking link

And I assume there's an event on the Events page where people can find all the details.

Definitely. And the theme is quite beautiful - Wrap with Love

There's more news in the Olive Press including ...

Climate Action News

News from the UCA National Assembly

Publication of the June Olive Branch

Plans for an Eco-theology series.

Remember to join Ian Ferguson for the post worship Zoom chat

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

And keep to date with news about our response to lockdown on the Moving towards COVID normal page.

And remember to read the Olive Harvest, our collection of Annual Reports.

Goodbye and thanks for listening.

Sending Song

Joanne

*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, United Church of Canada, Woodlake Publishing Inc. Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

Blessing

Joanne

In this coming week,
May we be attuned to our hearts
And more open to the presence of God
Open to encounters with Father and Mother God,
Open to the Spirit revealing herself in the unfolding of our day.
May we see each other through the loving eyes of God,
May we see the divine in the people we live and work with,
And may God's unconditional love fill us and bless us,
May it transform us and flow through us into our work, our conversations and our relationships.
Amen

*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.*

Thank You

Thank you for worshipping
with B.U.C. this week

And thank you to those who
helped with this service:

Liturgists / Worship leaders:
Joanne van Ravenswaaij
Rev Ian Ferguson
Dave Hall (Pastor, Children,
Youth and Young Adults)

Acknowledgement of
Country:
Andy Calder

Bible reader:
Kirsty Brown

Children's Time
Clara and Dave Hall

Reconciliation reflection:
Claire Foley

Prayers of the people:
Ray Cameron

Notices:
Matthew and Michael
Cameron

Musicians:
Christ be our light:
Elaine Potter, Glenice Cook,
Catherine Simone.
Canticle of Daniel:
Alistair Hunter, James
Balsillie, Courtney Rohde
O Lord hear my prayer:
Shawn Whelan, Natalie Sims,
Catherine Leslie
May God's sheltering wings:
Shawn Whelan, Natalie Sims,
Jane Allardice, Kate Scull

Images:
Mary anointing from
sanctifiedart.org, sourced from
<https://www.centraldenver.com/fifth-week-of-lent-2/>

James Tissot (French, 1836-1902). *Interview between Jesus and Nicodemus (Entretien de Jésus et de Nicodème)*, 1886-1894. Opaque watercolor over

graphite on gray wove paper,
Image: 9 1/8 x 7 in. (23.2 x 17.8
cm). Brooklyn Museum,
Purchased by public
subscription, 00.159.64

<https://www.emeryhorvath.com/nicodemus-is-his-life-a-positive-example-to-follow/>

<https://www.tfcanglican.org/go-deeper/nicodemus-and-jesus>

<https://outtheresomewhere.ca/morocco>

<https://thinktheology.org/2020/04/27/the-king-is-buried-follow-me-part-75/>

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