

Order of Service 18/7/21 Pentecost 8

Opening verse

So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.
(Ephesians 2:17)

Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship

Natalie

Let us begin by welcoming the word and the light

Even as we are separated physically, God calls us to come near:

Seekers and believers,
Neighbours and travellers,
Friends and strangers,

Let us come near to bear witness together to the love of God,
Come near to be moved by God's Spirit among us,
Come near to learn and travel together with Christ Jesus by our side.
Though we are in many places, we worship God together.

Let us begin by singing of our hope as a community of faith

MV001 Let us build a house (verses 1-3)

*1. Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:*

*All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

*2. Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:*

*3. Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat;
a banquet hall on holy ground,
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:*

SONG: Let us build a house, by Marty Haugen, from More Voices, United Church of Canada, Woodlake Publishing Inc. Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

Acknowledgement of Country

Natalie/Jamie Thom

Here we are once more, in lockdown. And as we shelter in our own places, we will continue our journey, listening to recorded acknowledgments of country from all around this land, now called Australia, from places where our members live or travel. I am here in Brunswick on Wurundjeri Country, and acknowledge the continuing custodianship of the Wurundjeri People.

Video: Jamie Thom

Welcome and Introduction

Natalie

Welcome to worship today, from wherever you are. We are in lockdown again, so this service is being livestreamed with a mixture of videos and live service with a small group of us here at Brunswick. Unfortunately, today was to be the first time since the start of the pandemic when we would formally welcome new members; that ceremony has been postponed. Instead, we will reflect together on God's words of welcome to us, and how Christ brings peace, even in the midst of division.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession incl Word of Grace

Natalie

God of all people, Creator and loving parent,
You love all people, with arms held wide open,
Bringing home those who are far away,
Calling us to provide a community of welcome.

Embracing Spirit, living and moving among us,
You are the same spirit who unites us all,
Bringing us together as one household of God,
Calling us to listen, pray, and work together as your people.

Reconciling Christ, bringer of Peace,
You tear down the walls between us,
Creating one humanity with no divisions or hostility,
Calling us to build and grow together as equals.

Welcoming God, embracing Spirit, reconciling Christ,
Forgive us.

Forgive us for the structures that we, as a society, have built, that create and reinforce division: workplace, educational and healthcare inequality, laws that discriminate, prisons and detention centres.

Forgive us for the times when we, personally, have honoured divisions: when we have judged someone based on skin colour, ethnicity or birthplace, when we have excluded someone based on gender, sexuality or appearance, when we have failed to extend your love to all people.

Forgive us, and open our eyes to see clearly where we fail, so we can work to end division and injustice in our world and in our lives.

Forgive us. Give us hope.

Amen.

Sisters and brothers, Hear the words of Paul in the letter to the Ephesians: through Christ Jesus all who once were far off have been brought near.

God does not want us to be distant, but embraces us, like a loving mother, bringing forgiveness and restoration, and with the Spirit guides us into new life.

Hear the good news: our sin is forgiven,

Thanks be to God.

Alleluia.

Ephesians 2:11-22 – Christ is our Peace

Ralph Eduardo

So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

With the Children

Dave H and Ralph Eduardo

Exploring Ralph’s citizenship ceremony, being a citizen with the saints, a member of the household of God.

SONG: Making things new – Tune In

*The desert will spring to life
A path will be made in the wild
- even now as you look I am making things new*

*The lion shall lie with the lamb
The day shall extinguish the night
- even now as you sleep I am making things new*

*Take hold of the hope that I give
Trust in me
Reach out for the love you can live
Eternally*

*The river of life shall flow down
The mountains shall break forth in joy
- even now as you speak I am making things new*

*The barren give birth, the lame walk
The deaf and the blind hear and see
- even now as you pray I am making things new*

Chorus x2

SONG: Making things new, by Sheree Anderson, from Tune In, Brunswick UC, Reproduced with permission

Isaiah 11:6-9 – A Vision of Shalom

The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy

on all my holy mountain;

for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

Reflection

Ian

I have a cousin named Irene. Perhaps you also know someone called Irene – it's not particularly common but there are people going by that name out there. My cousin Irene recently returned to New Zealand after working in Melbourne for 8 years – and those 8 years were the only time since I left home at the age of 18 that a member of my family has lived in the same city, the same state and in most cases, the same country as me. So, it was pretty special having Irene here for that time. She has gone now and so I've got Victoria to myself again, but I mention her today because Irene features significantly in our reading from the letter to the Ephesians. Her name appears there 4 times. Which is because Irene is the Greek word we translate as "Peace".



Christ is our Irene says the letter to the Ephesians (Greek people would say something like εἰρήνη but I'm going to keep apologetically colonising their pronunciation today by saying it in the way that is familiar to us). Christ is our Irene, our peace. He has created in himself one new humanity ... thus making Irene, making peace.

It is all about Irene today. And that's because the letter to the Ephesians like the rest of the New Testament is written in Greek. The Hebrew equivalent of Irene in those books we call the Old Testament, the word we translate there as "peace", is Shalom. For example, Proverbs 3 "Happy are those who find wisdom ... for all her paths are Shalom." The Talmud, the central text of rabbinic Judaism says, "the name of God is 'Shalom'". So, we've got 3 different words from 3 different languages Irene, Shalom, Peace – we translate them in the same way, but do they all have the same meaning? Are they interchangeable? Well, it depends on who is speaking and who is listening.



Today, I want to accept the challenge put to us by New Testament scholar Professor Gosnell Yorke from the Institute for African Renaissance Studies at the University of South Africa. In his article, *Hearing the Politics of Peace in Ephesians: A Proposal from an African Postcolonial Perspective*, Gosnell Yorke challenges us to take seriously the politically subversive world disturbing way the word Irene, Peace, is used in the reading we heard today. Gosnell Yorke asks, "who is listening?" Who is listening as this



letter is read out in public for the first time and what might they be hearing? Who is listening now and what might we hear? Today on this livestream, most of us are not postcolonial Africans, none of us are first-generation Christians living under the Roman Empire. But we are people once more living under lockdown, living in the time of pandemic, living perhaps without as much peace as “normal” (whatever normal is these days). So what can we hear? What is the peace that we know? What is the peace that we lack? What is the peace that we need?

All the paths of Wisdom are peace. The name of God is peace. Christ is our peace. What is the Irene, the Shalom, the Peace that God brings to us, that Christ embodies for us, today?

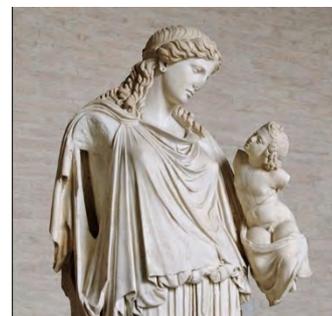
Gosnell York tells us that when Greek speaking Christians living in Ephesus, which is in modern day Turkey, living there as part of the Roman Empire, when they heard the word Irene from Paul (or whoever wrote this letter) their first thought would not have been, “Oh, he’s talking about Shalom like the prophets in the bible, Irene is the same as Shalom.” That wouldn’t have been their first thought, and that’s a pity for them, because in their bible, our Old Testament, Shalom is a magnificent concept, it is a word that holds a meaning bigger than our word

“peace”. We sang about Shalom earlier and heard a vision of Shalom read from the Prophet Isaiah: *The desert will spring to life, a path will be made in the wild, the lion shall lie with the lamb, the day shall extinguish the night.* Shalom is the building up into completeness of what has been broken down and divided up, it is the knitting together of God, humans, and all creation in justice and fulfillment, it is a state of wholeness and delight, of universal flourishing. More than just the end



of a war, Shalom is active cooperation between peoples and nations, more than just calm depths within, it is a heart in harmony with all life. Shalom is God’s creation in loving unity, with compassionate communion between all creatures and their creator – a vision of wholeness, the hope and promise of our faith. Bring it on! Shalom is a wonderful word.

But for Greek speaking gentile Christians in ancient Roman Anatolia, or Asia Minor, hearing the word Irene would not immediately evoke this sense of Shalom. They would have been more likely to think of this woman – this is the goddess, Irene, the goddess of peace. Here Irene is holding the child Ploutos, gazing at him with maternal affection, and he looks into her eyes so secure in her embrace despite the all-round absence of arms. Ploutos means prosperity or wealth, he is the God of Plenty and he thrives under the protection of Irene, Prosperity flourishes under Peace according to this statue.



And those Romans were pretty big on peace. Have you heard of the Pax Romana, the Peace of Rome, also called the Peace of Augustus? Augustus was the Roman emperor when Jesus was born. He ushered in a 200-year period of order, prosperity and sustained imperialism. Listen to these words written around the time of Jesus in the region of Ephesus – it’s a proposal to begin the new year on Augustus’ birthday: *We could justly hold [the birthday of the god Augustus] to be ... the beginning of all things. ... [he is] a saviour who put an end to war (debateable) and established all things in irene, in peace ... His birth is the beginning of the good news, the gospel, of irene, of peace ... (Green 133). Yes,*



Son of God, Saviour, Good News, peace on earth but we are not talking about Jesus – this is Caesar Augustus the bringer of irene, the peace under which the Roman empire thrives and prospers. Can you see how radical and subversive it might be in that time and place to call Jesus, Son of God, Saviour, bringer of the Good News of peace on earth? It’s ridiculous, Jesus is not an emperor, no, he is one of the colonised, a crucified criminal.

Gosnell Yorke explains, the irene, the 'peace' of the so-called Pax Romana was won and maintained through military conquest and, paradoxically, imposed on the subject peoples by means of warfare and crucifixion – crucifixion was a primary means of 'keeping the peace', break the peace, get broken yourself on the cross. Think of the many nameless colonised peoples who lived under the tyranny of the goddess Irene and the god Augustus. He was able to pacify (or 'peacify') Europe, Asia Minor, Arabia, Egypt and North Africa through force of arms – think of all those colonised peoples – what did peace mean for them? Think of the colonised peoples of the world 2000 years later – Gosnell Yorke speaks of the peoples of Africa, we might consider the First Nations peoples of Australia living under the Pax Britannica, the peace of the British Empire. Peace means something different depending on who is speaking and who is listening.

And so, the ancient Christians of Ephesus receive this letter and hear: "Christ is our Irene". But not the Irene we know through Roman imperial ideology and propaganda under the threat of their cross. No, Christ makes Irene, mysteriously, paradoxically, by being broken on that cross and by drawing all brokenness into himself there for reconciliation and healing. In Christ the goddess Irene becomes Sophia, Wisdom whose ways are Peace, becomes the God named Shalom.



Christ makes Irene, makes peace, creating in himself one new humanity encompassing all the diversity that we are. So, then we are no longer strangers and aliens in our own land, like the Ephesians under Rome, or the Wurundjeri under Brittan, but we are citizens with the saints under the Reign of Shalom, the Kingdom of God, members of the household of God, one family united in our diversity. Citizens, family members called to embody together a peace that subverts and deconstructs imperial power in all its forms, a peace that meets imperial terror with non-violence, and embodies a counter-culture of peace, a new way of being. A way for all creation, a way for all peoples, a way for our hearts.

Christ is our Irene, our Shalom, our Peace. What do you hear today? What is the peace you know? What is the peace you need?

Offering

Ian

As we sing together now you are invited to make an offering of faith to God. It is an offering we all make in our hearts, a sacrifice of thanksgiving. If you able to make a financial offering towards the ministry of our church in its worship and care for the poor and marginalised, please use the direct debit details on our website.

SONG: Make me a channel of your peace

- 1. Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring your love;
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;
and where there's doubt, true faith in you.*
- O Master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*
- 2. Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;*

*where there is darkness, let me bring your light;
and where there's sadness, ever joy. Refrain*

3. *Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving of ourselves that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.*

SONG: [Channel of peace](#), by Johann Sebastian Templehoff, Oregon Catholic Press, from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins *Religious*, Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502.

Offering 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

Helen Burnham

Hi everyone, I am Helen and I am doing the Prayers of the People today.

At the end of the prayers I will take the Christ Candle to the chapel at the rear of the church, and you are welcome to light a taper for your private prayers at the conclusion of the service.

We pray Shalom, Irene, of the
Comforting Mother and Father, Christ, the bringer of our Peace and the Holy Spirit, who walks
beside us, be with us all as we come before you today.

We pray Shalom, Irene, to those who live with conflict, with war, those who have been left in
danger. To those who are seeking a new home, safety, and freedom. To those we have
imprisoned through no fault of their own.

We pray Shalom, Irene, for our world fighting COVID. For stressed and overworked Medical
staff, and hospitals. Health and Government officials making decisions for us. And for us, once
again in Lockdown.

We pray Shalom, Irene for our Earth. For our icecaps melting, rising water that engulfs Islands,
and for those left homeless. For animals that face extinction in the warming of our land and sea,
and our ever encroaching cities.

We pray Shalom, Irene, for our worlds inequality. For the poor, the hungry, the abused, the
exploited. For those who are left out, or left behind. For the aged who feel forgotten. For the
disabled who feel excluded.

We pray Shalom, Irene for our worlds faiths. For opening of dialogue between Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and the end of conflicts.

We pray Shalom, Irene, for First Nations People whose customs and culture we have ignored and tried to destroy. For stolen children, taken from their families, and often abused and neglected by those supposed to care for them.

We are your people, we are your Church. We pray that we can be bringers of peace and wholeness, that we can be as open, accepting and welcoming as Jesus was, when he walked the Earth.

We pray these things in the name of Jesus, the bringer of peace, Shalom, Irene into our world.

Amen

Notices

Natalie and Ian

Ecotheology conversation on Zoom next Tuesday.

Welcoming Ceremony to be rescheduled.

Sunday Chat at 11am on Zoom – link on website event.

Garry Worrete Deverell speaking at Sophia Spring this afternoon (details on facebook group)

Emergence exhibition

Sending Song

He Came Down That We May Have Love, GA293/ Iona (M&G) / ATAR609

*He came down that we may have love(x3)
Hallelujah for evermore.*

He came down that we may have peace...

He came down that we may have joy...

Blessing and Sending

Ian

Jesus said, Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

And so I pray:

Deep peace of the running wave to you

Deep peace of the flowing air to you

Deep peace of the quiet earth to you

Deep peace of the shining stars to you

Deep peace of the Son of peace to you.

Go in that peace,
in the name of God,
Source of life,
Wisdom of creation,
and Breath of love.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

SONG: Peace I leave with you NCH249

*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,
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Thank Yous

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Acknowledgement of
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Christine Hornby

With the children:
Ralph Eduardo
Dave Hall
(Pastor: Children,
Youth & Young Adult)

Reflection:
Ian Ferguson
(Minister of the Word)

Prayers of the People:
Helen Burnham

Songs:

Peace, Salam, Shalom:
Glenice Cook
Ian Ferguson
Steph Gesling & Josh
Whitty
Maxine, Clementine &
Harriet Loynd
Jess and Anya Kvensakul
Dave Miller
Elaine Potter
Kate Scull
Natalie Sims
Shawn Whelan

Let us build a house:
Natalie Sims
Daniel Whelan
Shawn Whelan

Making things new,
Make me a channel of your
peace,
He came down:
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Alistair Hunter
Courtney Rohde

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Christ is our Peace (Ephesians 2:14)