

Order of Service 22/8/21 Pentecost 13

Opening verse

I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act," says the LORD. **Ezekiel 37:14**

Welcome

Jenne

Welcome to Brunswick Uniting Church, in person & over the internet, for this service. My name is Jenne, your liturgist. Let's welcome the Word as we sing.

Gathering Song Gather Us In – TiS 474 verses 1, 2 and 4 only

1. Here in this place new light is streaming,
Now is the darkness vanished away,
See in this space our fears and our dreamings,
Brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in the lost and forsaken,
Gather us in the blind and the lame.
Call to us now and we shall awaken,
We shall arise at the sound of our name.

2. We are the young - our lives are a myst'ry,
We are the old who yearn for your face,
We have been sung throughout all of history,
Called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in the rich and the haughty,
Gather us in the proud and the strong,
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
Give us the courage to enter the song.

4. Not in the dark of buildings confining,
Not in some heaven light years away,
But here in this place the new light is shining,
Now is the kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in and hold us forever,
Gather us in and make us your own,
Gather us in all peoples together,
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

SONG: [Gather us in](#) by Marty Haugen, © 1983 by G.I.A. Publications, Inc.
from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins *Religious* WORD OF LIFE

Lighting the Christ Candle

Jenne

Here on this land, O God, we come to worship You and
light this candle to remind us of your Son, the Earth he walks and nurtures,
the peoples He Loves the seeds he plants and the Spirit he embodies.

Lights Christ candle

Acknowledgement of Country

Dave

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.

Call to Worship

Jenne

Let us gather together to worship God, giving thanks for the abundant grace and liberating peace, hope and boundless Love, which we seek to know through Jesus Christ . We pray today for the healing of the earth, and may this community and all Creation rest wholly on Her breath of Love.

This morning we will hear readings from the Hebrew Sacred Text showing us that God 'will put RUACH my spirit/ wind/'breath' within you and you shall live and I will place you on your own soil."

Let's sing to God.

Prayer Of Adoration

Jenne

Creator we praise you for the Spirit of Her placed within us, in the wind, the sea, in the seeds of life planted in the womb of the Earth. **Your gift of life is as near to us as breathing.** We lean and grow toward the light like a seed in the dark winter earth, and in spirit we rise. We praise you for the plain seed that houses enormous potential, the spiritual shape of things to come. Yet the seed cannot yield its treasure trove of potential – the beautiful tree or majestic flowers, exquisite fruit, until it is planted in the ground. We honour you in wonderment that the earth possesses the power to catalyse the seed into feverish activity, forcing it to shed its outer husk, seemingly self-destruct, and then metamorphose into an emerging plant and tree. We live every day in wonderment and profound appreciation for your gift of conscious awareness and the unceasing beauty of Creation.

Adapted from SG and LW Rabbi Laibl Wolf https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/146876/jewish/A-Seed-in-Earths-Womb.htm

May we be like Saint *Father Oscar Romero. Archbishop of San Salvador, advocate for the poor and oppressed, assassinated while saying mass March 24, 1980, at the order of the Salvadorian regime.*
In his words -

We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the results, but that is the difference between the Creator builder and the worker. We are workers, not Creator builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. May we be inspired to speak our truth, to stand up for justice, even from You O God. Our accomplishments may not always be immediately visible, but may we be strengthened by the faith that the seeds we plant will ultimately flourish in a new world that is waiting to be born.

In the Name of the Creator Mother and God

Amen

Song: Reama Leboga (we give our thanks to God), MV 187

*Reamo leboga,
reamo leboga,
reamo leboga,
modimo wa rona*

We give our thanks to God,
we give our thanks to God,
we give our thanks to God,
we give our thanks to God.

Prayer of Confession

Jenne

Jenne: Let us pray our prayer of confession.

Creator God. We plant seeds of goodness, we try to heal the earth and all beings, out of good and love. We speak up, we try to take less, decrease our impact. Yet we fail, we give up, we keep quiet. We confess we lose hope and we, by our lives' privilege, keep polluting, keep buying more than our need. We lose our connection to your Spirit which breathed life in us to be the caretakers of the Earth, to plant the seeds. Oh, Creator Sophia /Gaia let us be like the man who.....in the words of Rabbi Adam Greenwald,

*"Long before Abraham came along, there was a certain man, who used to stand outside the gates of Sodom and cry out against it. Day after day, year after year, the man would stand there, all by himself, pleading and demanding that the people change their ways. Once, after many years, a delegation came to the man and demanded to know what he was still doing there-- hadn't he realized that his protests would not change anything? The man replied: **"I came to Sodom to try to change them-- and I have long since realized that that won't happen. However, I must keep trying, because if I leave, they will have changed me."**Change often comes at a glacial pace....society's problems get worse long before they get better. The spiritual work of protest is a matter of cultivating audacious hope,..... **like planting a seed** ... of believing that there is something valuable about standing up for what's right even when it feels like nobody is listening. It's about refusing to be a bystander in the face of injustice – if we cannot solve the problem, then at very least we can start by not being part of the problem.*

Inspired by - October 27, 2018 Rabbi Adam Greenwald Director Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies American Jewish University

Jenne: Gracious Creator God, forgive us for our failures, past and present.

By your Spirit transform our minds and hearts

May we elevate a simple act into a plane of spiritual value (Laibl Wolf)

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Word of Grace

Jenne

Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.

The old life has gone; a new life has begun.

Know that you are forgiven and be at peace.

Thanks be to God

Amen.

Song: Reama Leboga (we give our thanks to God), MV 187

*Reamo leboga,
reamo leboga,
reamo leboga,
modimo wa rona*

We give our thanks to God,
we give our thanks to God,
we give our thanks to God,
we give our thanks to God.

SONG: [We give our thanks](#), 1986 World Council of Churches and the Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music, from [More Voices](#), published by United Church Publishing house and Wood Lake Publishing 2007, Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENSE # 604502

Hebrew Scriptures: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Ray

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.'

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath. Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.' I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, 'Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely." Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.'

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

Song: Dem Bones dem Bones

Ezekiel assembled dem dry bones
Ezekiel assembled dem dry bones
Ezekiel assembled dem dry bones
Now hear the word of the Lord

Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones
Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones
Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones
Now hear the word of the Lord.

Foot bone connected to the leg bone,
Leg bone connected to the knee bone,
Knee bone connected to the thigh bone,
Now hear the word of the Lord.

Head bone connected to the neck bone,
Neck bone connected to the back bone,
Back bone connected to the rib bone,
Now hear the word of the Lord.

Ezekiel assembled dem dry bones
Ezekiel assembled dem dry bones
Ezekiel assembled dem dry bones
Now hear the word of the Lord

SONG: [Dem dry bones](#), Traditional

Children's time

Dave Hall, Steph Gesling and Joshua

Dave and Steph talked about Spirit, breath, wind
Steph shared her work with the Little Sprouts program, engaging preschoolers and educators in conversation about sustainability, inviting them to touch and smell plant cuttings, to plant seedlings and watch them grow. They reminded us that God's spirit within us and all creation We move in God's spirit

SONG: Wa wa wa Emimino, TiS 711

Wa wa wa E - mi - mi - mo.

E - mi o - lo - ye.

Wa wa wa A - lag - ba - ra.

A - lag - ba - ra me - ta.

Wa - o, wa - o wa - o.

E - mi - mi - mo.

Come, O Holy Spirit, come.

O wise Spirit, come.

Come, almighty Spirit, come.

Almighty Trinity.

Come, Come, Come.

O Spirit, come.

Wa wa wa Emimino Yoruba (Nigeria) traditional hymn
from [Together in Song](#), (711) Harper Collins Religious, Copyright uncertain

Bible Reading: Psalm 84:1-7

Peter

How lovely is your dwelling place,
God of hosts!

My soul longs, indeed it faints
for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.

Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my God.

Happy are those who live in your house,
ever singing your praise.

Happy are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

As they go through the valley of Baca
they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with pools.

They go from strength to strength;
the God of gods will be seen in Zion.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word:

Thanks be to God

(Steph singing) The fruit of the Spirit is... call and response... love, joy, peace, patience... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gracious me, faithfulness, humility and self-control... My name is Steph. Let's begin in prayer: Loving God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight, God our rock and our redeemer, Amen.

So, today's story comes from Ezekiel, where we hear this incredible story with cinematic-style special FX imagery of these dry bones that are knit together with life-giving breath. And it's a story of restoration. The restoration of the house of Israel. The Babylonian exile has taken place, and the people have been left in despair saying our bones have dried up and our hope is lost. Ezekiel's vision is a poetic and prophetic response to this situation of God's people and of their sense of helplessness and hopelessness. They say: "Our bones have dried up" and so Ezekiel shows them just that: a valley of dry bones. It's a pretty dark image, so what might Ezekiel's vision point to for us today? Hmmm... Despair? Hopelessness? ...Nup, can't think of anything!

...maybe the pandemic? maybe the fear of illness? maybe the fear of passing illness on to those who are most vulnerable in our community? perhaps the very real threat of climate change. The threat to this planet that we call home. The fear of the consequences of our action? ...of our inaction? ...and the impact that will have on the ecosystems that support life on this planet.

The dry bones in Ezekiel's vision are not the bones of the deceased. They are representative of the survivors and particularly of their fears and their fear of being cut off from God, which has made them basically paralysed with despair, and they use a common saying to describe themselves as dry bones and God sends Ezekiel to speak to them. God sends him with good news, to offer hope into their hopelessness. Ezekiel uses a very simple metaphor of God's presence to do that, he uses the ready availability of breath. 'God is with you' Ezekiel's vision is saying, 'as near as your breath'.

The word ruach is the Hebrew word for breath in this passage and it's used 9 times in the passage. It translates to mean 'spirit' as in God's Spirit, but also can mean 'breath' and 'wind'. It's a beautiful word, beautiful to think about the play of this word as it's used interchangeably and differently throughout the passage.

In this vision, we have this beautiful image of breath. Breath is automatic. It's both voluntary and involuntary. We choose to breathe but we keep breathing when we're asleep. Breath is this incredible ancient tool of wellness that we have access to, it gives us connection to ourselves.

I use singing to keep myself healthy and one of my greatest fears at this time is how do I keep myself well in order to be a good Mum and to be able to be present to my child, to my partner, to my community, to myself. I think it's a really important question in this time when mental health is being impacted quite severely.

How do we keep ourselves healthy so that we can keep our children and our planet healthy? I believe that they are all intertwined, and that if we can pause to experience the presence of God in our lives, that we can connect with that source of fruitfulness, even in lockdown in winter! The great paradox of fruitfulness in winter... but that promise that Ezekiel is making, that breath will come, that things might not be fantastic right now and they're not *suddenly* going to get better for these people that have survived exile, but that they WILL get better, the future IS bright, God is with you, as near as your breath.

I want to share with you a little practice that I've learnt and that I teach. I learnt through InterPlay which is an improvisational practice that uses voice and movement and storytelling and stillness. This is called a 'one breath song'.

So, the invitation is just to bring one hand up in front your mouth, almost like a mask, and just to hold it here and make a little sound like (Steph sings 'ahhh') and just feel your breath hitting your hand and the sound reverberating back toward you. You can make any sound at all.... (Steph sings 'tatata') and when

you're making this sound just have a sense that this sound you're making, this vocalisation is just for you. So, you're just making a little sound that's just for you.

For the length of one breath we're going to create a tiny little song. It might be a melody (Steph sings) or it might be just some consonant sounds (Steph sings), just for the length of one breath... give it a go... (pause for congregation to sing).

The body is wise, and this imagery of the body in Ezekiel is a beautiful reminder of that connection that we have, of the possibility we have, to find lifegiving moments of breath, the moments of movement, of wind, of animation in our lives, and in the situations of despair that we might be experiencing, either first-hand or from afar.

I felt the wind on my face yesterday when I took a bike ride with Joshua. He fell asleep on the ride but as we were riding home I noticed some graffiti written in chalk on a driveway and it said 'Do what you can. Enjoy what you can.' I believe we are called, like Ezekiel, to breathe life into the situations of despair that are around us. Not to be perfect, not to be happy all the time, not to say everything's going to be magically better, but I believe this haunting story of the dry bones reminds us not to get lost in our despair... or in the despair of our communities, or in the despair facing us as a planet, but to rest in God's spirit, to find life and peace and joy in the abundance of God, to be moved by the wind, infused with breath, knowing that God is with us.

Thanks be to God.

Music Holy Sacred Spirit, MV 15 (interlude after the sermon)

Holy sacred Spirit,
breathe your breath on us.
Holy sacred Spirit,
breathe your life in us.

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Offering:

Jenne

(Holding an empty bowl)

We now come to that time in our service where we offer our time, our gifts and our finances to God. If you'd like to make a financial offering, there's details on our website.

Let's pray together.

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

Kirsty

National Day of Prayer for COVID-19

Uniting Church in Australia President Rev Sharon Hollis is encouraging UCA members to join in a day of prayer for all those experiencing the ongoing impacts of the pandemic. Sharon encourages us to join together in prayerful ways as we acknowledge the loss, anxiety, fear and uncertainty facing many people in Australia and across the world. While we are physically apart, she invites us draw together with churches across the country and the world, united as the Body of Christ, and reminded of a God of love who cares for us all.”

Sharon has written a prayer which I will lead us in and we have added some images. Let us pray:

God of mercy and compassion,
We pray for the world as across the globe we face the challenges of COVID.
We give you thanks for those who care for the sick,
for those who work on limiting the spread of the disease
and those who develop and administer vaccines.
We remember before you all those affected by COVID,
Comfort those who mourn the death of a loved one,
Heal those who have COVID-19 or suffer the long-term effects of having had COVID.
Sustain those who work in health care, testing and vaccination.
Encourage those who are supporting education remotely,
Console those who must stay at home,
And bless and protect those whose work is essential for our wellbeing.
We long for a world where access to health care and vaccines are shared equitably
Strengthen the efforts of those who work to end COVID for all.
And fill us with a desire to work for justice and care for all. Amen

Notices

Matthew & Michael

Good morning.

I'm Matthew Cameron

And I'm Michael Cameron

And this is the BUC News

Now what do you think we should talk about today?

Hmm well there's a number of intriguing and interesting topics. (pause)

Okay stop with all the mystery, tell us what they are.

Right so there's pastoral care, CYA ministry, changes to worship and upcoming events

Well that's a lot and as always there's news from the Assembly to share.

Ah yes there's always lots going on in the wider church

There is and the latest Presbytery Newsletter is also available.

Okay so let's get started.

Tell us about Pastoral Care then.

So there's been two letters this week.

That's very helpful in these difficult times.

For sure and the first one was from our own Pastoral Care Compassion Team.

That's right, there were some good ideas about giving and receiving pastoral care.

Yes and the other letter was from the Synod and related bodies

What was that about?

It was offering sincere gratitude for the many actions of care offered over the last 18 months and encouragement for everyone to consider getting vaccinated.

Lots to reflect on.

Yes. What news is there from the Assembly?

The Uniting Church is calling for urgent action to protect lives in Afghanistan.

Lots of prayer needed there.

Definitely and these also a question about engaging in the church digitally

I'm sure we could contribute to that conversation.

Yes and there's also stories about Child Safe Week, Messy Church and the Act2 project.

It's good to be informed about these things.

Now you mentioned the CYA ministry

I did indeed. Dave is continuing to provide ways for our young people to connect.

Interesting do you have some examples.

I do, in the last few days both youth groups have met on Zoom and the Olive Pips had a fun day yesterday on Zoom as well.

That's great, what's coming up this week?

This evening there's a Zoom chat for Young Adults and the Student House.

Good idea.

Yes and on Friday there will be an opportunity for people interested in the Pageant to join Dave and Caitlin for a chat.

That's also great. How do people get more information?

Dave sends out an email each week and this week there's a link to it in the Olive Press.

Excellent.

Now you mentioned the Presbytery Newsletter.

Ah yes the Westerly.

So what can we learn about from this edition?

There's an article from David Carter about 'Christianity in secular age'

Interesting

And another one from Matt Harry about 'Releasing Resources within our community'

Very good

Now how about we finish up with the changes to worship and upcoming events that you mentioned earlier.

So first up due to the current restrictions worship was fully pre-recorded for today and it will be again next week as well.

It's good that we can continue to offer worship in these different ways and keep everyone connected.

Yes and this week the Eco-theology conversations continue and next Sunday will be a reflective style of service.

I like the sound of that and of course everyone is welcome to join the Sunday Chat after worship, this week hosted by Dave while Ian is on leave.

The Zoom link is available on the website as usual.

Keep up to date with all the news in the Olive Press, website and Facebook group.

Goodbye and thanks for listening.

Sending Song: May God's Sheltering Wings, MV 214

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.

May God's sheltering wings, by Judith Snowdon,
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Blessing

Steph

Go in peace with the blessing of God,
Seed sower
Land shaper,
Country healer,
Breath giver.
In the name of Christ. Amen

Thank You's

Liturgist:

Jenne Perlstein

Acknowledgement of Country

Dave and Patrick Hall

Children's Time

Steph Gesling

Dave Hall (Pastor: Children,
Youth and Young Adults)

Josh Whitty

Bible readers:

Peter Hornby

Ray Cameron

Preacher:

Steph Gesling

Prayers of the People

Kirsty Bennett

Rev Sharon Hollis
(UCA President)

Musicians

Jane Allardice

James Balsillie

Joel Hallinan

Alistair Hunter

Courtney Rohde

Kate Scull

Natalie Sims

Daniel Whelan

Shawn Whelan

Notices

Matthew Cameron

Michael Cameron

Production:

Jane Allardice

Ray Cameron

Saide Cameron

James Clough

Dave Hall

Lydia Jacka

Shawn Whelan

Matt Whitty

Closing verse on screen:

I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil;
then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act," says the LORD.

Ezekiel 37:14