

ORDER OF SERVICE - Sunday 26th September 2021

Season of Creation 4, Mountain Sunday

OPENING VERSE

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; ... Isaiah 65:17a

CALL TO WORSHIP

Saide

Good morning, welcome to worship for this fourth Sunday of the Season of Creation. Let's take a moment to light our candles together as we prepare to worship God, mother, father and lover of all creation.

Come let us open our hearts
holding the earth with love and tenderness
let us listen carefully
holding humanity with love and compassion
let us look to the sky
for the presence of God shaping our day.
Come let us worship God
who calls us to the mountain
to discover a radical new way to be at peace.
Let's sing

SONG: Come, O God, TiS 181

1. Come, O God of all the earth: **come to us, O righteous One;**
come, and bring our love to birth: **in the glory of your Son.**

*Sing out earth and skies! sing of the God who loves you;
raise your joyful cries; dance to the life around you.*

2. Come, O God of wind and flame: **fill the earth with righteousness;**
teach us all to sing your name: **may our lives your love confess.**

3. Come, O God of flashing light: **twinkling star and burning sun;**
God of day and God of night: **in your light we all are one.**

4. Come, O God of snow and rain: **shower down upon the earth;**
come, O God of joy and pain: **God of sorrow, God of mirth.**

5. Come, O Justice, come, O Peace: **come and shape our hearts anew;**
come and make oppression cease: **bring us all to life in you.**

SONG: Come, O God, by Marty Haugen, from Together in Song, Harper Collins Religious WORD OF LIFE

WELCOME

Saide

Good morning, welcome to worship from your lounge rooms, bedrooms, wherever you are. I'm Saide your liturgist this morning and with Ian, Claire, Jason, Tim, Meredith and Jenne will be leading worship. Today for the fourth and final Sunday of our Season of Creation we turn our attention to the mountain, God's holy mountain. And we remember the beauty of mountains, mountains that are home to abundant diversity, mountains, both physical and spiritual, where we have experienced joy and hardship and peace. The psalmist calls us to God's holy mountain. Jesus sends his disciples out from the mountain saying 'remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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.

PRAYERS OF ADORATION & CONFESSION

Saide

Creator God, mother of all the earth
in times long past you birthed the mountains
covering them with abundant beauty
providing homes for creatures of astonishing diversity.

We, fragile two legged beings, are drawn to the mountains
to retreat from the clamour of our everyday lives
to seek peace, to immerse ourselves in wonder.

Forgive us the harm that humanity has caused to the peace, beauty, diversity of the mountains.
Forgive us humanity's desire to conquer and possess that which is freely available to all who seek peace.

Jesus Christ, lover of all the earth
you call us to join you on the mountain
we immerse ourselves in your teachings
we are alive, free, filled with love and joy.

We, your disciples, respond to your command
to leave the mountain, to go and speak always with love
and we remember that you are with us always.

Forgive us the harm that has been done in your name to the earth, to the church, to people named as other.
Forgive us when our actions have not contributed to creating a new heaven and a new earth.

Holy Spirit, wind and flame, breath of the earth
you have whispered and raged through the ages
inspiring the prophets, calling them to the mountains
and sending them out again into the world bearing God's word.

We, ordinary humans, fill our lungs with your breath
and commit to work for peace in all creation
from the mountains to the seas and everywhere between.

Forgive us our fear of the unknown, our longing for safety when you would have us go out to speak in your name.
Forgive us when we find it difficult to grasp your vision and your delight in all that you are creating. Amen

WORD OF GRACE

Jesus calls all his disciples to the mountain
and sends us out again into the world to speak of love.

Hear then the words of Christ

Your sin is forgiven

Thanks be to God. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: Matthew 28:16-20

Claire

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

CHILDREN'S TIME

Tim and Meredith

Tim and Meredith talk about Tim's project for converting a petrol quad bike to electric.

SONG: Sent out in Jesus' name, ATO.412

Sent out in Jesus' name.

Our hands are ready now,

to make the world the place

in which the kingdom comes *repeat*

The angels cannot change

a world of hurt and pain

into a world of love

of justice and of peace.

The task is ours to do

to set it really free

O help us to obey

and carry out your will. *repeat*

SONG: Sent out in Jesus' name, Traditional Cuban, from All Together Okay, Openbook Publishers,
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FROM the PROPHETS: Isaiah 65:17-25

Jason

For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;

the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice for ever
in what I am creating;

for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,
and its people as a delight.

I will rejoice in Jerusalem,
and delight in my people;

no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,
or the cry of distress.

No more shall there be in it
an infant that lives but a few days,
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;

for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth,
and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.

They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;

for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

They shall not labour in vain,

or bear children for calamity;
for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—
and their descendants as well.
Before they call I will answer,
while they are yet speaking I will hear.
The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
but the serpent—its food shall be dust!
They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
says the Lord.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

REFLECTION

Ian

They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD. Isaiah gives us this vision of Peace Mountain today. It sounds like a great place, a place of harmony and healing – a good place to be – very unlike the place we find ourselves right now.

So, where is that place? Peace Mountain? When have you been there and what did it feel like?

The pandemic has prevented me from going to my Peace Mountain, one of my favourite places in the world, Macalister Springs in the Victorian High Country – I was last there in January 2019. It is an awesome place. I usually camp in a sheltered spot near the clifftop overlooking a spectacular valley surrounded by beautiful mountains. That valley is often filled with clouds in the morning at dawn. It is heart lifting, mind-blowing, breath-taking, and threatened.

Peace Mountain.

There are no mountains within my current 5K radius. The highest point in Brunswick is 50m above sea level (Mac Springs is about 1600m) – there is no literal Peace Mountain in Brunswick. But of course, with Isaiah, we are dealing in visions and symbols today. Peace Mountain in Isaiah's prophecy is Mt Zion. Now that is a real place in world – in Isaiah's day it referred to the hill upon which the temple in Jerusalem was built. At 740m above sea level it's not much of a mountain, but even in Isaiah's day it stood for so much more than its modest physical presence (as it still does today). Zion – it is a place in the world and a symbol, an idea, a hope, a vision of peace – a vision that has been variously exploited through history often in ways that have not led to peace.

From a symbolic perspective therefore, maybe I might have access to Peace Mountain after all even here in flattish old Brunswick. So what should I be looking out for?

“Be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating,” says God through Isaiah, “for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight.”

The new creation which God is bringing into being, with Peace Mountain at its centre, is a city full of people, according to Isaiah. Perhaps like me when you think creation, you think first of the natural world, wilderness places like Mac Springs, not of the city. Yes, I recognise within myself this world destroying pattern of thought. It says, Humans and their cities are different to nature, separate from nature. Nature is a thing to be visited, viewed, photographed, retreated to, enjoyed, exploited, dominated, controlled. And here we are in the ecological crisis.

Some ecologists say we should do away with the concept of “Nature” altogether in order to recapture a necessary sense of unity and wholeness and interdependence with the nonhuman world. As Brad showed us a couple of weeks ago, in Genesis 2 humanity is created from the same dust, the same ground, as all other life. We are not the centre of creation but a part of it according to scripture. We have evolved in the same way as all other life according to science. That means, on both counts, that our cities are as “natural” as anthills, termite mounds and beehives. But natural here doesn't necessarily mean good and perfect.

No, for Isaiah says God is recreating the city out of the flawed place it has become, making it new with Peace Mountain at its centre, making the city a new Garden of Eden. “I am creating Jerusalem, the city, as a joy,” says our God. “no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. For there will be zero infant mortality, full employment, positive health outcomes for all and raised life expectancy, there will be economic stability, and an end to homelessness

and hunger.” That’s Isaiah’s vision of the city as new creation, as Peace Mountain. A really good place to be human. But more, “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together there on that mountain, the lion shall eat straw like the ox.” This city is also a good place for wild and domesticated animals, carnivores and herbivores. “They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the birther of creation. Because in this city, on Peace Mountain, humanity lives in radical harmony with one another, and with the non-human world. And it is all very strange. Wolves and lambs hanging out together, that is not what we know, it’s not the way things are, it doesn’t make sense from our experience of this wolf-eat-lamb world we live in. But that’s what Isaiah sees: a radically new world of peace, a new city right where we are.

In recent years, I’ve learnt that there is no such thing as wilderness in this land now called Australia, if wilderness is country uncultivated by humanity. The first peoples lived in a relationship of life shaping wholeness with every part of this country including the High Country. Mac Springs is at the eastern edge of Taungurung country and backs onto Gunnai/Kurnai country to the south. But it is easy for me to forget that when I’m there lost in my colonialist wilderness fantasy. What is more obvious to me when I go there today, is our impact on that ecosystem. I see that what we do here in Brunswick shapes what happens there.

Macalister Springs was lucky not to be burnt in the bushfires of 2020, nor in the devastating High Country fires of 2003 – the hut survived, the snow gums around the campsite and the spring itself are thriving. But the 2003 fires came very close. In the foreground of this photo, you can see the burnt white snow gum skeletons. Those trees aren’t dead, because unlike some other eucalypt species snow gums regenerate from their roots. The trees in this photo have been regrowing for 16 years and still they are not close to overtaking their burnt limbs. What happens if another fire comes soon? And another after that before the trees can get re-established? – fires that are hotter and more intense than this country is used to? What if the climate warms to such an extent that snow gums can no longer live there at all? What if there is no place for snow gums in the future of Australia? My Peace Mountain is a fragile threatened place. Much depends on how we live here in the city, on what we do here to build harmony and healing and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Can Isaiah’s vision help us? He is speaking to people in exile. They’re not in Jerusalem, they are off in Babylon as prisoners of war, dislocated from their true home, separated from Peace Mountain. Like us. Separated from nature our true home, separated from the ecological harmony on which we depend, separated from the Source of life which births all things into being and loves them into flourishing. “I am creating all things new,” says our God, “Join me. Create with me. Become one with me.”

Isaiah’s vision of new creation, this new way of being in the world, was central to the self-understanding of the first Christians. “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation,” writes Paul (2Cor 5:17), there in Christ and his people the creator’s work goes on reconciling her world and all her creatures into harmonious ecological peace.

Jesus who flows from that loving Source of creation into our midst, goes to the city. And as he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “If you, even you, had only recognised on this day the things that make for PEACE! But now they are hidden from your eyes” (Luke 19:41-42). Jesus is dragged outside the walls of that city by the violence of it. And there on another hill, he builds with his body the new city of life, the new Peace Mountain. And from that mountain, Jesus sends his followers, us, to build that place of peace where we live, in our bodies and in the body of our community, the body of Christ.

Let’s do it. Let’s live out the reconciling grace of our creator along the way of the cross, embodying together the radical newness of Peace Mountain here in this city.

SONG: Where were you?, Shawn Whelan

“Where were you when the universe sprang to life?
Where were you when I made the day and the night?
Where were you when the morning stars sang, to all the heavens’ delight?”

“Have you walked into the springs of the sea?
Have you dwelled where the gates of death are revealed?
Have your minds yet comprehended the breadth of all that I see?”

*O God, You breathe through all time and space.
O God, we know You here in this place.
Help us learn to sit in silence, to open up to Your grace.*

Oohh...

*“Do you know the mountain goat in the wild?
Do you know the way she nurtures her child?
Do you know the way I treasure the earth that you have defiled?”*

*“O behold the birds of air that I feed.
O behold the deadly toll of your greed.
O behold the sparrow falling, and all that you never heed.”*

*O God, Your beauty all round us shines.
O God, we're breaking Your good design.
Help us learn a humble spirit, before we run out of time.*

*O God, we pray You make us anew
O God, our damage help us undo
Help us hear Your call to change as we tend creation with You
Help us hear Your call to change as we tend creation with You*

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OFFERING

Saide

Creator God, mother, father and lover of all creation
we listen, we wait, we respond, we act.

The psalmist offers us a radically new way of seeing and being in the world.
May all that we offer, our words, our actions, our money shape and contribute
to this creation of new heavens and a new earth. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Jenne

Jesus you are miraculously here with us on the mountaintop, as your Church, with all the Elders and ancestors, the prophets, the enlightened ones all atop Mother Gaia's breast, Your Spirit swirling around. Through the hard steps and challenges on the journey up the mountain You have loved us and got us here. God with Mother Earth You are literally shaking us up, forcing us to know we part of your earth and responsible for its transformation, that we are utterly dependent on you to give us Love Wisdom Humility and Strength.

From the mountain top, looking out and below we see your creation, displayed before us not at our feet as dominators but part of the community with all its chosen peoples, on its sacred site - the garden of Eden. God move us to re nurture to re-nourish, to step up to be True Guardians of it. We have allowed its scarring. God empower us to work with those who know your earth best, the First Peoples of this nation. Help us to listen to their Wisdom and follow them to work for Earths repair. Thank you for shaking us out of our complacency, as renewed Guardians bringing your loving creation to the world.

Thus, God we pray for those who tear and destroy rainforests, and sacred places and peoples for mining, for coal, for petrol, for the substances that we keep buying. Let those who dig and destroy have their hearts opened to stand at the mountaintop to see the view. And to stop. God give us Your Strength to stop consuming their products and to say STOP.

We pray, we implore o God for the leader of this country and other ones to pause too at the mountain top and to stop the use nuclear power for war again. God help us in this weary battle.

We pray from the mountain top great Healer please stop this virus, heal those who are sick from it and those suffering with the impacts of isolation from lock down and keep the health workers well. Shake us, fill us with mountain top love that we may show loving outreach to all who need it and take responsibility where we have contributed to the destruction of Eden, for its rise.

We pray for those who are angry, with actions of violence and destruction, hiding deep fear and pain and who feel not heard. God call to them from the mountain top and help us and them to see our need for Your collective love.

God help us all to see beautiful humanity stretched out before us, all part of Earth's home, particularly for the millions who are adrift in camps. We pray for those we lock out or mistreat. May government policy change and we welcome refugees and set them free.

May we as the Church, your people know your ever-present love, healing freshness and renewal as you take us down the mountainside, down the rocky road, down the hard path, but filled with your JOY. May we embrace the Ancestors and Elders and all humanity and place our hands, feet, and hearts on the Earth as part of your Loving Creation, ready for the journey.

Through your Son Jesus Christ. Amen

NOTICES

Ray

Good morning. I'm Ray Cameron bringing you the news this week. As the Season of Creation comes to an end just a reminder to keep sending in your commitments - actions you are already taking and anything new that you have been inspired to take up. You may even be doing things that you consider ordinary and obvious but it's still worth adding them to the graph to give us all a full picture of how we are committed to caring for creation. Send Kate an email today or any time that works for you.

The Children Youth and Young Adult Review is continuing. Join Joel Hallinan and Tim Winkler on Wednesday evening to share your thoughts and ideas on the ministry we offer to children, youth and young adults. The outcomes of the review will shape this ministry for the next five years.

The BUC Arts committee is preparing for virtual and in person exhibitions from 5th-15th November.

Please provide your intention to submit information by 3rd October and your full written submission by 17th October.

The Climate Action News includes information about two part Zoom event on Australia's Energy Future, a national day of action to call for Australia to increase its 2030 climate target and Why the Uniting Church supports the school strike for climate.

Meredith and Tim are fundraising by doing what they love (bike-riding) for a cause close to all our hearts (support for Palestine). People in Palestine have it really tough and this is one way to show that there are people across the world who care about justice and freedom for them. Both Tim and Meredith have spent time in Palestine and know from first-hand how difficult life is for people there. Contact Tim for more information.

Our worship services in October will be livestreamed from the worship space and will include pre-recorded music, readings, children's time and prayers.

Join Ian after worship for a zoom chat and look out for the October Olive Branch to be published next Sunday.

Contact information, times and any other details that you need for all the news are available in the Olive Press, on the Events Calendar and in the Our Stories section of the website.

That's it from me and now over to Claire for more news ...

The BUC Walking Together with First and Second Peoples Group invites anyone interested to join us in a study guide of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. This study guide has been prepared by Uniting Church in Australia for congregations and other small groups on the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

We will present this study on the second Monday of each month at 7.30 pm, by zoom, starting on 11 October 2021. The programme will take five to six sessions. There will be a break over Christmas. See the Olive Press for more information.

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

BLESSING

Saide

As we prepare to leave this time of worship take a moment to breathe to recall a mountain top experience, physical or spiritual or both Remember that experience, that moment of transcendence. Feel that moment filling your hearts and lungs with God's breath.

And now go out into your day, your week, your ordinary extraordinary life and breathe that feeling out into the world, shaping your words and your actions. Breathe peace, breathe love, breathe joy, simply breathe.

And may you know the steadfast love of our Creator God be inspired always by Jesus' profound teachings and shaped by the wind and flame of God's Holy breath. Amen

THANK YOU

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Meredith and Tim Budge

Reflection:
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Shawn Whelan

CLOSING VERSE:

They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord. Isaiah 65:25