

Order of Service 3/10/2021 Pentecost 19

Opening Verse

clothe yourselves with compassion Colossians 3:12

Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship

Ian and Julie

Ian:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.

Julie:

Lover of all beings, we know your breath in us:
the startle of wonder, the harrow of sorrow, the gasp of joy.
Attune us to your voice – ache of heart, yearning of spirit –
in lilt of birdsong, whisper of leaves, thunder of water.
All about us, the cacophony of love.
We are surrounded, witnessed, carried.

Ian:

Friends, draw near in the mystery of this hour.
Come to worship the lover of the world in the freedom of her grace.

Gathering Song

Freedom is coming ATOK 355

1. Freedom is coming, freedom is coming,
freedom is coming, oh yes I know.

*Oh yes I know, oh yes I know,
oh yes I know, oh yes I know.*

2. Jesus is coming, Jesus is coming,
Jesus is coming – oh yes I know.

SONG: [Freedom is coming](#), South African, © The Iona Community, from [All together okay](#),
Openbook Publishers, ; Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

Acknowledgement of Country

Dave and Clara

Gadubanud people Otways

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.**

Welcome and Introduction

Ian

Welcome

Participants: Julie, Jeanette, Dave, Clara, Clare, Jamie and Kirsty, not to mention all the musicians who recorded our songs for us.

Readings and themes: The blessing of the children. Christian Family Values.

Confession later in service today.

Prayer of Adoration

Julie

Holy One, Mother and Father of us all,
We praise you for the Divine met in Jesus,
For his recognition of you in all people.
You are the One who sees beyond status and posturing,
Who notices the forgotten, the little ones, the people in peril.
You are the One who refuses punitive hierarchies.

We praise you for your call to lift our heads and open our eyes
To see beyond our own small certainties
To hear your speaking through all creation.

In you, Gracious One, we hear the call to be clothed in love,
compassion, kindness, humility and patience
From these fragile yet sturdy strands,
May your kingdom be manifest again and again.

Amen

Gospel Reading – Mark 10:13-16

Clare

Jesus blesses the children.

People were bringing little children to Jesus in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word: **Thanks be to God**

With the Children

Jeanette Acland

Jeanette offered a Godly Play telling of 'Jesus blesses the children'.

Song

Love the Lord your God, God Gives 1.9

Love the Lord your God with all your heart
and all your soul and all your mind
and love human kind
as you would love yourself, and . . .

Love the Lord your God
with all your heart
and all your soul and mind
and love all people

We've got Christian lives to live
We've got Jesus' love to give
We've got nothing to hide
Because in him we abide
Love . . .

SONG: [Love the Lord your God](#), from [God Gives . . . Songs for Kids 1](#), JBCE,
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Epistle Reading – Colossians 3:12-17

Jamie

Life in Christ.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word: ***Thanks be to God***

Reflection

I want to talk about Christian family values today. Because we are reading from a section of Mark's gospel where Jesus teaches about the implications of discipleship for families.

There are two themes I want to touch on briefly today:

One: THE RADICAL REDEFINITION OF FAMILY by Jesus beyond cultural categories

Two: THE RADICAL EQUALITY between family members that Jesus teaches, particularly between women and men but also between adults and children.

Now in order to access these radical teachings, we are going to read one of the most difficult passages in the gospel – Jesus' teaching about marriage and divorce which immediately precedes his blessing of the children. It is such a challenging passage, that I had trouble finding anyone who was willing to read it this morning. And fair enough, because this passage, pitched at the first Xn community, has been applied to subsequent Xn communities in ways that have ruined lives. Jesus' teaching on divorce has been used to keep people together who should be apart and to keep people apart who should be together. It has been used to force women to stay in situations of violence. It has caused schism in the church and kings to lose their thrones, and people to be ostracised within their communities of faith. This teaching has brought shame on top of heartache. Perhaps you know this firsthand. It should also be said that this passage has provided one of the main arguments that people have used (unsuccessfully) against marriage equality.

And if all that is the case, then why are we reading it at all? If this passage is pastorally hurtful in the actual situations of real people's lives then shouldn't we just consign it to the "past-its-use-by-date" bin? I think the answer is, yes, unless God has a word of grace for us in it. But how can we hear grace in hurtful even offensive passages?

I'm going to risk the hurt today by asking: how do these teachings resonate in the world of their original audience? And can that resonance still be felt now separate from the oppressive history of interpretation? So, with that encouraging introduction, let's hear Jesus' teaching about marriage and divorce.

(Julie Perrin - Mark 10:2-12):

Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her." But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

Thank you, Julie, thank you, Jesus.

Imagine a visit to the optometrist. You know how they drop different lenses in front of your eyes and ask, "is that clearer? Or this?" In a similar way, let's look at Mark 10 through a series of different context lenses.

First the lens of family. Jesus redefines family in the gospel. For Jesus family is not about genetics or descendants or marriage alliances. "Who are my mother and my brother and sisters?" He asks in Mark 3:31-35. And looking at the crowd sitting around him, he says, "Here are my mother and my brothers and my sisters! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." And if that is the case, if family is defined by my relationship to God in Christ, then what value does marriage even have in the life of faith? If it is just a cultural custom or a power sharing alliance between families, why should we even bother with marriage? Think of those fishermen leaving it all, their nets, their homes, their families to follow Jesus. Is that the model for all of us?

Let's add in another lens, persecution. If being a follower of Jesus means that my family is at risk of being culturally shunned and perhaps politically discriminated against, even threatened, then perhaps I'm better off without a family. Or perhaps my family has already rejected me for their own safety's sake because I became a follower of Jesus.

Let's add in the lens of apocalypticism. If the world is about to end, hasn't marriage and family suddenly become completely meaningless? The first Xns naively thought they were living in the end times – pah! what did they know about pestilence, earthquakes and tornados? – we could teach them a thing or two. Welcome to the end of the world as we know it in 2021!

In the face of the great disruption to family life caused by following Jesus, the persecution, the disintegration of the familiar, he is saying, marriage still matters, don't give up on it. It matters not as a cultural custom but as part of the substance of creation. God made physical love to be part of creation and the disruption that Jesus brings to the world does not undo that. It does not give people license to desert their partners. In particular, it does not give men licence to dismiss their wives.

Let's look at this passage now through the lens of power and patriarchy. Divorce WAS legal in Jesus' world – Moses allowed it. But marriages were arranged as alliances between families – love didn't play a part – and women were given away as possessions, as breeders. Divorce, therefore, caused great upheaval to social structures as women were extracted from their new family and alliances dismantled often leading to intergenerational feuds. Women were powerless and very vulnerable in this – vulnerable to being rejected by their birth families as well as their husband and finding themselves with no means of support. Jesus holds his followers to a higher standard than is allowed for in the law – and he does it for the sake of the powerless, for the women. The irony of course is that the application of this teaching through the ages has primarily hurt the powerless. And it is on that basis that many Xn denominations, including our own, permit divorce despite Christ's condemnation of it. What was once oppressive can now be liberating.

Add in the lens of honour and status. Only men have honour in Jesus' world – women and children exist only to support a man in his quest for status. Through this lens, the ugliest verse in this passage, where Jesus says that remarriage is the same as adultery, appears quite radical because it treats women and men equally – equal judgment resonates with equal power. And as if that weren't startling enough, the next thing we know here is Jesus blessing children, the lowest of the low, and saying, "If you want to be in God's family, become like a child, give up all attachment to rank, status and honour (such as might come to you through marriage), and embrace utter dependence upon God."

Jesus is calling for radical equality in his family – but equality with those of the lowest status, the most vulnerable, the most powerless – men with women, adults with children, free people with slaves. That is the resonance of grace in this passage – can we feel it? And what might it mean for that grace to resonate now?

I think that if we allow the loving grace of Christ to resonate in our world, it is going to find situations where divorce is necessary. And it is going to mean that the church of Jesus Christ is called to be a family for those who have been hurt by family life, whose families have not been safe or nurturing places, called to be a family for those whose marriages have ended, and those who are struggling in their relationships, as well as those who find spiritual joy in their partnerships. We are called to be a family that does not judge or condemn people on the basis of their marital status or loving relationships but provides a safe place to be held and nurtured together by the love of God in creation.

Children of God, may you know that blessing. Amen.

Reflective Music

I am a child of God, MV 157, vs 1 only

[I am a child of God, I am a glimpse of God's new creation.](#)

[I am a child of God, I am a child of God.](#)

SONG: [I Am a Child of God](#) words and music by Cheryl and Bruce Harding,
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Confession and Word of Grace.

Julie

Holy One, hear our confession now, as we imagine ourselves in conversation with Jesus.

Jesus of Nazareth, we are here to talk about the trouble.

We are glad you invite us to wrestle with your words

We know that like the disciples, we can't always get at what you are saying.

We have to ask after the event – did you really mean what we thought you meant?

And we are grateful, that you don't always mean what we thought you meant.

You are never barracking for oppression, for judgements which damage people.

More often these arise from our need for certainty

Than from your embrace of vulnerable humanity

It turns out there are things we need to confess.

We ask for forgiveness for our desire to be right

For the moral high ground which is so often implied in the public speech of Christians

And for the silent resentment when we know we are not spoken for.

Help us to find the humility to speak our truth when we are trampled
And to hear the quiet or loud rebuke when we are the ones walking roughshod over others.

Jesus you are the one who said
'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them.'
We ask for the grace to recognise our own hardness of heart
Our desire to stage-manage the lives of others
Chasing false gods of compliance.

Always in our Australian story is the overlooking of First Peoples
the unseen privileges of whiteness, the long-held securities of settlers.
Discomfort us in the flow on privileges of economic security
that fences people out, creates an us and them
assumes worthiness and unworthiness.

Meld us in compassion
Melt our hardened opinions
To form joyous loyalties which arise in true seeing.

Amen

WORD OF GRACE

Know that you are seen and heard a by the God of Grace
and freed to live as a forgiven people.
Know that the One who sees, even our most shameful secrets
Is ready to meet us in the place of honesty and truth telling
Of new seeing in our clouded lives, and clear hearing for our crowded minds.
May we receive with gratitude these gifts of Christ's freedom.
Thanks be to God.

Reprise: I am a Child of God
[I am a child of God, I am a glimpse of God's new creation.](#)
[I am a child of God, I am a child of God.](#)

Offering/Communion of Empty Hands

Another Holy Communion Sunday passes on which we are unable to break bread and drink wine together as one family at Christ's table.

Today, in this empty plate we choose to see the world's hunger. And we acknowledge that we ourselves hunger, this day, in ways that no earthly bread can satisfy.

Hospitable God, meet us in our unmet hungers – and help us to put our abundance at the service of the poor.

In this empty cup we choose to see the world's thirst. And we acknowledge that we ourselves thirst, this day, in ways that no earthly cup can quench.

Hospitable God, meet us in our unmet thirsts – and help us to put our fullness at the service of the empty.

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.' (Matthew 5:6)
In the name of Christ, Amen.

Let's offer ourselves as bread for the world in song...

Song: In spirit we rise – Sheree Anderson

*In Spirit we rise, rise, rise
to be bread for the world
In Spirit we rise, rise, rise
to be bread for the world*

Planted, the seed within:
Image of You we bear;
life as Your blessed ones,
love the gift that we share.

chorus

Christ is the pattern sown
in moments of trust known deep.
Knowledge of You we grow;
faith the harvest we reap.

chorus

Tumbled by life we come,
love's holy grain worked through.
Spirit, the yeast so wise
proves our power in You.

*In Spirit we rise, rise, rise
to be bread for the world
In Spirit we rise, rise, rise
to be bread for the world
In Spirit we rise, rise, rise
to be bread for the world
bread for the world.*

SONG: [In Spirit We Rise](#), Sheree Anderson April '07, Used with permission

Prayers of the People

Prayer written by Kirsty B, read by Julie or Ian with the other lighting taper candles

God who reimagines what a family is,
Jesus who models radical inclusion,
Spirit who embraces us all,

We pray for our family:

for our siblings who come to Australia to seek asylum,
for our sisters in Afghanistan who are hidden away and deprived of education and a voice,
for our cousins around the world who are persecuted because of their religion,
for our nieces who join with us in speaking for justice for Palestinians,
for our nephews who work in refugee camps,
for our mothers who work in the health system in these difficult times,
for our brothers who struggle with isolation,
for our fathers who farm, drive our trucks and stock our supermarket shelves,
for our aunts who fight for freedom of information and accountability in government,
for our parents who work to respond to climate change
for our grandmothers who keep reimagining their work to teach on line,
for our children who work in aged care providing invaluable support to older people who are
shut away by Covid restrictions

for our grandfathers who provide a listening ear, food and shelter for those of us in need,
for our in-laws who respond to emergencies of storm and flood,
for our grandparents who spend hours and hours in PPE,
for our grandchildren who work as scientists to discover new ways to improve our health,
for our great-nieces and nephews who use the arts to offer us beauty and make us smile,
for our great grandchildren who work to bring about change at the UN climate change
conference in Glasgow.

May we celebrate the richness of our family,
And give them our support and love,
As we strive to live out your vision for an inclusive world.
Amen

Notices

Matthew, Michael

Good morning.

I'm Matthew Cameron

And I'm Michael Cameron

And this is the BUC News

The October Olive Branch is being published today and it looks like it's going to be an interesting month

Ah, can I just observe that every month is interesting.

Well yes that is true but how about we tell people what's interesting about this month.

Good idea, why don't you start.

Thank you I will.

You're welcome.

The BUC Arts committee has asked for artists to provide an intention to submit statement by today for the Emergence exhibition.

And then what happens?

Well - then by the 17th October they need to provide a full written submission.

Okay great and I've heard that the exhibition will be both virtual and in person.

That's correct, the committee will contact artists to make arrangements for this.

Excellent and perhaps remind us of the dates.

Will do: Emergence is from 5th - 15th November.

And details?

Easy. Check out the Events calendar on the website or the email sent out on Wednesday.

Great and the next interesting thing is Blessing of the Animals

Ah yes we did this online last year and were hoping to do it in person this year.

True and unfortunately that is not possible again so please email your photos or videos to Ian to be included in worship on 10th October.

Lovely and we've got a few contributions to make from our house.

Yes indeed we do. I'm sure Mum's already sent on in of Zim.

And then on 17th October we're participating in the Sound the Alarm action organized by Faiths 4 Climate Justice.

Goodness it is an interesting month.

For sure, there'll be more details about how to get involved in the next week or so.

Okay good and today is Older Person's Sunday.

What's that about?

Uniting Churches are being encouraged to recognise the human rights and dignity of older people on the first Sunday after the United Nations' International Day of Older Persons.

So what are we doing?

Something is being planned for worship on 24th October.

Nice now do you want to know what's happening for the Welcoming Ceremony that was postponed when we went into lockdown?

I definitely do, it was so disappointing to miss it.

There are plans to do something creative using Zoom to share with the congregation.

I like it, we've learnt so many new ways of doing things in these past 18 months.

That's for sure and something similar is being worked on for the Commissioning of the Elders elected back in June.

Now back to the Olive Branch.

Okay anything in particular?

Yes, Ian has offered some Theological Reflections on Vaccination for the Mediation with questions for people to further reflect on.

It's a big topic and important to pay attention to.

Yes it is.

And one more thing - on Humanity Sunday Peter Blair launched the Future Directions for the Olive Way.

That's right he did so what's happening now?

The Olive Way Operations Coordinator role is now being advertised.

How do people find out more?

Details are in the Olive Press and also in the Our Stories blog on our website.

Okay we're about to head over to Cliare for one more new items.

Sounds good. Remember you can join Ian for the Sunday chat after worship, the Zoom link is available on the website as usual.

And set aside some time to read the Olive Branch.

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

Goodbye and thanks for listening.

Sending Song

Community

1. Part of a family, interconnected, this is community
Welcoming strangers, visiting neighbours, this gives us dignity
Care for the earth and sea, we need to keep them free,
So we care for the earth and sea
Care for the ones we meet, love is the face we see,
When we care for the ones we meet

2. Part of a family, interconnected, this is community
Welcoming strangers, visiting neighbours, this gives us dignity
Sharing our joy and pain, praying and keeping faith
By sharing our joy and pain
Singing a song of rights, imaging God in life,
By singing a song of rights.

3. Part of a family, interconnected, this is community
Welcoming strangers, visiting neighbours, this gives us dignity
Talk to the lonely, bind up the broken, this makes community
A glass of water shared with the thirsty, this makes for dignity
This makes for dignity, this is community

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Blessing and Sending

Ian and Julie

Ian:

Let us go out surrounded by family
Unexpected cousins aunts sisters brothers
Let us go out as children
A glimpse of God's new creation

Julie:

All about us, the cacophony of love.
The cacophony of love and pain.
We are surrounded, witnessed, carried
by the Holy Mother and Father of us all.

Ian:

Go with Christ's blessing
to live as his blessed family,
the blessed children of God.

Julie:

Go in peace.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Thank yous

Liturgists:

Ian Ferguson
Julie Perrin

Acknowledgement of
Country:
Dave and Clara Hall

Bible readers:

Clare Keogh
Jamie Thom

Children's time
Jeanette Acland

Reflection:

Ian Ferguson
(Minister of the Word)

Prayers of the People:
Kirsty Brown

Notices:

Matthew Cameron
Michael Cameron

Musicians

Sheree Anderson
James Balsillie

Helen Burnham

Sheryll Coulson
Hannah Denison

Ian Ferguson
Alistair Hunter

Jessica Kvensakul

Kate Scull

Courtney Rohde

Natalie Sims

Daniel Whelan

Shawn Whelan

Songs:

(Prelude) Gathered Here,
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Saide Cameron, Natalie
Sims, Daniel Whelan,
Shawn Whelan

(Postlude) Love the Lord
your God from God Gives .

.. Songs for Kids 1, (9)

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Natalie Sims, Daniel
Whelan, Shawn Whelan

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(Bible readings)

Ian Ferguson

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Michael Cameron

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Ian Ferguson

Shawn Whelan

Closing Verse

Clothe yourselves with compassion. Colossians 3:12