

Order of Service 21/11/21 Reign of Christ

Opening verse on screen:

'My kingdom is not from this world.' John 18:36

Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship

Good morning, please take your seats.

Let's take a breath together as we prepare to worship God.

Geoff carries Bible in. Ian follows, lights Christ Candle

Come let us worship God.

As we continue to emerge from a long time apart
we bring a mix of emotions.

So come with your uncertainty and anxiety
with your delight, wonder, joy and laughter
with your questions, songs and prayers.

Come let us worship God who holds us
in all our complexity with love and compassion.

Let's sing to our God.

Song of praise - O sing to the Lord!, ATE 216

*1. O sing to the Lord, O sing God a new song (3 times)
O sing to our God, O sing to our God.*

*Cantai ao Senhor um cantico novo (x3)
Cantai ao Senhor, Cantai ao Senhor*

2. For God is the Lord, and God has done wonders...

3. So dance for our God and blow all the trumpets...

4. O shout to our God who gives us the Spirit...

5. For Jesus is Lord! Amen! Alleluia!....

SONG: [O Sing to the Lord](#), Trad: Brazil, from [All Together Everybody](#), Openbook Publishers
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Acknowledgement of Country

James

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,**

Welcome and Introduction

Good morning and welcome. I'm Saide the liturgist this morning joined by Ian, James, Claire, Dave, Geoff, Ray and the musicians led by Shawn in leading and shaping the worship we offer to God.

Today is the final Sunday in the liturgical calendar. Next Sunday the season of Advent begins. Today we will explore the Reign of Christ and as we prepare to commission our Elders our Bible readings invite us to reflect on Jesus' subversive leadership style and the kingdom we are called to embody in our lives and in our church. Our Title slides this week use Nic Batch's Emergence submission 'Wildflower Discovery'.

Thank you for wearing masks today while we consult with our vulnerable members to determine our policy going forward.

So welcome to worship here in this space, joining us on livestream from your homes or watching later on YouTube. We are gathered in many ways, as one body - the body of Christ. And so let us pray.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession including Word of Grace

Saide

with SONG: Kingdom of God, MV (146)

*The kingdom of God is justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit
Come, Lord, and open in us the gates of your kingdom*

SONG: The Kingdom of God © 2001 Taize Community, Ateliers et Presses de Taize
from More Voices (146) United Church of Canada, Woodlake Publishing Inc.

God of the ages you speak through your prophets.
You put your word on their tongues, on our tongues
to cry out for justice, to seek peace, to speak with love.
You have made an everlasting covenant with your people
We turn to you again and again.

Jesus Christ, Word of God, kingdom maker
We listen to your voice, we yearn for your truth
to renew the world, to turn all things upside down.
Your kingdom is not from this world, it is within.
We turn to you again and again.

Holy Spirit, Breath of Life, change bringer
We feel the rage building, the tide turning
the longing for the old to pass away, for a new dawn.
Your breath sustains us, empowers us, lifts us up.
We turn to you again and again.

*The kingdom of God is justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit
Come, Lord, and open in us the gates of your kingdom*

God of the ages we confess that we are not enough
and yet we know that you are and so we turn to you.
Forgive us, fill us with your power.

Jesus Christ we confess that we do not always listen
to your voice but we know that you love us always.
Forgive us, fill us with your truth.

Holy Spirit we confess that the fire in our bellies makes us uncomfortable and we try to put it out. Forgive us, fill us with our passion. Amen

Jesus speaks truth to power in Pilate's headquarters. Let us rejoice as we hear and respond to Christ's words of grace to us 'Your sin is forgiven'

Thanks be to God. Amen

*The kingdom of God is justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit
Come, Lord, and open in us the gates of your kingdom*

Gospel Reading - John 18:33-38a

Claire

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?' Pilate replied, 'I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?' Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.' Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.' Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

With the Children

Dave shared images of various kings (and a queen). The final image was the stained glass window of Jesus with the crown of thorns, lifted high, purple robe – upending what we think a king is. If Christ is our king, then who is not?

Song - Jesucristo Reina Ya, TiS 728

(Jesus Christ reigns!)

1. *Jesucristo reina, reina, ya!*

Jesucristo reina, reina, ya!

Jesucristo reina, reina, ya!

Aleluya, amen! Aleluya, amen! Aleluya, amen!

(Jesus Christ heals)

2. *Jesucristo sana, sana, ya!*

(Jesus Christ loves.)

3. *Jesucristo ama, ama, ya!*

(Jesus Christ lives.)

4. *Jesucristo viva, viva, ya!*

(Jesus Christ saves.)

5. *Jesucristo salva, salva, ya!*

Lighting of SMP candle, then kids head out

From the prophets - 2 Samuel 23:1-7

Geoff

Now these are the last words of David:

The oracle of David, son of Jesse,
the oracle of the man whom God exalted,
the anointed of the God of Jacob,
the favourite of the Strong One of Israel:

The spirit of the Lord speaks through me,
his word is upon my tongue.
The God of Israel has spoken,
the Rock of Israel has said to me:
One who rules over people justly,
ruling in the fear of God,
is like the light of morning,
like the sun rising on a cloudless morning,
gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.

Is not my house like this with God?
For he has made with me an everlasting covenant,
ordered in all things and secure.
Will he not cause to prosper
all my help and my desire?
But the godless are all like thorns that are thrown away;
for they cannot be picked up with the hand;
to touch them one uses an iron bar
or the shaft of a spear.
And they are entirely consumed in fire on the spot.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

Reflection - Are you the King?

Ian

Gospel light shines upon us this morning through our reading from John pictured here in stained glass. Jesus, the political prisoner, and Pilate, the Roman Governor, the agent of empire, meeting together. "Are you the King of the Jews?" asks Pilate incredulously, "because you sure don't look like a king to me."

Of course, this is no meeting of equals pictured here. On the contrary. All the power rests on one of these two. One of them has all the legitimate authority and the other is on trial, one of them is free and the other is captive, one has the power of life and death and the other is dependent and vulnerable. Which is which? It looks one way to the eyes of the world. But today, the gospel challenges us to see it the other way around. "Are YOU the King?" asks the power of this world. How is the answer, "Yes"? And what might that answer mean for our hearts and our lives?

It's Reign of Christ Sunday today, otherwise known as the Festival of Christ the King, or the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Ruler of the Universe. And I do like the ring of that last one – but despite that, I have always considered this festival to be a bit of a dud. Why do we need a special Sunday to focus on Jesus as the bringer of the Divine Commonwealth of Love, the Kingdom of God, when it's pretty much the main plot point of the gospels and seldom a Sunday

goes by without us mentioning it? After all, Jesus' first words are: "the Kingdom of God has come near". So why do we need a festival to be reminded of what is ubiquitous in our faith?

I was interested to discover this week that the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Ruler of the Universe is a modern festival – it's less than a hundred years old, having been instituted in 1925 by good old Pope Pius XI. And why? What was going on in Europe in 1925 that led the Pope to think that a special time of reflection on the nature of divine power and authority might be a good idea?

1925 in Europe – one World War is behind us, another is on the way. It is a prosperous time, a culturally rich time, the roaring 20s. But our historical hindsight tells us all that is about to collapse. Nationalism is on the rise. On 3rd January 1925 in Italy, the Prime Minister Benito Mussolini declares himself Il Duce, the dictator. Meanwhile in Germany, Adolf Hitler has just been released from prison after serving 9 months for treason, months he spent writing his book *Mein Kampf* which is published in 1925. And over in Russia, the Bolsheviks have recently taken power after a bloody civil war.

And here's Pope Pius XI, an Italian, sitting in the Vatican watching his country and those around festering with the growing infection of racial nationalism, ethnic supremacy and political totalitarianism. And he decides to institute a festival. 18. *"With God and Jesus Christ excluded from political life,"* he writes, *"with authority derived not from God but from 'man', the very basis of that authority has been taken away... The result is that human society is tottering to its fall."*

I'm not wanting to uphold Pope Pius XI as a perfect model for us to follow in all things today. No, there is a hierarchical, imperialistic edge to his theology that grates with me. For example, he says, *"the manifold evils in the world are due to the fact that the majority of 'men' have thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law out of their lives; ... as long as individuals and states refuse to SUBMIT to the rule of our Saviour, there will be no really hopeful prospect of a lasting peace among nations."* You see, he projects a kind of benign totalitarianism onto Christ as God's dictator. Personally, I am more interested in the way Christ's rule is manifest in community, the way his power might be expressed in the society of friends which is the church, his communal body. But back in 1925, in the light of the Russian Revolution, the very thought of anything remotely resembling collectivism was anathema to Pius, it represented the godless end of the world.

So, I don't see Pius as a model to follow in all things. But he did give us a gift: a festival, a solemnity, designed to confront the idolatrous tendency amongst people in his world to make human rulers and ideologies into gods. What about our world? How relevant is this festival 96 years later? Is there something of the same dynamic in our time and place as white people take to our streets demanding "freedom"? Some historians say yes. They say the 1920s is returning as some start defining their nation in terms of a particular ethnic or religious group tossing around phrases like "Western Civilisation, Judeo-Christian Values, European Heritage" and suppressing pluralism, the coexistence of different ethnicities, different expressions of humanity, different political perspectives, or religious ways of life – the rainbow diversity that is God's good gift in creation.

What do you feel? Is this happening now, here? And if so, are alternative ways of seeing and being in the world, ways that resist the fear of the other, fear of difference, ways that are more Christlike, are those ways strong enough right now?

"My kingdom is not from this world." says Jesus to Pilate, that figure of imperial totalitarianism. "My kingdom, my authority is not from your world, Pilate. If it were, my followers would be up in arms, they would be fighting in the streets to overthrow you, they would be recruiting insurgent militias and stockpiling weapons and making bombs. But as it is, as I stand before you here powerless, rejected, humiliated, my kingdom is not from this world."

It is not FROM here – the authority that Jesus embodies in his brokenness – but it belongs here. It has come near, it is so close that we can touch and taste it right now – that other way of living

and being that turns the world of Pilate upside down. The Commonwealth of Love, the possibility and promise of a just peace for all creation, Jesus embodies it, and calls us to live it into being by the empowering grace of Holy Spirit within us.

But we, the church of Jesus Christ, his body in all the world, haven't always managed to be true to that call. The European Christian churches did not all emerge from the turmoil of the 1920s and 30s and the war years with their dignity and integrity intact – with notable exceptions, many capitulated to or collaborated with the kingdoms of this world, or just kept silent to protect themselves. In the light of this, Pope Pius XI deserves an honourable mention. There is debate about the extent to which he worked with rather than against Mussolini. But he IS credited with writing the first official public document to dare to confront and criticise Nazism. It was a strenuous condemnation of racism and anti-Semitism in an encyclical to the German Churches entitled *Mit brennender Sorge* (With Burning Concern). Its existence was kept a secret while copies were smuggled into Germany and then reproduced by sympathetic printers. It was read from the pulpits of all German Catholic churches on Palm Sunday, 21 March 1937. Hitler was infuriated and immediately ordered mass arrests of clergy and the destruction of the printing presses used. Hundreds of Christians were sent to prison or the concentration camps – just like so many of their Jewish siblings, including their Jewish brother, Jesus of Nazareth.

And if that is what it takes, if that is what it could mean to be aligned with Christ the anti-King, then God give us strength.

In his encyclical, Pius condemns the exaltation and elevation of race, or the people, or the State, or any particular form of government or ideology to an idolatrous level. He writes, 11. *None but superficial minds could stumble into concepts of a national God, or a national religion [you know, like calling ANZAC Day “our most sacred day”]; none but superficial minds could attempt to lock within the frontiers of a single people, within the narrow limits of a single race, God, the Creator of the universe, ... before whose immensity they are “as a drop in a bucket”.*

Today that “immensity” stands rejected, broken, powerless before the kingdom of the world. “So you ARE a King!” Pilate taunts. “You say I am a king,” replies Jesus, “that is your language, your understanding. My reign is not kingship as you know it. You say King, and you mean what Caesar or Herod is. But my reign is not from your world.”

You say king, Pilate. What do we say? In our world where queens and kings are more about pageant than power, what do we say when we are talking about world transforming power, about leadership that gives life, about the kind of authority to which we are willing to freely give our allegiance? You say King, Pilate. What do we say? Who is Jesus for us? And what might it mean for us to give our allegiance to the Commonwealth of Love rather than the rulers of this world?

Pope Pius XI died in February 1939, just before his burning concern was vindicated in the horror of WWII. Conspiracy theorists speculate that he was murdered by his physician who was the father of Mussolini's mistress. But by then Pius was an 81-year-old on his third heart attack – so whatever – he died. And today on the festival he bequeathed us to reflect upon the way the Divine Lover turns our world of power upside down, today we are going to commission our new Elders (if they haven't changed their minds after listening to this). We are going to celebrate our congregational leaders whose role is not to rule over us, but to model the humble authority that we all share together as the body of Christ – authority that does not divide people along ethnic, national, religious or political lines, but the authority of the Kingdom of God, the Reign of Renewing Grace, the Commonwealth of Love that is real and present in us, among us, around us, bringing a new world of peace.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/12/the-return-of-the-1920s/422163/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mit_brennender_Sorge

https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_14031937_mit-brennender-sorge.html

Offering with Song - Fresh as the morning, MV 28

Ian, Saide

We offer our gifts to God as we sing. If you have brought a physical offering with you, please place it in the bowls near the baptismal font in the Gathering Space as we sing.

*Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, You do not change.*

*God of the Bible, God in the Gospel
hope seen in Jesus, hope yet to come
you are our centre, daylight or darkness
freedom or prison you are our home.*

*God in our struggles, God in our hunger
suffering with us, taking our part
still you empower us, mothering Spirit
feeding sustaining from your own heart.*

*Those without status, those who are nothing,
you have made royal gifted with rights
chosen as partners, midwives of justice
birthing new systems lighting new lights.*

*Not by your finger, not by your anger
will our world order change in a day
but by your people, fearless and faithful
small paper lanterns lighting the way.*

*Hope we must carry, shining and certain
through all our turmoil, terror and loss,
bonding us gladly, one to the other,
till our world changes facing the Cross.*

SONG: [Fresh as the morning](#), by Shirley Erena Murray, from [More Voices](#), United Church of Canada, Woodlake Publishing Inc.
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Let us pray
God of the Bible, God of the Gospel
You are changing the world moment by moment
person by person, nation by nation.
Let all that we offer today and every day
breathe hope, peace, joy and love
into this kingdom remaking movement. Amen

Commissioning of Elders

Ian

There are diverse gifts:
But it is the same Spirit who gives them
There are different ways of serving God:
But it is the same Lord who is served.
Each one of us is given gifts of ministry by the Spirit:
And there is no gift without its corresponding service.

There is one ministry of Christ:

And in this ministry we all share.

Together we are the body of Christ:

And individually members of it.

Ian: The Uniting Church provides for the exercise by people of all genders of the gifts God bestows upon them for the building up of the church. Having sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are now to commission as elders those whom we have newly elected or co-opted to this ministry, Kenna Morrison and Semisi (James) Tapueluelu, and those whom we have re-elected Joel Hallinan, Claire Foley, Shawn Whelan, and Amelia Ware.

Sisters and Brothers, the congregation has elected you to serve as Elders on our church council. The church council shall give priority in its life to building up the Congregation in faith and love, sustaining members in hope, and leading the Congregation to a fuller participation in Christ's mission in the world.

Now, before you are commissioned as Elders within the Brunswick Uniting Church congregation I ask you these questions.

Do you once again confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord?

Elders: ***I do***

Relying on God's grace, and with the support of this congregation and other members of the Church Council do you promise to faithfully carry out the responsibilities of an Elder in the Brunswick Uniting Church.

Elders: ***I do***

Ian (to congregation): Having elected these people as leaders and Elders of our congregation I ask you now: will you accept Joel, Claire, Semisi, Shawn, Kenna and Amelia as your Elders and do you pledge your support and prayers for them during their term of service?

Congregation: ***We will.***

Ian: Let us pray:

Almighty God, we thank you that in every age you have chosen leaders to serve and care for your people. We thank you that you have called these our brothers and sisters to serve you. May those you have chosen have the same mind which was in Christ Jesus and be faithful disciples, giving example to Christ's flock and witnessing to the truth of the gospel; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

All may reach out a hand in blessing:

God of grace, through the Holy Spirit
empower your servant Joel/Claire/Shawn/Kenna/Amelia/Semisi for the ministry of Elder.

BLESSING: *May God bless and keep you Aaronic Blessing, AoV1.177*

*May God bless and keep you,
May God's face shine on you;
May God be kind to you
and give you peace.*

SONG: [May God bless you](#), © 1988, Christopher Walker, OCP Publications, from [As One Voice](#), Vol. 1, Willow Connection Pty. Ltd. Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE #604502

Prayers of the People

concluding with SONG: Kingdom of God, MV (146)

God of the ages we bring you our broken hearts
 There is so much darkness, despair and loss in our world.
 We pray all who are suffering the impact of the pandemic
 And in particular we pray for indigenous communities
 here in Australia and around the world
 We pray for all who are suffering and will suffer
 the impacts of climate change and share
 our grief and despair arising from the outcomes of COP26.
 Help us to work for justice and peace and joy.

Jesus Christ, Kingdom maker we bring you our hope
 The voices of prophets are rising in the church and beyond
 crying out for justice and peace and joy.
 We pray for church leaders everywhere who add their voices
 of love and longing to the daily clamour around us.
 We pray for our Elders commissioned today
 for our whole Church Council and Ministry Team
 for the many committees who guide and shape our ministries.
 Help us to truly be the gates of your kingdom.

Holy Spirit, change bringer we bring you our joy.
 As we emerge from many months of upheaval
 our joy is tempered by complex emotions and experiences
 And so we pray for our widespread community,
 for all who are fragile, anxious, fearful, unwell and lonely.
 We pray for the Olive Way and Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre.
 We pray for the men being held in detention centres.
 We pray and give thanks for all who offer support and care.
 Help us to be your people, your voice of love.

Let's sing ...

*The kingdom of God is justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit
 Come, Lord, and open in us the gates of your kingdom*

SONG: The Kingdom of God © 2001 Taize Community, Ateliers et Presses de Taize
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Mission Spot re Presbytery

Jessica and Jamie

Jessica - Church Council would like to place a spotlight on the Uniting Church Presbytery of Port Philip West. Presbytery has advised that nominations are currently being invited for positions on committees. We ask that all members of our congregation give this consideration. It is particularly important that Presbytery reflects diversity in terms of CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse), gender, age, clergy and lay diversity. There are a number of positions including positions on The Ministry Formation Committee, The Mission Strategy and Education Committee and the Presbytery Liaison to Ecumenical Relations Committee.

Jamie - Our church already has a strong representation on both Synod and Presbytery. Details are in the Olive Press. As a large and thriving congregation BUC has many talented people who could be willing and very capable of serving Presbytery. Please give this prayerful consideration. Reach out to Jamie or Kate for further information regarding the 'how' of

Presbytery. Claire Foley can forward nomination information.
Nominations close on Friday 26th November.

Notices

Saide

As we prepare to go out from this space please come to the front, tell us your name and share any news or notices in a sentence or two. There's lots of information on our website and our Facebook page. Look out for the Olive Press by email on Thursday evenings.

Sending Song - All hail the power of Jesus name, TiS 224 (ii)

*1. All hail the power of Jesus' name;
let angels prostrate fall;
bring forth the royal diadem
to crown him Lord of all.*

*2. Crown him, you martyrs of our God,
who from his altar call;
praise him whose way of pain you trod,
and crown him Lord of all.*

*3. As heirs of Israel's chosen race
and ransomed from the fall,
hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all.*

*5. Let every tribe and every tongue
responsive to his call,
now shout in universal song
and crown him Lord of all.*

SONG: [All hail the power](#), by Edward Perronet,
from Together in Song, Harper Collins Religious; PUBLIC DOMAIN

Blessing and Sending

Saide

Jesus responds to Pilate saying 'My kingdom is not from this world'.
Let's go out today and every day to be gates of Jesus' kingdom
seeking justice and peace and joy in the power of the Holy Spirit.

May you always know and share
the steadfast love of God
the deep compassion of Jesus
and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Thank yous

Liturgist: Saide Cameron	Musicians Shawn Whelan (co-ordinator) Helen Burnham Michael Cameron Mikul Denison Anthony Hinds Joanne van Ravenswaaij	Songs: Peace, Salaam, Shalom (Prelude) © 2001 Pat Humphries and Sandy Opatow. Moving Forward Music BMI, www.pathumphries.com.
Acknowledgement of Country: Semisi Tapueluelu		Musicians: Shawn Whelan (coordinator), Glenice Cook, Ian Ferguson, Steph Gesling & Josh Whitty, Kate Scull Jess and Anya Kvansakul, Maxine, Clementine & Harriet Loynd, Dave Miller, Elaine Potter, Natalie Sims
Bible readers: Claire Foley Geoff Thompson	Mission Spot: Jessica Kvansakul (Council Co-Chair) Jamie Thom (Presbytery Representative)	
Children's time Dave Hall (Pastor: Children, Youth and Young Adults) Ian Ferguson	Images: Nicole Batch, Wildflower Discovery - Emergence 2021	Jesucristo Reina (Postlude) Anon. (from Argentina), from <u>Together in Song</u> , (728) Harper Collins Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN
Reflection: Ian Ferguson (Minister of the Word)	Editing / Production: Jane Allardice Martin Brown Ray Cameron Saide Cameron Dave Miller	Musicians: Natalie Sims, Daniel Whelan, Shawn Whelan
Prayers of the People: Ray Cameron		

Children's time king and queen images sourced from:

<https://listverse.com/2018/11/14/10-unusual-statues-of-jesus-christ/>

<https://www.catholicjournal.us/2020/11/20/christianity-101/>

<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/trumps-got-the-whole-world-economy-in-his-hands-but-who-elected-him-king-2019-08-28>

<https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2018/03/how-im-the-king-of-the-world-happened-inside-titanic-historic-oscar-haul>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_VIII

<https://worldhistory.us/ancient-history/ancient-egypt/cleopatra-vii-the-last-queen-of-egypt.php>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExeZA5gnZRl>

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/03/03/kings-of-leon-to-release-album-as-nft-.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNa1J9UqF-M>

Closing verse on screen:

'My kingdom is not from this world.' John 18:36