

# THE OLIVE BRANCH

Holy Week 2024, Brunswick Uniting Church Congregation Worship - 9:30 am

## > Recalling the Lenten journey



Throughout Lent we explored and responded to the questions 'What are we turning away from? What are we turning towards?'. We were invited to locate ourselves in God's bigger picture, to turn towards what is true and good, to pay attention to God's foolishness, to turn away from the fear of judgement to God's love, to turn towards joyfulness and to towards Jesus.

We followed the journey of the purple cloth with Cath beginning with a tearing and turning and on to a wrapping of a bowl of water, remembering our baptism and the importance of community for our faith, then on into the messy middle of the market place and finally

we turned our attention to the light and to matters of the heart.

Beginning our Holy Week journey we marked the significant turning point in the story of Easter with Jesus' provocative entry into Jerusalem. On Maundy Thursday we read Mark's telling of Jesus Passion with a Tenebrae service. On Good Friday we read from John's gospel with a series of responses and reflections. We lit a fire on Easter Dawn and then the new Christ Candle. And later we celebrated the Risen Christ by flowering the Cross and sharing Holy Communion.

This special edition of the Olive Branch offers the story of Holy Week in words and photos.



## > Palm Sunday



Cath welcomed our congregation and the Brunswick Baptist congregation to worship on **24th March Palm Sunday, Mark 11:1-11**, to begin Holy Week. She acknowledged the people who were participating in the Palm Sunday rally and the Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage. Jenn and Mark from the Baptist congregation led us in the Acknowledgement of Country. Our Prayer of Confession included a time of remembering those who waved branches, laid garments and were under Roman oppression.



Cath read the story [Dave the Donkey](#) and Peter offered a reflection *'The way of love'* observing that this *'starts with the other, considers the needs, the wants, the hopes and the dreams of others, and treats those as sacred'*. Peter began by reminding us that Jesus' triumphant entry is followed closely by his crucifixion. He commented that *'in the middle of all the political chaos, tension and violence around him Jesus offers a way of self-sacrificing and self-emptying love one that leads directly to the Cross. Jesus path stands in stark contrast to the system of domination ...'*. He invited us to remember this amidst the violence in our world now and concluded with some words from a song by Amanda Udis-Kesler.



As the time neared 10am we moved out onto the steps where the Christ Church Anglican, Salvation Army and the Brunswick and Moreland Catholic Mission congregations joined us to begin the Ecumenical Walk. We followed Murphy (the donkey) to walk around the block through to the gardens of Christ Church Anglican. We shared the familiar [Palm Sunday liturgy](#), including blessing of the palms, and were sent on our way with Father Russel acknowledging the joy of knowing that we are one in the body of Christ even as we go our separate ways.

These two aerial view photos were taken by a women in Helen Rowe's Pilate's class. She lives in the apartments on Merri St.

The remaining images for the Palm Sunday story are a combination of screen-shots and photos offered by Cath James, Jane Allardice, Mal Rowe.





We [returned to our worship space](#) with the Salvation Army congregation also joining us. We shared [Prayers of the People](#) offered by Jenna from the Baptist congregation and Jim from BUC. Phil Hudson offered the very moving song 'Many Miles from Home'. Phil is a member of the Love Makes a Way group and also the Brunswick Baptist congregation. Cath was joined by Mark Payne (BB) and Alison Templar (SA) to [offer the blessing](#).

## > Palm Sunday Walk for Justice

The Palm Sunday Walk for Justice for Refugees as held at 10am starting in Parliament Gardens. We had a strong but smaller presence at the rally this year led by the Love Makes a Way movement. Reflections on Peace and Justice were offered by speakers from various faith perspectives. They spoke about peacemaking, the experience of seeking asylum in Australia, and policy changes needed in the treatment of people seeking refugee protection. After walking in to the city centre the rally closed with a final speaker and music from refugees and others.



Photos from Abi Benham-Bannon

## > Maundy Thursday

On **Maundy Thursday, 28th March**, we gathered for a Tenebrae service. Tenebrae is the Latin for darkness or shadows and is marked by a series of readings and the gradual extinguishing of candles. It helps us enter into a space where we can identify with the darkness and loss felt by Jesus' followers as they experienced his death.

We read Mark's gospel during Lent and a group of people also gathered weekly to study the gospel through Rowan Williams' book 'Meeting God in Mark'. And so we heard Christ's passion told from the perspective of Mark. Six readings were offered from Mark 14:3-15:39 with each followed by a response or song and the extinguishing of a candle.



Our service began in the Gathering Space and continued gathered in front of the Cross and a long table of candles. We prayed and sang. We anointed each other with oil as a gesture of healing and shared Holy Communion.



In response to the cry 'Crucify him' we laid olive branches as a prayer for peace. Our service concluded with the Lenten cloth torn down the middle and laid at the foot of the Cross.



We left in silence with the Christ Candle burning in the dark.

This service was not live-streamed.

You can [read the Order of Service](#).

# > Good Friday

As we arrived at worship on **7th April, Good Friday, John 18:1-19:42**, we were invited to spend time in the Gathering Space engaging with the symbols from our Lenten journey and to take the items offered there - a piece of purple cloth, a nail, a taper and a heart with a text/a pen.

[Read the Order of Service](#)



## The cloth

- turning and tearing, a reminder of moments of disruption, an invitation to stop in the emptiness, to be open to the unexpected, to turn to God and say yes

Mark 1:10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.

*Touch/look at the torn cloth  
- take a piece of purple fabric*



## The water

- gathering around the waters of baptism, a reminder that we can only understand Christian faith in community, in baptism we say 'we belong'

Mark 8:3 "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

*Dip your hand in the water  
- mark your head or hand  
with the sign of the cross*



## The market place

- the messy middle where the world and Christian values collide, a reminder that we are more healthy and resilient when we work together as a congregation and community.

1 Corinthians 1:25 For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

*Think of a market place, the noise & clamour  
- take a nail*



## The Light

- we moved towards the light, lighting a candle, a reminder that Jesus is the Light of the World

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

*Remember a time when you turned to Jesus  
- take a taper*



## The heart

- we turned our attention to matters of the heart, an invitation to turn away from sin, asking God to restore a right and willing spirit within us

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

*Place your hands on your heart,  
give thanks for God's steadfast love  
- take a heart and a marker*



Cath James [offered a greeting of peace](#) and selected verses of the Suffering Servant with Saide Cameron [responding in prayer](#).

Amelia Ware offered the Acknowledgement of Country and [welcomed us to worship](#) inviting us to enter into a service of readings from John's gospel together with reflections and responses as we followed Jesus in his final hours and considered what he is turning towards.

The readings were offered by Kirsty Bennett, Gwen Arnold and Jamie Thom.



**Betrayal** - [Dan Broadstock offered the first of three reflections](#) taking us back to the beginning of Jesus' ordeal at the Last Supper and in the Garden of Gethsemane. He invited us to wonder about Judas' motivation for betraying Jesus and reminded us of Jesus' response to Judas' kiss. Dan wondered if *'I can love Judas. I who have been a traitor, a traitor to my principles a thousand times over. I who have been faithless to those I love, to my neighbour and to God. Perhaps if I can find a way to love Judas I can begin to understand in some distant way how God can love me so fully and unconditionally and perseveringly. I can begin to understand how God who sees all of me could enter into the world. Perhaps I can begin to understand how Jesus Christ the Betrayed one could be a servant to me'*.



**Denial** - [Saide offered a Prayer of Lament](#) - lamenting, offering our grief for the suffering and devastation being experienced by so many people. We sang a Kyrie from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. *Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy.* During the prayers we were invited to write the prayers of our hearts on the paper heart in preparation for taking them to the Cross later in the service.



**Truth** - [Peter Blair took us into the middle of Jesus' trial](#) before Pilate. Focussing on Pilate's interrogation of Jesus he commented that it *'is a clash of world views - the world view of Empire against the world view of God and there is simply no common ground between them'*. He reflected on Pilate's cynicism noting that *'cynicism is what breeds when truth is scarce and where lies are abundant'*, noting the many ways this is evident in our world. Peter concluded *'Brendan Burn writes the truth upon which the gospel rests may not be from this world but the allegiance it demands inevitably has social and political consequences in the world ... but Jesus life provides the example of a life lived with love, compassion, self-emptying self-sacrifice and devotion and perhaps this is what our cynical world needs.'*



**The Crowd** - Amelia offered the [Prayers of the People](#). She invited us to reflect on what we had just heard and how it might've felt to be amid the crowd as they shouted "Crucify him!" *How does it feel to be tangled up with a source of injustice? How do we pray? How do we turn away from injustice and turn towards justice and peace?*

As we prepared to pray the Lord's Prayer she invited us to *wrap the nail in the purple cloth and hold it gently, feeling the pain of this cry for Jesus' crucifixion.*





**Power** - [Reflecting on Jesus' journey Cath](#) commented *'The worst of humanity is concentrated in these last days of Jesus' life, these final hours and looking at it now I want to ask 'Why did this happen? How could it happen? How could people do such a thing? How could the system be so unjust?' Then she reminded us that all this is still happening and that 'we must live with the futility of being human' ... that it is in this futility and the brokenness of the world is where 'God meets us most'. She concluded telling us that this story of our faith is not an accident 'because in it there is something very particular that we need to grasp, something particular in the suffering that we need in order to be made whole and each year we need to tell this story because each year we needed to be reminded of who we are and where God meets us. We tell this story because if we are open to it, it will transform us. It is in our darkest night, in our despair, in the surrender that God prepares the ground for us, for new life.*



**Death and Veneration of the Cross**

- Cath invited us to come forward [to venerate the cross](#), a time of reverence for the event that took place and is at the heart of our faith. She invited us to offer both our prayers of pain and prayers of love. *In Christ's death, we hold the way of love with the way of suffering. God's love stirs us to hope that there is life beyond death.* We placed our items and spent some time touching the wood to venerate the cross.



**Burial** - Amelia [offered a prayer to honour Jesus' dying](#), his final breath concluding *'As his hands are bound and his movement stills, May we release ourselves from the constraints that stop us from turning towards others. As we watch and wait, we remember that we are your people'*



**Sending** - [Cath sent us on our way](#) with the invitation to light a taper to begin the Easter Vigil and to return again on Easter Day.



## > Good Friday Hot Cross Buns

Many thanks to Ray, Michael & Emma Cameron for the delicious Hot Cross Buns offered for morning tea after worship on Good Friday. On Thursday they made 150 buns in four varieties (traditional, chocolate choc-chip, red velvet, white chocolate & cranberry).



## > Easter Dawn



On **31st March, Easter Day, Mark 16:1-8** we gathered close to dawn, as the women did, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome who came to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. We gathered in memory of this vulnerable group of first witnesses who carried spices for burial, faithfully prepared to honour someone that they had followed and loved, to honour Jesus, their beloved leader and friend.

We selected spices from the bowls by the fire pit.



Gen read Mark 16:1-8 and Cath lit the fire. Moving into the Gathering Space we added to the spices installation. A new Christ Candle was lit by Cath, Saide & Gen. We prayed, sang, offered a creed (statement of faith) and participated in a remembrance of baptism. During the Prayers of the People we lit tapers for the prayers of our hearts.





## > Breakfast



Thank you to Linda Wannan & Jamie Thom for the very welcome breakfast of muesli, yoghurt and plump purple grapes after the Dawn Service. Conversation and board games made for a lovely time of gathering.

The Dawn service was not live-streamed.  
[Read the Order of Service](#)

Photos from Kirsty Bennett,  
 Ray Cameron, Saide Cameron

## > Easter Day



**31st March, [Easter Day](#), John 20:1-18, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11** [Cath called us to worship](#) on 'the greatest day of the year' and proclaimed '**Christ is risen**' and we offered our joyful response '**He is risen indeed. Alleluia!**'



The Christ Candle, first lit at dawn, was lit again. The table and the Cross were re-set in preparation for Holy Communion as we sang 'Halle Halle'.

Saide [welcomed us to worship](#) speaking of the spices from the Dawn Service together with the flowers and the greenery - a celebration of new life, and the stones - a reminder that God's love sets us free. We shared an [Easter Prayer](#).





Cath [dedicated our new Bible](#), an updated edition of the New Revised Standard Version, praying '... *On this Easter day, we give thanks for Christ's resurrection revealed to us through these Scriptures. In Jesus name, Amen*'.

Josh, Christine and Briain offered the Gospel reading and Cath [invited us to come and flower the cross](#) in celebration of Jesus' resurrection '... *So come with your flowers and your hopes, come with your questions and your doubts about how all this could be true, come and see how God's transforming presence calls us back to life, and love*'.



Cath began her reflection '[God's love sets us free](#)' sharing a story of her husband Joel's attempt to rescue a magpie lark from the plastic binding it's leg. Ultimately the bird did not accept the invitation of freedom and flew away. She asked '*So why am I telling you this story on today of all days? Because there is something in this story that I think illustrates God's Easter invitation to us.*' Cath went on to explore what is needed for us to come to terms with the meaning of Easter and how we might understand it. She commented on Mary's experience at the tomb and reminded us of God reaching out to us through Jesus. She concluded that as with the Corinthians '*For now, the invitation is simply to turn towards resurrection, to allow ourselves to be held in the outstretched arms of God and taste the freedom of that love*'.



[Kirsty offered](#) Prayers for the People framed with the words '*as we turn towards the flowered cross ...*'

We [celebrated Holy Communion](#). Cath [blessed us](#) and sent us out.



Photos from Saide Cameron and screen-shots

## > Flowering the Cross

After worship the process of flowering the Cross was joyfully completed.



Photos from Kirsty Bennett,  
Mal Rowe, Saide Cameron



## > Thank you

The worship committee delights in the creative process that has shaped the seasons of Lent and Holy Week. We offer our thanks to the planning teams for the Holy Week services, to the music co-ordinators, musicians, Bible readers, liturgists and prayer leaders who have been the faces and voices of worship. We also offer our thanks to the AV teams who make it possible to share our services beyond our worship space; we regularly receive messages of gratitude from those who join us for worship in this way.



We loved having ten musicians in and near the music pit on Easter Day - such a wonderful celebration.

And finally thank you to Helen Burnham for the floral arrangements on Easter Day, to Mal Rowe for creating the mesh for flowering the cross, to Helen Rowe for purchasing the flowers and to all who brought their own flowers and greenery.



Saide Cameron