



# KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

## Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

10am – Sunday 27 September 2020

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Music to prepare us for worship "*Tranquilly*", C H Parry (1848-1918);

"*Come down O Love Divine*", Chorale Prelude on Down Ampney by Henry Ley 1(887-1962); "*Herzlich tut mich verlangen*", Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Karen Knudson/organ

## Welcome

**Music of approach** *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace*, Malcolm Boyle (1902-1976)

Karen Knudson/organ

## Call to worship

Kia noho a Ihowa ki a koutou. May God be with you.

**Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.**

We meet in the name of God

**whose speech began the story of life.**

We meet in the purpose of Jesus

**whose life was the speech of God.**

We meet in the power of the Spirit

**whose tongue shapes the words of change and who energises the ones who give them voice.**

We meet in the name of the Triune God, the Source, the Sharer, and the Shaper,

**Who was, and is, and will be, and who is in the Story of Love still told.**

## Hymn

(tune Gather us in) CH4 623 - Marty Haugen

1 Here in this place new light is streaming,  
now is the darkness vanished away,  
see in this space our fears and our dreamings,  
brought here to you in the light of this day.  
Gather us in – the lost and forsaken,  
gather us in – the blind and the lame:  
call to us now and we shall awaken,  
we shall arise at the sound of our name.

2 We are the young – our lives are a mystery,  
we are the old who yearn for your face,  
we have been sung throughout all of history,  
called to be light to the whole human race.  
Gather us in – the rich and the haughty,  
gather us in – the proud and the strong;  
give us a heart so meek and so lowly,  
give us the courage to enter the song.

3 Not in the dark of buildings confining,  
not in some heaven, light years away,  
but here in this place the new light is  
shining,  
now is the Kingdom, now is the day.  
Gather us in and hold us forever,  
gather us in and make us your own;  
gather us in – all peoples together,  
fire of love in our flesh and our bones.

## Prayer, assurance of forgiveness

E te whanau, in Christ we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

Kia tau te rangimarie o te Karaiti ki runga i a koutou. May the peace of Christ be  
with you always. **And also with you.**

## Music

“If ye love me, keep my commandments”, Thomas Tallis (1505-85)

## Children

### Hymn

1 Our life has its seasons, and God has the  
reasons  
why spring follows winter, and new leaves  
grow,  
for there’s a connection with our  
resurrection  
that flowers will bud after frost and snow,  
*so there’s never a time to stop believing,  
there’s never a time for hope to die,  
there’s never a time to stop loving,  
these three things go on.*

(tune Kotuku) AA 113 - Shirley Murray

2 There’s a time to be planting, a time to be  
plucking,  
a time to be laughing, a time to weep,  
a time to be building, a time to be breaking,  
a time to be waking, a time to sleep,  
*but there’s never a time to stop believing ....*

3 There’s a time to be hurting, a time to be  
healing,  
a time to be saving, a time to spend,  
a time to be grieving, a time to be dancing,  
a time for beginning, a time to end,  
*but there’s never a time to stop believing ...*

## Readings – Listen for God’s Word to us ...

### Philippians 2:1-13

*Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church* **Thanks be to God**

### Matthew 21:23-32

*This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ* **Praise to Christ the Word**

## Reflection “Baptism – infant and adult, grace and faith”

We are about to baptise Henry James Blain aged 5 months old. So I want to talk about baptism. A little while ago, we baptised an adult. Whether we baptise infants or adults, the same theology applies. What does the church say about baptism? In summary, baptism marks the commencement of Christian life. In being plunged into the water and rising from it, we proclaim that the person is united with Christ in his dying and in his rising, the dynamic of our everyday living. The person enters into the life of being cleansed from sin and of receiving the life-giving spirit, the dynamic of our everyday living. The person is welcomed into God’s new society of love, the Church. Baptism marks the start of a faith journey toward God’s coming renewal of all things, the whole of creation. That is a summary of key aspects of the meaning of baptism.

You will know that some churches baptise infants and some don’t. The Roman Catholic and Orthodox – the two largest strands of the Church do baptise infants. Many Protestant churches baptise infants but Baptist, independent, evangelical and Pentecostal churches generally don’t. There are some within our own tradition who oppose infant baptism.

So let’s look at both practices, infant baptism first. We believe that God loves us and all people, and that we and all people are claimed for God’s service from birth. With infant baptism, the emphasis is on God’s initiative. It conveys God’s love for us before we can respond. It demonstrates that even when we are helpless, at whatever age, we are loved, accepted and affirmed by God. It celebrates God’s love for Henry and every child. Nothing we do can earn God’s love. Nothing we do can take God’s love from us. God’s acceptance of us does not depend on our faithfulness.

Infant baptism celebrates God’s welcome of a child into a faith community that takes responsibility for helping children mature in faith. It celebrates the beginning of a process of growing into Christ as part of a supportive community of faith. Our intent as a congregation is that one day Henry will declare his intention to live as a disciple of Jesus.

So in infant baptism, we affirm the faith of the community of faith, including the faith of the parents. Baptism is a sign of human solidarity, that at no stage of life are we meant to be isolated from each other or from God. We celebrate the grace of God who draws us deeply into relationship and seeks to form a new community of faith. We celebrate our life in family and in community.

In the process, we celebrate God’s patient pursuit of every person. I was baptised at the age of 18 but looking back, I have no doubt God had been pursuing me for years. There were moments of awakening and preparation. I am grateful that God was patient with me, never giving up, until I made my public response in due time. Before we are conscious of it, faith is being planted in us, because faith works at a level deeper than consciousness, deeper than our intellectual capacity. Faith cannot be limited to what happens in our minds. I remember visiting a congregation in Hungary where children who were intellectually disabled were being prepared for professing their faith. They may well have appreciated more about faith than I ever will.

The Holy Spirit is at work in our lives long before we recognise her. The Holy Spirit works in the lives of infants and children through parents, grandparents, teachers, friends and a faithful congregation and more. And the call to the congregation is to care for, nurture and guide children. Every baptism asks us whether our life as a congregation is enabling people to grow as disciples of Jesus. We are committing ourselves to being a multi-generational congregation, to point beyond the family circle, and beyond the local church to God’s love for the world.

The emphasis is on God’s initiative. But there are people who raise concerns about infant baptism. One of the important theologians of the last century, Karl Barth, opposed the practice, for three reasons. He said that infant baptism didn’t figure in the Bible and so has no biblical authority.

Strictly speaking he may be right. Although there is reference to households being baptised, it seems that the baptism of children started in the second century. But although it may not be specifically authorised in the Bible, it quickly became widespread.

He also argued that infant baptism has led to the disastrous assumption that people become Christians virtually by birth, that we are born Christians. Barth argued that this watered down the Christian faith and contributed to the church's lack of distinctiveness in society. If we become Christian at birth, there is nothing new about being Christian. The church is meant to be an alternative society of radical love, offering the world a different perspective. Now, Barth was writing in a time and in a context when national churches had been taken over by destructive popular values. In that context, infant baptism was abused, but so have many doctrines and practices of the church, yet we continue with them.

The third argument. Baptism has two sides to it - there is first an action of God – baptism with the Spirit – and then a corresponding human action – baptism with water. We celebrate both a divine gift and a human response. We celebrate the gift of God's life with us and we celebrate the beginning of a new life in Christ. Barth argues that infant baptism emphasises the first, but neglects the second. The Christian faith is certainly about God's unmerited love, he says, but it is also about making a free and glad human answer to that.

It is a free gift but that gift is not for filing away. We are baptised once because Christ died for us once and for all, but baptism is for living out, day by day, week by week, year by year. We are to live a baptised life. Now all of that is perhaps more evident in adult baptism. But as there are risks with infant baptism, so are there with adult baptism. The risk of adult baptism is that it can seem that faith comes before grace, our commitment comes before God's love of us. And it carries the risk of making faith individualistic, of making it about my faith, my relationship with God, whereas Christianity is fundamentally a communal faith. We grow in faith as part of a community, as a member of the body of Christ.

I think it is important to hold both practices together, to note what each contributes, and to note dangers with each. Two dimensions, to be held together. Grace and faith. Beginning and continuing, which is the point of the gospel reading today.

We are a congregation that celebrates infant and adult baptism. One is not better than the other. They have the same underlying theology, God's love, God's patient pursuing of us, calling for human response, every day of our lives.

## Hymn

(tune Laudate Dominum) TIS 494- Brian Arthur

1 In water we grow, secure in the womb,  
and speechlessly know love's safety and  
room.

Baptising and blessing we publish for good  
the freeing caressing safe keeping of God.

2 In water we wash: the dirt of each day,  
its trouble and rush are carried away.  
In Christ re-created by love's cleansing art,  
self-will and self-hatred dissolve and  
depart.

3 In water we dive, and cannot draw breath,  
then surface alive, rebounding from death.  
Our old self goes under, in Christ dead and  
drowned.

We rise, washed in wonder, by love clad and  
crowned.

4 In water we dwell, for by its deep flow  
through bloodstream and cell, we live, think,  
and grow.

Praise God, love outflowing, whose well of  
new birth  
baptises our knowing, and waters the earth.

## Sacrament of Baptism

We celebrate the baptism of Henry James Blain, son of Andrew and Hayley Blain ...  
Let us affirm the faith.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen**

...

**The Aaronic blessing (*sung*)**

**The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen**

...

On behalf of the universal church, do you welcome Henry and do you renew your commitment, with God's help, to live before all God's children in a kindly and Christian way, and to share with them the knowledge and love of Christ?

**We do. We will nurture one another in faith, uphold one another in prayer and encourage one another in service.**

### Sung blessing

"Deep Peace of the running wave to you", John Rutter ( b 1945).

## Prayer for others and the Lord's Prayer

*Anglican prayer book*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the  
glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.

E tō mātou Matua i te rangi  
Kia tapu tōu Ingoa.  
Kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga.  
Kia meatia tāu e pai ai  
ki runga ki te whenua,  
kia rite anō ki tō te rangi.  
Hōmai ki a mātou āianei  
he taro mā mātou mō tēnei rā.  
Murua ō mātou hara,  
Me mātou hoki e muru nei  
i ō te hunga e hara ana ki a mātou.  
Āua hoki mātou e kawea kia whakawaia;  
Engari whakaorangia mātou i te kino:  
Nōu hoki te rangatiratanga, te kaha,  
me te korōria, Āke āke āke. Āmine.

tune LM) GtG 487 - Jacque B Jones

## Hymn

1 These treasured children present now  
are bound to us by sacred vow:  
with love, we make a heart-felt claim  
to welcome them in Jesus' name.

2 Our ancient story we shall tell,  
till these our children know it well  
within their souls and minds and hearts,  
for this is where their journey starts.

3 Come, Holy Spirit, help us be  
a nurturing community;  
empower us to realise  
God's kingdom through our children's eyes.

4 Then, tender God, each child embrace;  
God give them blessings, grant them grace.  
Surprise them, God, with wonders still,  
and gently guide them to your will.

**Dedication of offering** – *Please place your offerings in the offering bags held out for you at the door as you leave. Please do this as soon as you are able.*

## Blessing

Music for our leaving "*Gaudeamus*", S S Campbell (1810-76)

### Serving

Minister – Kerry Enright

Associate Minister - Jordan Redding

Organist and Choir Director – Karen Knudson

Reader – Beulah Leitch

Prayer for others – Helen Thew

Welcoming team – Week 2 team

Counting team – Week 2 team

*In relation to your monetary offering, you may:*

- *Make regular automatic payments (which are tax deductible) - contact Helen Thew at [plannedgiving@knoxchurch.net](mailto:plannedgiving@knoxchurch.net)*
- *Give online to the Church's bank account at 03 0903 0016425 00 - our charity number for tax rebate purposes is #CC52318*
- *Give at the conclusion of the service.*