



# KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

## Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

10am – Sunday 6 September 2020

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Music to prepare us for worship “*Wem in Leidenstagen*”, Peter Hurford (b. 1928);

“*Bis du bei mi*” (I will not forget my Lord), J S Bach (1685-1750); “*Lento*” Frank Bridge (1924)

Karen Knudson/organ

### The bell sounds, quietness, welcome

**Music of approach** *Trumpet Voluntary*, John Stanley (1712-86)

Ralph Miller/trumpet, 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.**

People of God, open your eyes! Look around!

**Jesus Christ is present here, around, among and within us.**

God’s salvation is close at hand— nearer than you know.

**We open our hearts and minds to the Spirit, and worship God together!**

### Hymn

1 For the beauty of the earth,  
for the beauty of the skies,  
for the love which from our birth  
over and around us lies:

*Christ, our God, to you we raise  
this our sacrifice of praise.*

2 For the beauty of each hour  
of the day and of the night,  
hill and vale, and tree and flower,  
sun and moon and stars of light:

[*Refrain*]

(tune *Lucerna Laudoniae*) CH4 181 - Folliot Sandford Pierpoint

3 For the joy of ear and eye,  
for the heart and mind's delight,  
for the mystic harmony  
linking sense to sound and sight:  
[*Refrain*]

4 For each perfect gift and sign  
of your love so freely given,  
graces human and divine,  
flowers of earth and buds of heaven:  
[*Refrain*]

## 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.**

## Children

**Song** (we will sing several times)

John Bell

We will take what you offer,  
we will live by your Word;  
we will love one another  
and be led by you, Lord.

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

### **Romans 13:8-14**

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

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

**Music and Art** “Prayer of St Gregory”, Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000) Ralph Miller/ trumpet

*For What Binds Us*, Jan L Richardson; *The Space Between*, Robin Farbman; *Soulmates*, Ben Will;  
*Repair*, Betony Coons; *Two Birds*, Maria-Thérèse Andersson

### **Matthew 18:15-20**

"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

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

## Reflection “The value of conflict”

There are times people wonder why a certain sermon is preached. What is going on that prompted the minister to say that, people wonder. At other times, people imagine that a sermon is directed at “certain people”. They look across the aisle to see whether the people to whom the sermon is evidently aimed are listening to it. So let me make a disclaimer. The gospel reading set for today is about conflict, and that is the reason I am speaking about it, not because anything is happening we don’t know about or because I want to pick on someone. In relation to the text, many commentators note that this passage is not meant as a template for resolving all conflict. Following these steps as if they were law will not necessarily produce a favourable outcome and may be harmful and hurtful.

Every day we are conscious of destructive conflict. Trump’s America. Wars that roll on - South Sudan and Syria. Tensions at the Khyber Pass. Closer to home, ongoing harm from previous conflicts - The New Zealand Land Wars. There are dynamics that will not go away - gender based violence. And in the church we are not immune. The second congregation I served had a large number of people leave during a previous ministry and when I arrived people were still bruised and anxious and afraid and angry. One supporter of the previous minister was so caught up in the conflict that she sent me a letter after I had been called but before I had moved, saying there was no way she wanted a Marxist, feminist failed lawyer as her minister. We all have war stories and when we dig them over, what dark places we go to. And COVID-19 has added to the stress. And so has social media.

Jia Tolentino, a staff writer at The New Yorker identified five intersecting problems created by the internet: First, how the internet is built to expand and extend our sense of identity; second, how it encourages us to overvalue our opinions; third, how it maximizes our sense of opposition; fourth, how it cheapens our understanding of solidarity; and, finally, how it destroys our sense of scale. “The self-deluding dynamics of modern digital life highlight how the internet’s success is partially built on its ability to kindle the flames of human conflict.” Rage sells.

Is there anything good about conflict? The church was born in conflict. Conflict runs through its story, often arising over what seems trivial today. The issue of whether Christians should eat meat that had been offered first to idols. Whether Gentiles should be allowed to convert to Christianity without being circumcised first, whether Christians should marry, whether Christians were bound to keep Jewish law. At the time these conflicts must have seemed painful, that the church was coming apart at the seams, that it was a hopelessly divided and fragile movement without a future. And yet.

Jesus generates conflict. Living with conflict is a major part of how we exercise our discipleship. Conflict is an expression of the life of Jesus among us. Joan Tucker and Joyce Gray say “Some of the key doctrines of our faith were forged in the fire of these early controversies. In fact, almost every important facet of Christian belief ... was a matter for conflict in the ancient church at one point or another.”

The book of Acts could be understood as a story about conflict. There were differences of opinion and practice, but the church was not destroyed. It often became stronger. Acts 6:1-6, for example. Christians provided food for destitute widows. The Greek-speaking members complained that the Greek-speaking widows were not getting as much as the Hebrew-speaking widows. This put pressure on the apostles who were busy enough already, preaching the gospel and making disciples. That led to what became the order of deacon in the church, one who provides food for people who are hungry. And, records the book of Acts, the word of God increased and the number of disciples multiplied.

Although we don’t always notice it, much conflict is very positive. Let me start near home. Every month I look forward to our Church Council meeting, a meeting of people selected to govern and guide our congregation. To which you might say – Get a life! You look forward to a church meeting! Why? Well, significantly because a group of people seek to grapple with what they believe to be important, from different perspectives. The differences help make the discussion life-giving. People from different generations, with different faith experiences, cultural backgrounds, personality types and more. We have learned that what some find utterly logical, others find bizarre. So we have to talk and listen. In focusing on issues and not people, we grow together. In many ways, the differences make the difference. We seek to live out the call of Jesus to unity which is not uniformity. We seek to be faithful. We believe the Holy Spirit is working through the process of conflict to bring about the will of God. Painful as it can be,

conflict can help the church grow and become more creative in its life and ministry. In many ways, our Presbyterian system is a system for living with conflict. We are guided not by individuals but by councils, people talking and praying and working together to discern what is of God. We have a system of accountability so our local council is overseen by a regional council, and the regional council is overseen by a national council. We are not meant to exist in our own bubble and make our own rules and dissolve in our own juices. We can imagine that cutting ourselves off reduces conflict, but it generally means avoiding the underlying issues.

Years ago I attended the Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The Queen's representative that year was Lord Mackay of Clashfern. He told a story of a ship-wrecked Scotsman washed up on a desert island. Years later the Scotsman was discovered. He took his rescuers on a trip around the island and they were surprised to find two churches. Two churches?, they asked. Ahh yes, the Scotsman said, this is the church I attend and this is the church I would never set foot in. My friend told me some background to the story. Lord Mackay had been a member of a conservative Presbyterian Church. And he was also Lord Chancellor, the highest elected judicial figure in the United Kingdom. In this role, he attended the funeral mass of a Lord Justice who had died. Because he attended a Roman Catholic mass, Lord Mackay was excommunicated by his church. A man of deep faith, he found his spiritual home in the more inclusive Church of Scotland.

Conflict is more likely to be healthy when it is framed by our common commitment to Jesus. When we meet, we believe God is in the room. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." In Council we start our meetings with a Bible reading and reflection and prayer. We are reminding ourselves that none of us is the final authority. None of us sees all or knows all. It nourishes humility. We could be wrong.

Healthy conflict has value. It is an important part of an active, life-giving congregation. It is an important way we discern God's will. It challenges some of our patterns. It broadens out our perspectives. It can elicit growth. If we see it as a way we live out our discipleship, then we can learn to practise it well and to learn how to thrive with it. May it be so.

## Hymn

(tune Love Divine) - Fred Kaan

1 God! When human bonds are  
broken  
and we lack the love or skill  
to restore the hope of healing,  
give us grace and make us still.

2 Through that stillness, with your  
Spirit  
come into our world of stress,  
for the sake of Christ forgiving  
all the failures we confess.

3 You in us are bruised and broken:  
hear us as we seek release  
from the pain of earlier living;  
set us free and grant us peace.

4 Send us, God of new beginnings,  
humbly hopeful into life;  
use us as a means of blessing:  
make us stronger, give us faith.

## 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 āiane  
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.

## Hymn

1 O day of peace that dimly shines  
through all our hopes and prayers  
and dreams,  
guide us to justice, truth, and love,  
delivered from our selfish schemes.  
May swords of hate fall from our  
hands,  
our hearts from envy find release,  
till by God's grace our warring world  
shall see Christ's promised reign of  
peace.

(tune Jerusalem) GtG 373 - Carl P Daw, jr

2 Then shall the wolf dwell with the  
lamb,  
nor shall the fierce devour the small;  
as beasts and cattle calmly graze,  
a little child shall lead them all.  
Then enemies shall learn to love,  
all creatures find their true accord;  
the hope of peace shall be fulfilled,  
for all the earth shall know the Lord.

**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 “*Toccata in 7*”, John Rutter (b. 1945)

## **Serving today**

Minister – Kerry Enright

Associate Minister - Jordan Redding

Organist and Choir Director – Karen Knudson

Reader – Liz Miller

Prayer for others – Lincoln Coe

Welcoming team – Helen Thew's team

Counting team – Roy Somerville's 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.*