



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

Christmas Day

10am – Friday 25 December 2020

Music to prepare us for worship “*What child is this*” Paul Manz:

“*Angels we have heard on high*” op 55 Gunther Gottsche, “*Infant Holy*” Polish carol, arr. Keith Chapman (1979)

Welcome

Music of approach “*The Holly and the Ivy*” traditional carol, arr. Walford Davies

Jesse Hanan, Grace Togneri, Alex McAdam

Call to worship

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

Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

Beautiful is the newborn One,

Who is with us and one with us, full of life.

Beautiful is the child who will walk the Way,

whose feet will blister from the journey.

Beautiful is the carpenter building te whare aroha,

whose hands shape communities of transformation.

Beautiful is the light that shines in the darkness,

who shows compassion in the midst of violence.

Beautiful is the newborn One,

to lead and guide us always.

Hymn

1 O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him born the king of
angels;

O come, let us adore him (x3)

Christ the Lord.

(tune: Adeste Fideles) CH4 306 - John Francis Wade

2 God of God, Light of Light,
Lo! He abhors not the Virgin's womb;
very God, begotten not created;
[Refrain]

3 Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exaltation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above,
'Glory to God in the highest.':
[Refrain]

4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given:
Word of the Father, now in flesh
appearing; [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

Lighting the candle

We light this candle as a sign that the light of Christ has come. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; **those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined. Let us walk in the light of God. Amen.**

Hymn

*Come and join the celebration,
it's a very special day;
come and share our jubilation,
there's a new King born today!*

1 See the shepherds
hurry down to Bethlehem;
gaze in wonder
at the Son of God who lay before them.
[Refrain]

(tune: Celebrations) CH4 321 - Valeria Collison

2 'God is with us',
round the world the message sing;
he is with us,
'Welcome!' all the bells on earth are
pealing. [Refrain]

Readings – Listen for God's Word to us ...

Isaiah 52:7-10

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the LORD to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Hebrews 1:1-4

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

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

John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

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

Music “When a child is born” text Johnny Mathis, melody Dammicco & Bembo (1974)

arr. K Knudson 2020 for Knox Church Choir. Piano/ Sara Brown

Reflection – “The God of Christmas”

The early Christians were thought to be atheists because they did not believe in the Roman god. There are gods in which I do not believe. I do not believe in a god who controls everything that happens, a puppet-master moving people and pieces around. I do not believe in a god that sits remotely in a place far away called heaven. I do not believe in a god who arranges life to fit around us and our wants.

I do want to take up some of John's imagery, not as a formula but as an invitation to life. I want to speak of three persona or faces of God.

The first persona, or the first face of God.

I wonder if you have seen Mike's snowy Dunedin Christmas display, reminiscent of the north of North America in winter. It is a bit like those displays that help us know where the features of a region are. On a display of the topography of the Mackenzie Country, you might press a button that says Mount Aoraki, and a light comes on so you see where it is located. We press the button and the light appears. If we turned the board over, we would see the wires that ran underneath the board, connecting the power and the lights together. I would like us to hold that image in our minds.

The presence of God in the world has a pattern, involves a series of connections, a bit like a mosaic that is underneath and beneath everything that exists. On the surface, there seems little order. Events are random. We are frequently surprised by the unexpected. Lights shine here and there with no evident pattern.

But if I was, somehow, to turn over the full extent of creation and human experience, to look on the underside of the whole of life, to see the disparate pieces together but from underneath, I might see a vague outline, or even an outline that had parts missing and parts broken, but still some kind of pattern, a pattern that would be the effect of love, the power of love.

I would see billions of small and large acts of love that somehow generated more than we imagined. Like lights on a board that shine randomly. I might sense that those acts had had their source in a cosmic light-bearer, a lover, who gives life and love and meaning.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through God and without God not one thing came into being. What has come into being in God was life and the life was the light of all people.”

And now the second face.

This lover does not stay distant from us and uninvolved. The power of love was such that the lover had a beloved, a creation and creatures, so loved that the lover God would be fully “with-us”, and with us in our creatureliness, our humanness. God came in the other, the Christ, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, who was immersed, baptised, plunged into all our experience. “The Word became flesh and lived among us.” God came to Mary and through Mary came as the Christ, a vulnerable, susceptible child who needed a mother’s milk and parental care. There is a God who knows us, a constant companion, a conversation partner, the one who breaks bread with us, who walks life’s journey with us, who endures our suffering, whose life keeps breaking forth in impossible circumstances.

In the tough times of COVID, many people have found hope, and known love, and experienced a joy that is more than happiness. “To all who received God, who believed in God’s name, God gave power to become children of God, who were born of God.” As people bear the image of God, so they can be born of God.

The story of Christmas is the story of the lover and the loved.

And the third face, the third persona of God, is love itself, unrestrained, unlimited, reckless, fiery and untameable love. Spirit who blows through every fence we erect, across every field we try to border, into every person, every community, every nation, no matter how hard we try to stop that love. This light of love cannot be snuffed out and cannot be hidden and cannot be locked away. “What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.”

The God John portrays is points to a God who is lover, a God who is loved, and a God who is love itself. The God who is more than us, the God who is with us, and the God who is free of us in order to be free for everyone. Beyond, beside, among. All praise be to God, the God of Jesus.

Hymn

(tune: In Dulci Jubilo) CH4 322 - John Mason Neale

1 Good Christians, all rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now give heed to what we say,
Jesus Christ is born today:
ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!

3 Good Christians, all rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now you need not fear the grave,
Jesus Christ was born to save,
calls you one, and calls you all,
to gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!
Christ was born to save!

2 Good Christians, all rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now you hear of endless bliss,
Jesus Christ was born for this:
he has opened heaven's door,
and all are blessed for evermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!

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

(tune: Antioch) CH4 320 - Isaac Watts

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature
sing.

3 He rules the world with truth and
grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

2 Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns!
let all their songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

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.*

Benediction

Music for our leaving “Sussex Carol” English traditional carol, arr. David Willcocks
“O Come all ye Faithful” K Knudson (2013)

Claire Barton/ soloist

Serving

Minister - Kerry Enright

Associate Minister - Jordan Redding

Organist and Choir Director - Karen Knudson

Reader - Peter Stockwell

Prayer for others - Mavis Duncanson

Welcoming team - Welcoming team 2

Counting team - Counting team 2

Sound - Vanessa Sinclair

In relation to your monetary offering, you may:

- *Make regular automatic payments (which are tax deductible) - contact Helen Thew at 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.*

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