



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

10am – Sunday 17 January 2021
The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Music to prepare us for worship *Andante in G major* - Adolf Hesse (1809-63)

Gnossienne III - Eric Satie (1866-1925), arr. Colin Hand; *Andante Religioso* - Henry Smart (1813-79)

Please place your offering in the offering boxes at the back of the church

Welcome

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've come to worship God,

who loved us before we were yet born,

who knows us even better than we know ourselves,

whose presence never leaves us,

and whose love for us never ceases.

This is our God.

Let's worship together!

Hymn

(tune: Lewis Folk Melody) CH4 510 - G Maule & JL Bell

1 Jesus calls us here to meet him
as, through word and song and prayer,
we affirm God's promised presence
where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise;
praise the Son who calls us friends;
praise the Spirit who, among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.

2 Jesus calls us to confess him
Word of life and Lord of all,
sharer of our flesh and frailness,
saving all who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story;
tell his tales that all may hear;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.

3 Jesus calls us to each other,
vastly different though we are;
creed and colour, class and gender
neither limit nor debar.
Join the hand of friend and stranger;
join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter
in their common search for truth.

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

Hymn - Psalm 139

CH4 97 - Bernadette Farrell, from Psalm 139

1 O God, you search me and you know me.

All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down you go before me:
ever the maker and keeper of my days.

2 You know my resting and my rising.
You discern my purpose from afar,
and with love everlasting you besiege me:
In every moment of life or death, you are.

3 Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
you have known its meaning through
and through.
You are with me beyond my
understanding:
God of my present, my past and future
too.

4 Although your Spirit is upon me,
still I search for shelter from your light.
There is nowhere on earth I can escape
you:
even the darkness is radiant in your
sight.

5 For you created me and shaped me,
gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonder of who I am, I praise
you:
safe in your hands, all creation is made
new.

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

1 Samuel 3:1-20

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls

you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." Then the LORD said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever." Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am."

Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him." As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD.

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

John 1:43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

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

Reflection "Negotiating transitions"

2020 - a year of transition, not least in facing us with our vulnerability as creatures on this tiny planet. 2021 is already proving to be another year of transition, as we come to terms with the pandemic and its impact on how we live and how we understand ourselves. Of course, we are always making transitions of one kind or another. Nothing is static. And transitions often ask us awkward questions about what we had assumed to be true.

Fred Craddock spoke of how that worked out for his father. "When the minister used to come from my mother's church to call on him, my father would say, 'You don't care about me. I know how churches are. You want another pledge, another name, right? Another name, another pledge, isn't that the whole point of church? Get another name, another pledge.' My nervous mother would run to the kitchen, crying, for fear somebody's feelings would be hurt. When we had an evangelistic campaign the minister would bring the evangelist, introduce him to my father and then say, 'Sic him, get him! Sic him, get him!' My father would always say the same thing. 'You don't care about me! Another name, another pledge. Another name, another pledge! I know about churches.' I guess I heard it a thousand times. One time he didn't say it. He was at the Veteran's Hospital. He was down to 74 pounds. They had taken out the throat, put in a metal tube, and said, 'Mr. Craddock, you should have come earlier. But this cancer is awfully far advanced. We'll give radium, but we don't know.'

I went in to see him. In every window—potted plants and flowers. Everywhere there was a place to set them—potted plants and flowers. Even in that thing that swings out over your bed they put food on, there was a big flower. There was by his bed a stack of cards 10 or 15 inches deep. I looked at the cards sprinkled

in the flowers. I read the cards beside his bed. And I want to tell you, every card, every blossom, every potted plant came from groups, Sunday School classes, women's groups, youth groups, men's bible class, of my mother's church—every one of them. My father saw me reading them. He could not speak, but he took a Kleenex box and wrote something on the side from Shakespeare's Hamlet. . . . He wrote on the side, 'In this harsh world, draw your breath in pain to tell my story.' I said, 'What is your story, Daddy?' And he wrote, 'I was wrong.'"

Sometimes we leave it too long to admit we were wrong. Sometimes we are so much part of the system that needs transition, we cannot see that we are wrong, or if we do see it, we cannot free ourselves from it enough to admit we were wrong. There is too much at stake, in reputation or relationships or the changes it will require of us. And we can feel we owe a loyalty to those who framed our assumptions.

We had just pulled up for a picnic on the shores of Lake Ruataniwha in Twizel and were about to get out of the car when we heard on the car radio the news that a crowd of people, incited by the President of the United States, had occupied the Capitol building. We sat and listened. And now some of the people who had supported the President are going through contortions trying to hold on to their supporters yet do what is right. For political reasons they cannot say "I was wrong." And there are others who for religious reasons cannot say "I was wrong." We have been there, in our way, have we not?

Eli left it too long and the consequences of leaving it so long went on for generations. The calling of Samuel and his critique of Eli signalled a major shift in Israelite society and religion. It began a period of prophetic criticism of Israelite leaders, precipitated by Eli's failure to see how wrong he was. The spiritual context is stated: "The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread" (1 Samuel 3:1). The Israelites are no longer witnessing God's leading of them, and they no longer hear God's laws or prophecies. In 1 Samuel, the blame for that is largely laid at the feet of one man: Eli the priest.

Eli is a terrible leader. He mistakes Hannah's silent prayer of deep devotion for drunkenness (1 Samuel 1:13). Nowhere in Scripture is Eli, the leading priestly and prophetic figure of his time, said to hear from God. Rather, we are reminded continually, Eli's senses have grown dull (1 Samuel 3:2). He had got used to not hearing from God.

The worst crime of Eli was that he did not control his sons, who were also his subordinate priests. Hophni and Phinehas stole the best portions of sacrifices from God for themselves (2:12-17). And if that was not enough, they also raped the women who were guarding the entrance to the tent of meeting (1 Samuel 2:22). Instead of controlling his sons and protecting the people of Israel from their abuse, Eli spent much of his time sitting on a throne (1 Samuel 4:13, 16). God pronounced judgment on the house of Eli (1 Samuel 2:27-36).

The first words of God that Samuel received (1 Samuel 3:11-14) set the tone of prophetic judgement on callous, abusive, unfaithful rulers in the rest of the books of Samuel and Kings. But before Samuel could speak he had to realise who was speaking to him. As Samuel lay by the ark of the covenant, he heard a voice crying out his name. His response immediately was "hineni" which means "here I am." It's a phrase uttered in their times by Abraham and Jacob and Moses and Isaiah and Ananias. And when they said hineni, here I am, each of them went on a journey of truth-seeing and truth-telling. Each of them acted from a wider accountability ... to God. Is that not what our faith represents, at least in part? It isn't just about us and those close to us.

Samuel had to tell Eli that Eli and his family were to be removed from power because of their abuse of power. Samuel brought a different approach. He travelled the countryside, prophesying and judging Israel (1 Samuel 7:16). Samuel's approach represents an intentional departure from the tent of meeting and the tabernacle and the temple as the centre of the biblical story. He began the tradition of prophets speaking to kings and people wherever they found them. What we see expressed is God's passionate disgust at abusive leadership and God's raising up of young prophets to undo the abuses of their elders who ignored God and failed to protect innocent people.

As people who seek to live the gospel, to listen for God's voice, we are part of an ongoing process of revelation and learning. That will often bring us to the point of saying, sometimes anxiously, sometimes reluctantly, at least to ourselves, "I was wrong", "we were wrong".

Just before Christmas I read an article about one of the earlier Premiers of New Zealand, John Ballance. It highlighted Ballance's involvement in some of the most troubling aspects of our history in relation to

Maori. The more I read, the more personally troubled I became, because over thirty years ago I led a service marking the centenary of Ballance's death and I cannot remember uttering one word of lament. I did not see enough. I did not know enough. I did not acknowledge enough. I was wrong. We were wrong. Just three years later, frustrated at how parts of the story were being represented, people occupied a park in that city.

We are invited to pray with Samuel – "Speak Lord for your servant is listening." Dare we pray it? Dare we pray it, given what we face? Our economic system keeps adding wealth to the wealthy. Our political system is not protecting our environment. Our judicial and health systems discriminate racially and economically. Our church system seems unable to engage in life-giving ways with the neighbourhood in which we exist.

"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening", that we be part of God's transitioning of this world to the world God wants.

Hymn

(tune: Kelvingrove) CH4 533 - G Maule & JL Bell

1 Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?

3 Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

2 Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

Offertory Prayer

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 Christ is our light!
the bright and morning star
covering with radiance all from near
and far.
Christ be our light,
shine on, shine on we pray
into our hearts, into our world today.

2 Christ is our love!
baptised that we may know
the love of God among us, swooping low.
Christ be our love, bring us to turn our face
and see in you
the light of heaven's embrace.

Benediction

Music for our leaving *March in G major* - Henry Smart (1813-79)

(tune: Highland Cathedral) CH4 336 - Leith Fisher

3 Christ is our joy!
transforming wedding guest!
Through water turned to wine the
feast was blessed.
Christ be our joy;
your glory let us see,
as your disciples did in Galilee.

Serving today

Minister - Kerry Enright (0274675542)
Associate Minister - Jordan Redding
Organist and Choir Director - Karen Knudson
Organist today - Peter Stockwell
Reader - Barry Brown
Prayer for others - Keren Skegg
Welcoming team - David Richardson's team
Counting team - Howard Smith'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*
- *Give online to the Church's bank account at 03 0903 0016425 00 - our charity number for tax rebate purposes is #CC52318*
- *Give before the service, into the offering boxes at the back of the church*