



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

10am – Sunday 21 February 2021

The First Sunday in Lent

Music to prepare us for worship *Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt (By Adam's Fall All is Lost)* BuxWV 183 –
D Buxtehude (1637-1707), *Erbarm dich mein, O Herr Gott (Have Mercy on Me, O Lord God)* BWV 721 –
J S Bach (1685-1750) played by Peter Stockwell

Everyone is welcomed to worship. Please place your offering in the offering boxes at the back of the church, if possible before worship commences.

Music of approach “*Ave Verum- Hail true body*” W A Mozart (1756-91) Peter Stockwell/ organ

Call to worship

(Psalm 25)

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

Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

We trust in you, O God, for you are faithful.

Show us your ways and teach us your paths.

We wait for you.

Lead us in your paths of truth.

Do not remember our failures.

Out of your merciful grace, forgive us.

You are faithful, O God. Your love is steadfast.

**We lift up our souls to you,
and praise you.**

Hymn

(tune: Abbot's Leigh) CH4 118 - Ruth Duck

1 Womb of life, and source of being,
home of every restless heart,
in your arms the worlds awakened;
you have loved us from the start.

We, your children, gather round you
at the table you prepare.

Sharing stories, tears, and laughter,
we are nurtured by your care.

2 Word in flesh, our brother Jesus,
born to bring us second birth,
you have come to stand beside us,
knowing weakness, knowing earth.
Priest who shares our human struggles,
Life of Life, and Death of death,
risen Christ, come stand among us,
send the Spirit by your breath.

3 Brooding Spirit, move among us;
be our partner, be our friend.
When our memory fails, remind us
whose we are, what we intend.
Labour with us, aid the birthing
of the new world yet to be,
free from status and division,
free for love and unity.

Prayer of praise and confession E te ariki, kia aroha mai

During the prayer, the following refrain will be sung:

E te ariki, kia aroha mai

E te karaiti, kia aroha mai

E te ariki, kia aroha mai, kia aroha mai

O Lord, have mercy, have mercy on us

O Christ, have mercy, have mercy on us

O Lord, have mercy, have mercy on us, have mercy on us.

Assurance of forgiveness and passing of the peace

E te whanau a te Karaiti, brothers and sisters 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

GtG 750 - Desmond Tutu

Goodness is stronger than evil;
love is stronger than hate;
light is stronger than darkness,
life is stronger than death.
Victory is ours; victory is ours
through God who loves us.

Readings

Genesis 9: 8-17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a

flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

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

Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 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. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

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

Music "Pie Jesu" Andrew Lloyd Webber

Calla Knudson & Jesse Hanan soloists

Reflection "Walk together for the journey is long"

Imagine after worship you cross the road for a coffee. And a person you know, but not well, is standing in the line for coffee behind you and says something like ... Did I see you come out of Knox Church just now? What is Church about?

Or imagine an old friend who is going through a tough time, whose assumptions are being questioned and who is wondering about faith, and you are having a cup of tea together and she surprises you by saying – you go to Church – What is Christianity about?

Or imagine a person here this morning and to whom you have been friendly as Knox people are, happens to mention that this is the first time they have been to a regular church service and they say to you – Well, that was interesting. What is this really about?

Or imagine a person where you work or where you study happens to know that you sometimes participate in Knox Church and they say to you – I am really fed up with religious bigots. What do you think of the Christian faith?

Now, of course, people rarely get to the question in just one or two steps, but they may get to the question in a few steps.

And one of the thrilling aspects about Knox is that people who have come to study or work in Dunedin are often exploring alternative ways of viewing the world. They turn up at Knox on a Sunday just wondering what Christianity is about and whether it might be an option.

What are we going to say?

Of course there is no prescribed set of words. And much depends on the context and tone of what people ask and our relationship with them. Often we would want to involve people in a longer conversation so we sense a connecting point.

For seven years until I came here, I was part of an agency that had an office on the tenth floor of an office block in the middle of Sydney. On the floors beneath there were businesses of all kind. It was clear from the noticeboard on the ground floor that our agency was the main one on the tenth floor, so when I got in the lift and pressed the button for the tenth floor, people who had worked in the building for a while had an idea of who I worked for. And every now and again, someone would ask – O you work for UnitingWorld. Yes. What do you do? And then I had a three or four floors to answer, sometimes in the confines of the lift with other people overhearing the conversation. The first time I was asked, it threw me because I hadn't worked out what to say, so I muddled through. In speaking with my colleagues, I learned that all of us had been asked the same question. Many times. So at our annual retreat we talked together about what we could say, and we practised it, helping each other in the process, and we did it every year, because we wanted what we said to be true to who we were as an organisation and true to us and also engaging. We realised how important those words were, because our organisation relied entirely on the good will of others.

What we say in those moments is popularly called elevator spiel.

What can we say that is genuine, that is true to the church and true to us?

Mark's elevator spiel seems to be this. Jesus says "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; change your mind and believe in the good news."

Let's lift from that sentence ideas that might be central to what we would want to say to someone today.

Notice, it is good news. Not the caricatured soap box preacher saying – The End is Nigh. Save yourself from Hell. Actually, I don't think I have ever heard those words. Sometimes we have done a good job in making the good news sound bad.

A friend shifted cities and attended a local church for the first time. It seemed evident she was a visitor so at morning tea one of the local people came up and started the conversation with something like "It's all metaphorical you know. We are not literalists here. We don't think all that actually happened." That person started with what that congregation didn't believe. Perhaps not the best place to start.

And not everyone is actually asking a question. The great US preacher of the twentieth century, George Buttrick, describes a brief conversation on an aeroplane.

As he sat there, he had a legal pad out on which he was furiously scribbling some notes for his sermon the coming Sunday. The man next to Buttrick inquired, "Say, what are you working on there?"

"My sermon for Sunday--I'm a Christian preacher."

"Oh," the other man replied. "Well, I don't like to get caught up in the complexities of religion. I like to keep it simple. You know, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' The Golden Rule. That's my religion!"

"I see," Rev. Buttrick replied, "and what do you do for a living?"

"I'm an astronomer. I teach astrophysics at a university."

"Ah, yes, astronomy," Buttrick shot back.

"Well, I don't like to get caught up in the complexities of science. 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are.' That's my astronomy. Who could ever need more than that, eh?"

But if the question is genuine, what is the good news?

There is in the gospel today a central idea – the idea of the reign of God or the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven, but not in some far off place or far off time.

The reign of God embodied in the life of Jesus. And what is that reign? It is the world as God intends it to be. It is the flourishing of creation, the thriving of human life. Where no one dies of hunger or thirst. Where every child is cherished. The good news is that God is at work now to bring that new world.

What does Knox exist for? It exists to be part of God's reign on earth, to share in it, to embody it, and to point to it.

So how do we become part of that reign?

The word repent may be better understood as "let your mind be blown wide open." Or "let your life be transformed". The world God envisages is so startling it blows our mind open and it changes how we live and what we live for.

And the second word – believe, not believe in certain doctrines, but trust. Not intellectualise, but live into. Not explain, but experience. Trust that the new world is possible, trust that the world Jesus embodies is what this world needs, trust that this is the world God is bringing. Let your mind be blown open and trust in that reign.

What does Knox exist for? It exists to enable people to experience and have their mind blown open by a transformational vision for our world, such that they choose to live into it.

The verbs are plural not singular.

So it might be more true to say that Knox exists to enable groups of people to be part of a community that experiences and has their minds blown open by a transformational vision for our world, such that they choose to embody it themselves.

And the mind-blowing nature of the reign of God is such that we always have more to experience and live into.

Some know it primarily as justice and peace. Some know it primarily as healing and forgiveness. Some know it primarily as acceptance and love. Wherever we start, we are being led into what is deeper and more expansive. The length and breadth and height and depth of the love of God. Expanding. Growing.

The Christian season of Lent which we have now embarked on highlights the challenges of the journey, not least because it takes us over about 40 days to Easter. A community of people, encouraging each other to live into the reign of God so disturbing to the status quo that Jesus must be killed.

In Lent we are led into a deeper experience of the more, all the way to resurrection.

Hymn

(tune: Tama Ngakau Marie) GtG 425 - Shirley Murray

1 Son of God, whose heart is peace,
Son of God, most holy,
to your presence we have come;
give us now your love.

3 Warm our hearts to love you,
Lord, you died to save us;
gather us within your arms,
Jesus, on this day.

2 Take away our sinfulness,
evil that imprisons us;
free us from what troubles us;
give our souls release.

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.

Blessing *"The Lord is my Shepherd- Psalm 23"* Howard Goodall Carolyn Schmid/organ, Sara Brown/ piano
sung by the Knox Junior Choir with Knox Choir

Hymn

1 I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?
*Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

(tune: Here I am, Lord) CH4 251 - Daniel L Schutte

2 I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my Word to them.
Whom shall I send?
[Refrain]

3 I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?
[Refrain]

Benediction

Music for our leaving "Toccata" Gordon Young (1919-98)

7pm Worship - 'In Joppa'

Serving today

Minister - Kerry Enright (0274675542)

Associate Minister - Jordan Redding

Organist and Choir Director - Karen Knudson

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*