



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

10am – Sunday 18 April 2021

Easter 3

Music to prepare us for worship

“Christ lag in Todesbanden (Christ lay in Death's Grasp)”

“Christ lag in Todesbanden”

“Jesus Christus, unser Heiland (Jesus Christ, Our Redeemer)”

“Jesus Christus, unser Heiland”

Organist: Peter Stockwell

BWV 625 from 'Orgelbuchlein', J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

Friedrich Wilhelm Zachau (1663-1712)

BWV 626 from 'Orgelbuchlein', J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

BuxWV 198, D. Buxtehude (1637-1707).

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

Welcome

Music of approach *“We wait for Thy loving kindness, O God”*

text by C M Armitage, Music by William Neil McKie (1901-1984).

Call to worship

(based on Psalm 4)

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

Ma lhowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

God has been gracious to us and heard our prayers.

God has put gladness in our hearts.

We shall live in peace;

for God alone is our dwelling place.

Hymn

Tune: Hymn to Joy, GTG 248 - Brian Wren

1 Christ is risen! Shout Hosanna!

Celebrate this day of days!

Christ is risen! Hush in wonder:

all creation is amazed.

In the desert all surrounding,

see, a spreading tree has grown.

Healing leaves of grace abounding

bring a taste of love unknown.

2. Christ is risen! Raise your spirits

from the caverns of despair.

Walk with gladness in the morning.

See what love can do and dare.

Drink the wine of resurrection,

not a servant, but a friend.

Jesus is our strong companion.

Joy and peace shall never end.

3 Christ is risen! Earth and heaven
never more shall be the same.

Break the bread of new creation
where the world is still in pain.

Tell its grim, demonic chorus:

“Christ is risen! Get you gone!”

God the First and Last is with us.

Sing Hosanna everyone!

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

CH4 434 - JL Bell and G Maule

1 Jesus is risen from the grave;
Jesus is risen from the grave;
Jesus is risen from the grave.
Alleluia!

4 Jesus will meet his people;
Jesus will meet his people;
Jesus will meet his people.
Alleluia!

2 Jesus was seen by Mary;
Jesus was seen by Mary;
Jesus was seen by Mary.
Alleluia!

5 Jesus will live for ever;
Jesus will live for ever;
Jesus will live for ever.
Alleluia!

3 Peter will soon be smiling;
Peter will soon be smiling;
Peter will soon be smiling.
Alleluia!

Readings

Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God of my right! You gave me room when I was in distress. Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer. How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame? How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies? Selah

But know that the LORD has set apart the faithful for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him. When you are disturbed, do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent. Selah

Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD. There are many who say, "O that we might see some good! Let the light of your face shine on us, O LORD!" You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound. I will

both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O LORD, make me lie down in safety.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church

Thanks be to God

Luke 24:36b-48

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence. Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you--that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Praise to Christ the Word

Music *"Ubi Caritas- Where charity and love are found, God is there"*

Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978)

Reflection "Witnesses of these things"

I want to take what law students would call a case study approach to the text today. I am going to look at a particular set of events and then ask – what does the text today tell us about what happened. Here is the case. In the early 1990s, Lake Alice Psychiatric Hospital near Marton in the North Island began to close. Dates were set for people to be returned to the community, including in Whanganui. In the middle of Whanganui was the congregation of St Paul's Presbyterian. In that congregation, there was a man who had recently come to faith. He had started attending worship and, being an accountant, not long after became Treasurer. He was a senior businessman and chaired the local health authority so he knew what was happening at Lake Alice. He persuaded the church council that they had resources to help people relocate from Lake Alice and settle in the city. So a community living trust

was formed, the trust began preparing to rent properties and the church looked to buy a large home for people most affected by mental illness so they could lease it to the trust. However, there was a lot of opposition. People did not want people from Lake Alice living in their community. They called them paedophiles and murderers and that headline figured in the local paper. There were meetings in local halls, hundreds of people protested. Their photos were on the front page of the local newspaper. The people on the trust board received threatening phone calls. A confidential application to the city council regarding planning permission, was leaked to the press. Every address of potential houses was disclosed. Then the mayor of the city came out in opposition. The city council began to debate what to do, including the possibility of funding the opposition. In the meantime, the church council kept discussing what was the right thing to do. Month by month, they looked at the biblical passages that had to do with drawing in people who were ostracised and unwell, people who were on the edge. There was enough biblical material to keep them going for many months. Then people in the congregation began to express dissent to what the church council was doing. Some resigned. Some stopped attending. Another part of the Presbyterian Church in the city expressed concern.

And the church council kept taking advice from a psychiatrist in the congregation and from the person on the regional health body, kept talking, kept praying and kept clarifying what was the right thing to do. But the time was getting short, and the pressure was on. Then as the house was about to be bought, elders started receiving phone calls from people who were opposed, and people in the community, and people in the congregation. And they received a lawyer's letter making threats of complaint and retribution. Naturally, the church council paused and wondered .. and they carried on. The minister and the Session Clerk went to a meeting of the city council and said that if any money went from the city to the opposition groups, the church would refuse to pay its rates and would persuade as many other people as possible to do the same. All of this was reported in the local newspaper. So what happened? The house was bought and for nearly thirty years housed people in care until it was no longer needed. Every year people in the congregation had events where they mixed with the residents of the home. The Community Trust acquired many properties and housed many people. People in those properties became increasingly well. And the events of that time became part of the story of that congregation.

Now what has this to do with this text? In many ways, the events played out the gospel we heard. He stood among them and said "Peace be with you". Not the kind of peace that comes from withdrawing from society, not the kind of peace that goes with fitting into society, but the peace that is given amid engaging the world, amid tumult and opposition. These words are spoken after the religious and Roman authorities brutalised and crucified Jesus. After Judas betrayed Jesus and Peter disowned him and the disciples fled. At a time, when any of the disciples could have been pursued and arrested. Through all that tumult of that time in Whanganui, elders said they felt that God was guiding them, through scripture, through prayer, through taking expert advice, through paying attention to those most on the edge. The peace of the word, not the peace of the world.

And what happened in Whanganui had much to do with the suffering of our nation. Since then, inquiries into Lake Alice have shown how horrific life there was. The church council kept asking – who are the most excluded people in our city? People with mental illness. And the Jesus we follow, is the Jesus one in body with us. When he showed them his hands

and his feet, what did they see? Did they see, a perfectly healed body that showed no signs of suffering? Did they see, a body that showed no sign of healing, but which bore all the marks of crucifixion? I prefer to believe that although in some way healed, Jesus bore the marks of his suffering and crucifixion. The body of Christ is a body in which people carry the marks of their humanity, their imperfection, tying them to the suffering of our world. That Whanganui congregation saw themselves as one with people who needed housing. In the Apostles' Creed, there are these words - I believe in the resurrection of the body. Now that is not a scientific or medical statement. It is not a statement about what happens beyond death. It is a theological statement. It says that God is concerned with the physicality of our living, with the matter of life, with our bodies, the physical well-being of people. The life death and resurrection of Jesus affects the materiality of our existence. The resurrection of the flesh, of the body, says that the whole of who we are is caught up in the raising of Jesus. That is why we seek to house people who need housing.

And more than that, resurrection discloses the world that is coming. It is said that when people try to cut through wood with a karate chop, they are asked not to imagine the moment of hitting the wood, but the time afterwards, as the wood falls away. So resurrection is not really about the moment of Jesus being raised. The Bible tells us nothing about that. Rather the Bible tells us about what happened afterwards, the difference it makes, the future it opens out, the possibilities that are coming towards us. Resurrection is about the breaking in of God's future. That means that we do not need tenaciously to hold on to what we have because we can see a time when the world will be what God wants it to be, the time called the reign of God.

Now this is not always easy to hold on to. Doubt and disbelief figure prominently here. Doubt and disbelief go with faith. They are not the opposite of faith. There were many times that church council doubted what they were doing. They anguished over challenging the city council. They wanted to avoid legal action. They didn't like being in the local newspaper. Doubt and disbelief provided the grit our decision-making needed. It helped us imagine a city in which people who were mentally unwell could feel safe and protected. The word we use for that reimagining is repentance – imagining God's world now.

So where in the events were the witnesses to all this including to resurrection. They were the doctors and nurses who saw that people were in hospital that ought not to have been there and raised questions and agitated until something was done. They were the person who saw what the church could do. They were the church council who read the Bible, who prayed, who were committed to people on the edge and who persevered. They were the people who came to see that the way they had lived for decades in a hospital need not be their future, and they trusted it could be different.

And so we live out our identity as witnesses to all this, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Hymn

CH4 417 JMC Crum

1 Now the green blade riseth
from the buried grain,
wheat that in dark earth
many days has lain;
love lives again,
that with the dead has been:
*Love is come again,
like wheat that springeth green.*

2. Forth he came at Easter,
like the risen grain,
he that for three days
in the grave had lain,
quick from the dead
my risen Lord is seen:
*Love is come again,
like wheat that springeth green.*

3 When our hearts are wintry,
grieving, or in pain,
thy touch can call us
back to life again,
fields of our hearts
that dead and bare have been:
*Love is come again,
like wheat that springeth green.*

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 *"Peace be to you, and grace from him who freed us from our sins"*

Hymn

1 Go to the world! Go into all the earth.
Go preach the cross
where Christ renews life's worth,
baptising as the sign of our rebirth.
Alleluia. Alleluia.

2 Go to the world! Go into every place.
Go live the word
of God's redeeming grace.
Go seek God's presence
in each time and space.
Alleluia. Alleluia.

3 Go to the world! Go struggle, bless
and pray;
the nights of tears
give way to joyous day.
As servant church,
you follow Christ's own way.
Alleluia. Alleluia.

4 Go to the world! Go as the ones I
send,
for I am with you
till the age shall end,
when all the hosts
of glory cry "Amen!"
Alleluia. Alleluia.

Benediction

Music for our leaving " *Fanfare* "

William Mathias (1934-1992).

If you are new to Knox or visiting please make yourself known to the minister or the person at the door. Everyone is invited to morning tea after worship, in our Gathering Area.

7pm Worship - Healing Service

Serving today

Minister - Kerry Enright (0274675542)
Associate Minister - Jordan Redding
Organist and Choir Director - Karen Knudson
Reader - Carolyn Richardson
Prayer for others - Wendy Gunn
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*
- *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*