



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

10am – Sunday 2 May 2021

The Fifth Sunday of Easter

Music to prepare us for worship “Prelude” Henryk Pachulski (1859-1921)

“Come down O Love Divine” Chorale Prelude on Down Ampney by Henry Ley (1887-1962)

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

Greeting and all to worship

I am signalling you through the flames

The North Pole is not where it used to be

Manifest destiny is no longer manifest

Civilisation self destructs. Nemesis is knocking at our door.

We are caught up in lives and times that are

messy, disappointing and uncertain, and sometimes even frightening;

We are looking for a new way.

We are caught up in a world of sudden violence, cruel words, and easy apathy;

We are looking for hope and a promise that will be kept.

We are looking for the One who calls us by name

Whose voice we shall recognise, and who has promised to meet us here.

(excerpt from L Ferlinghetti: *Poetry as Insurgent Art*, 1975 and Corrymeela Community, 2007)

Hymn

1 Holy Spirit, hear us;
help us while we sing;
breathe into the music
of the praise we bring.

Holy Spirit, prompt us
when we try to pray;
nearer come, and teach us
what we ought to say.

(tune: Camberwell (CH4 458ii)) CH4 599 - William Henry Parker

2 Holy Spirit, teach us
through the words we read;
bring to life the Bible
with the light we need.
Holy Spirit, give us
each a lively mind;
make us more like Jesus,
gentle, pure, and kind.

Prayer of approach

To the words: “Lord, we believe”

You are invited to respond: **“Help our unbelief”**

Assurance of forgiveness and passing of the peace

E te whanau, family of 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.

Hymn

CH4 755 - Unknown

1 Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.

3 In you, Lord God, I put my trust.
In you, Lord God, I put my trust.
In you, Lord God, I put my trust.

2 I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.

Children's address

Prayer for illumination

Read by Patsy Mason

First Reading: Isaiah 49:1-9

Read by Patsy Mason

Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away! The LORD called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the LORD, and my reward with my God." And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and my God has become my strength- he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you." Thus says the LORD: In a time of favor I have answered you, on a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages; saying to the prisoners, "Come out," to those who are in darkness, "Show yourselves." They shall feed along the ways, on all the bare heights shall be their pasture;

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

Gospel Reading: John 2:13-22

Read by Patsy Mason

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of

here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

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

Reflection "Praying for a change"

Mark 9: 14 - 29

[Everyone in the congregation has been given a short piece of string].

It is a pleasure to be with you this morning. Before we start, I would like to invite you to take your small bits of string and make a knot, or knots. How tight is up to you. Hold on to it. Feel it. We will come back to it when we pray for others.

I am a morning person. I love the possibilities and the starting fresh.

The Christian traditions tell us the mercy of God is new every morning. And every New Year's day we start fresh too. But last year, January 1 2020, felt different. Perhaps like many of you, I woke up and looked out the window seeing what seemed at first a golden haze. From a distance a beautiful sunrise, maybe. Then I looked for the sun. I couldn't find it. This wasn't the sunrise. Slowly it dawned on us that it could be the bushfire smoke, all the way from across the Tasman, in Australia. And so we had a few days of murky haze to start the year.

....

'I am signaling you through the flames

I am signaling you through the flames

The North Pole is not where it used to be

Manifest destiny is no longer manifest.....' as we read the words of Lawrence Ferlinghetti this morning to begin our Call to Worship.

I think most of us who follow the news of the world, and even those of us who don't, might agree that even if we are personally doing ok, the larger landscape of the times in which we are living can be chaotic and frightening; with fires and floods and conflicts and climate change. 2020 started with old conflict and new fires and floods, and trends toward continued warming and more frequent disasters, health emergencies made worse by broken systems, overlapping with war. And that's even before the world was engulfed in a global pandemic. In case this all sounds very gloomy, I perhaps should tell you this is my day job. I work with the Red Cross, with legal frameworks that can help vulnerable people in humanitarian emergencies (refugee law, International Humanitarian Law, human rights).

So, and you may see where I am going with this... here is a knotty problem.

How do we pray in terrible times?

A sense of fearfulness about the future seems to be in the air. As one example, I would like to share with you a report from the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement early last year (Survey Millennials and War):

As background, we have the term 'Millennials' from marketing people; it refers to adults who are now about mid 20s to mid 30s. A survey of more than 16,000 millennials in 16 countries and territories last year – roughly half in peace, half experiencing conflict – commissioned by the International Committee of the Red Cross, explored millennials' views on conflict, the future of warfare and the values underpinning international humanitarian law, such as the use of torture against enemy combatants.

The results indicate that millennials are nervous about the future, and heightened tensions globally are likely to deepen these fears.

A plurality of respondents, 47 percent, think it's more likely than not that there will be a third world war in their lifetime. And although 84 percent believe the use of nuclear weapons is never acceptable, 54 percent believe it is more likely than not that a nuclear attack will occur in the next decade.

So we ponder these knotty problems. Hold on to those. These are difficulties.

We started with the question: how to pray in these times. I would like to talk a little now about the **WHY** and the **HOW** of prayer; WHY we should pray, and then talk about HOW we can pray.

Why pray?

In Mark's Gospel, chapter 9, we heard a story about how Jesus heals a boy of an evil spirit after his disciples had failed. When the disciples ask what they had done wrong, Jesus says, 'This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.'

About twenty years ago, we came across this text while I was working on other huge issues on poverty and inequality. This text helped our understanding of prayer in the face of huge and overwhelming problems of the world. I just want to say a few things about this story.

1. Firstly, we know that these ancient scriptures and then later historically in Christian tradition, we have blurred the line between mental illness and spiritual possession. I am not sharing this story to keep that message alive. I don't understand mental illness; modern science has found ways to try to understand some ways the body and brain function but Over time medicine, and law and our understanding has developed to separate out mental ill health from the persistence of evil, wrong choices, their evil consequences.
2. Secondly, notice that while we might understand a bit about mental ill health, we still don't understand the persistence of evil, wrong choices and evil consequences.
3. Thirdly, sometimes, in fact, many times in life, we are not big enough to handle the scale of how wrong things can go. We are so small and the problems of the world are so big.
4. Sometimes things are such a mess that prayer is the only thing for it.
5. In fact, as Jesus says in this story, some of the evils we face cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.

When we worked with this scripture 20 years ago, we had another insight. Sometimes we think the opposite of prayer is action. I would like to propose to you that the opposite of prayer is not action. I have learned that the opposite of prayer is despair, thinking that we are all alone, that we can do nothing.

Involvement in the world leads disciples to prayer. We are not easily driven to our knees. **We are not easily driven to our knees.** May I say in passing, Presbyterians are never driven to our knees. I sometimes go to Anglican and Catholic churches because they have kneelers.

About now, some of you may be thinking, 'But nothing happens when we pray.' I would challenge that idea. As we explored it, we found a few things that can happen during prayer.

1. First, prayer reminds us that we are not alone. God is with us. We are part of many communities, not least the worldwide Christian Community. We are not alone. /////
2. Second, in prayer, we can nourish a steady hope for renewal of this world God loves so much. /////
3. Third, in prayer, with God with us, we confront head on the causes of evil. /////
4. And finally, in prayer, we are drawn into God's will for the world God loves so much. So, if involvement in the world leads us to prayer, prayer leads us the other way, back into the pressing issues of this messy chaotic world God loves so much.

Its not too complicated.

It might help to remember that others have been in terrible times before us.

You can find a verse in scripture. The Psalmist is often overwhelmed by wickedness and despair and found poetry for the ages in it: My prayer now for being overwhelmed comes from Psalms (119: v133) Order my steps and do not let evil have dominion over me.

Why pray? Sometimes, maybe often, because the job is too big for us. Sometimes when I am very low, I just pray this:

God, this is too much for me. I need to hand this over to you.

So why pray? One reason we pray is that the challenges we face are so big and we are so small. Now HOW to pray.

How to pray

To explore this question, we are going to draw on the traditions and resources of our faith to consider how we pray in terrible times.

First, we remember what prayer is. Christians have often described it as a 'Conversation with a purpose. The purpose is to offer ourselves to be changed.' Or if you prefer Richard Foster, in his book on Leadership: 'God is always speaking, always doing something. Prayer is to enter into that activity.' Padraig O' Tuama, an Irish theologian and poet, says:

'Prayer is rhythm. Prayer is comfort. Prayer is disappointment. Prayer is words and shape and art around desperation, and delight, and disappointment, and desire.

Prayer can be the art that helps you name your desire, and even if the desire can only be named, well, naming is a good thing, surely. Naming is what God did, the Jesus tell us, and the world unfolded. Naming things is part of the creative impulse.'

How do we pray? Well, as I said a few minutes ago, it is super easy. That is, it is super easy and will take your whole life to learn. In terms of practices of prayer as Henri Nouwen wrote, 'The only way to pray is to pray. The only way to try is to try.'

We already have some clues in the service we have been worshipping in together.

Prayer traditions: are reflected in the order of service, and in the short prayers we already talked about.

First, **naming** who you are speaking to:

God or Jesus. Your friend, your creator, redeemer, sustainer.

Then you might say, '**I don't know what to say.**' That's ok. The Apostle Paul has been there before us and promised that the Holy Spirit will intervene for us and pray if we don't have the words for what is on our hearts (Romans 8: 26- 27).

Then we might say:

I am here. You are here: Pray to feel God's presence with you. That's **invocation**.

Then we might continue to **Adoration: I love you**, as our young friend said just now. Or, you are amazing.

Invocation, adoration.

The '**Thank you: Praise and thanksgiving**. Try to wake up with praise and go to bed with thanksgiving. This is a way to reframe our thoughts to. To identify what we are thankful for can turn grumpiness to gratitude.

Invocation, adoration, thanksgiving.

Then **I am sorry: Confession**. We are part of the brokenness and want to be part of the healing of this old world. Invocation, adoration, thanksgiving, confession.

Then maybe, 'Help me. Help us.'

That is Intercession: Naming the desires of our hearts for the places we are and for this world that God loves so much. Being bold. As Walter Wink wrote, History belongs to the intercessors, who believe the future into being.

I am here. You are here. You are amazing. Thank you. I am sorry. Help us.

And finally, **blessing. I wish you well, I wish you healing.**

Blessing is about wishing well, and healing. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about how blessing can heal a broken world and I would like to close with his words. Most of us know that Dietrich Bonhoeffer was

executed in 1945 because he took part in a plot to kill Hitler. His engagement to counter the Nazis started many years before that in the early 1930s. Over time his church broke with their denomination and he began running a clandestine seminary. Then the new seminary was outlawed, the building shuttered and leaders arrested. So they met in a remote farmhouse as war grew more and more likely. Here is what he wrote as the storm clouds threatened in 1939:

'The world lives and has its future by means of the blessing of God.... Blessing means laying one's hands on something and saying, 'You belong to God in spite of it all.' 'This is the way we respond to the world. We do not forsake it or condemn it.

Instead, we recall it to God, we give it hope, we lay our hands on it and say
God's blessing come upon you

May God renew you, you dear God created world

For you belong to your creator and redeemer.

And he continues, 'We can do this because we have been blessed ourselves.'

And whoever has been blessed must pass on a blessing.

The renewal of the world, which seems impossible, becomes possible in the blessing of God.'

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

[**Hymn:** What a Friend we have in Jesus

Prayer for Others: In conclusion to the sermon, Rebecca invited the congregation to build a prayer based on the traditions and words we had discussed together, while we unknotted our string, or indeed turned it over to God if the knots were too tight.]

Hymn

(tune: Converse) CH4 547 - Joseph Scriven

1 What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
oh, what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer!

2 Have we trials and temptations,
is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged:
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful,
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness:
take it to the Lord in prayer.

3 Are we weak and heavy-laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Jesus is our only refuge:
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In his arms he'll take and shield you;
you will find a solace there.

Prayer for others

Dedication of offering 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 Beauty for brokenness,
hope for despair,
Lord, in the suffering,
this is our prayer.
Bread for the children,
justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset
your kingdom increase.

2 Shelter for fragile lives,
cures for their ills,
work for the craftsmen,
trade for their skills.
Land for the dispossessed,
rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause
of those who can't speak.

(tune: God of the poor) CH4 259 - Graham Kendrick

*God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion, we pray,
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain.
Come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*

3 Refuge from cruel wars,
havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary,
freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing-fields,
scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness,
the cross for the pain.

4 Rest for the ravaged earth,
oceans and streams,
plundered and poisoned,
our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness,
carelessness, greed;
make us content with
the things that we need. [*Refrain*]

5 Lighten our darkness,
breathe on this flame,
until your justice
burns brightly again;
until the nations
learn of your ways,
seek your salvation
and bring you their praise. [*Refrain*]

Blessing

Music for our leaving *Festival Toccata* Percy Fletcher (1979-32)

Serving today

Officiating Minister: Jordan Redding
Preacher: Rebecca Dudley
Organist and Choir Director - Karen Knudson
Reader - Patsy Mason

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*