



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

10am – Sunday 4 July 2021

6th Sunday after Pentecost: *Arise! Shine!*

Music to prepare us for worship “Folk Tune” Percy Whitlock, “A solis ortus cardine” (*From whence the sun rises, Unto the end of the Earth, Let us praise Christ, our Lord*) Marcel Dupré (1886-1971) Op 38. (1942), “Supreme creator of the light” Jeanne Demessieux (1921-68)

Introit “Holy is the true light, and passing wonderful”

text W H Vanstone (1923-99), music William Harris (1883-1999)

Greeting and Call to Worship

Darkness is not limited to night skies; darkness invades our spirits and our souls.

Arise, shine, for your light has come.

Darkness is over the earth, darkness is over the people

Arise, shine, for your light has come.

There is fear, there is despair, there is loneliness, there is darkness.

Arise, shine, for your light has come.

The darkness doesn't cease. But will it take over?

Arise, shine, for your light has come.

Let us welcome the light. Let us make space for the light. Let us join the light.

Arise, shine, for your light has come.

Amen.

God of mystery, in the darkness of our world your light shines with grace and truth. Open the eyes of our hearts to the glory of your love. Speak your word of truth and joy. May the mystery revealed in Jesus draw us closer to you. May the wonder of your love fill us with wisdom and peace. As we rejoice in your presence, teach us to seek justice and righteousness. Fill our hearts to overflowing with your joy, your glory, your hope. Amen.

Hymn

(tune: Gather us in) CH4623 - Marty Haugen

1 Here in this place, new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away,
see in this space our fears and our dreamings,
brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in – the lost and forsaken,
gather us in – the blind and the lame:
call to us now, and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of our name.

2 We are the young – our lives are a mystery,
we are the old who yearn for your face,
we have been sung throughout all of history,
called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in – the rich and the haughty,
gather us in – the proud and the strong;
give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
give us the courage to enter the song.

3 Here we will take the wine and the water,
here we will take the bread of new birth,
here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
call us anew to be salt for the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
give us to eat the bread that is you;
nourish us well, and teach us to fashion lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

4 Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven, light years away,
but here in this place, the new light is shining,
now is the Kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in and hold us forever,
gather us in and make us your own;
gather us in – all peoples together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

Prayer of approach

God of Light, shine your love into the darkness of our lives. Preoccupied with ourselves we forget the needs of others; we participate in the systems that oppress; we accept violence as a way of life; we fail to respond to the cry of others. May your love outshine our selfishness. May your love wash away our indifference and encourage the growth of our compassion. May we grow into people who live in righteousness and who work for justice for all your children. Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

In Jesus Christ, God has revealed the mystery that brings grace and forgiveness. The light of God's love transforms us so that we may act with boldness and confidence.

E te whānau a te Karaiti, family of Christ, we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

Passing of the peace

The mystery of Christ has been revealed to the world. In that mystery, peace abounds. Share the mystery of Christ's plentiful peace.

Kia tau te rangimārie o te Karaiti ki runga i a koutou.

May the peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Anthem *"May it be"* (Look for light) text Phineas Fletcher, music Howard Shaw/Enya

The Knox Church Children's Choir /Knox Church Choir

Children's talk

"After which the children and youth are invited to go to their programmes"

Hymn

(tune: Christ be our light) CH4 543 - Bernadette Farrell

1 Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.
*Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today.*

3 Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed. [*Refrain*]

4 Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone. [*Refrain*]

2 Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice. [*Refrain*]

5 Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
helping your kingdom come. [*Refrain*]

First bible reading: Isaiah 60:1-5, 19-22

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, or your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended. Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land for ever. They are the shoot that I planted, the work of my hands, so that I might be glorified. The least of them shall become a clan, and the smallest one a mighty nation; I am the Lord; in its time I will accomplish it quickly.

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

Gospel reading: Matthew 5:14-16

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

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

Sermon 'You are the Light'

Light shining in darkness is a theme found all through the Old and New Testaments and also in other religious traditions. It is not difficult to understand why the symbolism of light is so important and offers so much to our theology and others as well. We need only to imagine how our ancestors experienced night and darkness. We need to imagine a time before there were street lights and headlights, before there were ceiling lights and chandeliers, before we relied on the light of our phones to find the bathroom in the middle of the night. London was apparently the first city that was illumined at night...perhaps in the 1600s. It became more common in cities after the invention of gas lighting in the late 1700s. And it wasn't until the 1800s that the majority of the population could afford candles in their

home. So when night fell, it was dark....very...very dark. Our ancestors knew darkness in a way that we do not. Darkness and night were associated with blindness and limited vision. It was associated with being lost, stumbling around, not being able to see your way. It was associated with fear, uncertainty. Night was when you slept – were unconscious and unaware. Night and winter go together – the nights become longer, the earth sleeps and becomes unfruitful – night is associated with death – wearing black while mourning. It is no wonder our ancestors valued light, the day. They welcomed the dawn and celebrated the return of light – celebrated enlightenment, seeing, awakening, visions, epiphanies. No wonder glory – which means radiance, luminosity – is a central quality of the sacred. And no wonder, light has such an influence in the Christmas story – in the darkness of night, light was sent to illumine our paths and bring meaning to our lives. No wonder, Christ, is called Light of the World and no wonder we are also called the lights of the world. We know all too well that darkness is prevalent in our own lives, in the lives of those around us, in our world, and we find reassurance in the knowledge that light was sent to overcome the darkness.

A couple weeks ago on the 21st of June, we had our longest night here in New Zealand. Since then the sun has come up earlier and gone down later. I look forward to that day each year. Not because I know winter is ending, it's really just begun at that point! But because it's a reminder that there's hope...no matter what. There's still challenges ahead, always. The cold is certainly not going away anytime soon, our electricity bill will stay high awhile longer, laundry won't dry outside for now, there will still be icy mornings. But...no matter the challenges that lie ahead, the light still shines and actually it's getting brighter. No matter what I do or what happens around me, the light does not, will not, go away.

The original hearers of the Isaiah passage would have been dispirited....disheartened...discouraged. The problems of returning from the Babylonian exile had worn them down. They felt insignificant against the powers that be. They weren't getting along with each other. There was oppression, there was violence, there was hatred. But the prophet says there's also light. There's a light that shines in the darkness...the thick darkness. You don't need to rely on the things of this world because there is an everlasting light...there is a new way...a completely different opposite way. There is hope...even as you sit underneath this thick darkness...there is still light shining. Lift your eyes the scripture says...Look up! Arise! Despair isn't the only thing there is. There is also light. You are light. We are light. Even when it feels otherwise, the light still shines and no amount of darkness can defeat it.

At our church in the States, during the advent season we'd have a Blue Christmas service. Other churches might call it a Longest Night service. In the Northern Hemisphere the longest night happens around Mid December. Here, it's around now. These services were a purposeful time set aside to remember that some of us are hurting, are mourning, are remembering. It sets aside time to remember those who have died in the past year. This is an important element of Matariki – the Maori New Year, which many are currently celebrating. Remembering. Matariki, as a marker of transition from past to future, is a natural time for people to mourn and honor loved ones that have died.

When we gathered at these Longest Night services or Blue Christmas services, we created space to acknowledge that there are times we are deep in mourning or in despair, unable to carry a light of our own. And that there are times we feel we are surrounded by darkness. During the service we would take a moment to each light a candle, in memory of someone who was no longer with us or in honor of someone who was struggling physically mentally or spiritually during the holidays. We would take the light from the Christ candle and then light one of the tea lights or other small candles that covered the table. We'd sit back and watch our flames dance alongside the others. Together we'd watch how the collective light got brighter with each candle that was lit. We were together in our memories, sharing our sorrows and our grievances, and our flames shined brighter and our paths became better lit.

When our world seems dark we gather strength from the lights of one another. Our light still shines through the grace of God and in the company of one another. We were reminded that even amid our grief and sorrow, there is hope. That even though we feel as if the darkness is becoming too overwhelming, the light still shines.

That's one of the gifts of church, isn't it? Being in community. Being alongside others, others who can hold the light for us when we are unable to hold it for ourselves. And then being able to shine our own light when someone we love isn't feeling very bright. We carry the light for one another.

As a chaplain at uni I was called a couple months ago to come be with a student at one of the colleges. This was an international student who had just found out that her mom had died unexpectedly and traumatically back home. She had received the news the night before, hadn't told anyone, but then broke down during breakfast. She and I spent the greater part the day together. Had morning tea and lunch. She told me she was a first year health science student. She didn't really want to be here but she came to study hard, become a doctor, get a job, and eventually move her parents to New Zealand for them to live with her. She didn't want to waste time making friends or joining clubs or even getting to know her fellow residents in the college. She came for one purpose. And now, she was having the worst moment of her life and she had no community. She ended up withdrawing and returning home. She hopes to return next year. She sent an email to the head of the college a few weeks later and he forwarded the email to me. She said in the email, "It was the worst news I ever had to face and you and the college really made the experience so much more bearable. At first I was a bit reluctant on telling others but I'm so glad I was found and taken into care." Later in the email she talked about how students on her hall left her chocolates and little notes...people she never spoke to were reaching out, reminding her she wasn't alone. She ended her email expressing her hopes to return next year and saying she was going to take more advantage of the community college living provides. She had indeed experienced the power of community.

Nothing was going to lift the thick darkness of shock and grief from the student. But the availability and concern shown to her was the light she needed to be reminded that she wasn't alone. Community living, light sharing, is so often essential in navigating the darkness.

Jesus said, "You are the light of the world." This is a great and holy attribute given to us by Jesus. But the blessing doesn't stop there. With the blessing comes a responsibility. This belief, this faith, this promise we have is more than knowledge. It's more than what we know about God and experience about God. It comes with a responsibility to react, to respond. It's one thing to know and claim your identity. I am a child of God. I am light of the world. It's another thing to respond to it...to entirely live it. This verse we read in Matthew's gospel, follows the beatitudes. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, where the beatitudes are found, shows us how to put the knowledge into action. Jesus' disciples have been living and following Jesus and learning who they are. Now, they need to know what difference it can make. What difference their identity can make to the world. Knowledge without action, an identity without response, impedes the implementation, the growth, of the Kingdom. God has gifted us the Kingdom, to care for it, to grow it. It's not enough to have *knowledge* about God. As disciples we are told to be the *activity* of God.

We need to put our lights on a stand so that it gives off light for everyone around us. We need to shine our lights because the darkness is thick in the world.

2020 was hard. 2021 is hard. I'm pretty sure 2022 will also be challenging for our world. The cloud of Covid is thick and heavy. The darkness of climate change isn't lifting. The cloud of poverty and war hovers over many. There is darkness and it is thick and it is heavy. And I don't know about you but sometimes my light feels defeated. I miss my overseas family. I feel inadequate in my job. I wonder what sort of earth there will be for my kids to raise their kids. I'm not sure what I'd do without other people in my life shining their lights when my flame is dwindling.

There is room for despair *and* hope.

There is room for defeat *and* victory.

There is room for mourning *and* celebrating.

Matariki reminds us that there is space for looking back and looking forward.

The stars shine even on a cloudy night. Even when our eyes can't see it.

May we carry our lights into the darkness. Be willing to sit alongside others in the darkness that surrounds them. We won't always be able to pull one another out of the darkness. Mental Illness is very real. Covid is very real. Grief is very real. We can't always remove the darkness. Sometimes we can and we should – when we see an injustice that we can change. But sometimes we need to sit in the darkness with someone, holding our candle near them. We can remind others that even in the darkness there is light. There is hope. There is love.

There is a song by Chris Rice called *Go Light Your World*. He sings,
Carry your candle, run to the darkness
Seek out the helpless, confused and torn
And hold out your candle for all to see it
Take your candle, and go light your world

Arise, shine, your light has come...a light that transforms us, transforms our lives our being our community. A light that restores, rejuvenates, refreshes. A light that cannot be defeated. You are the Light of the world. May our lights shine brightly, reminding ourselves and others that no matter the darkness that surrounds us there is still always light. May we carry our light, run toward darkness, and light up the world. Amen.

Sung refrain

He hōnore, he korōria
Maungārongo ki te whenua
Whakaaro pai e
Ki ngā tangata katoa
Ake ake, ake ake
Āmine
Te Atua, te piringa,
Toku oranga

*Honour, glory and
peace to the land
May good thoughts
come to humankind
For ever and ever
Amen
The Lord is my refuge
and my life*

Prayer for others (followed by 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.**

Notices

"During which the children and youth will come back in"

Prayer of dedication of offering *"The Lord Bless you and keep you"* John Rutter (b. 1945)

Hymn

©Catherine Burton & Malcolm Gordon

*From the ends of the earth we will sing;
God is here, the kingdom is near.
In the Land of the Long White Cloud
Christ to dwell, Emanuel.*

1 From north and south, from east and west.

Beneath the Southern Cross we rest.
Found by One who came for all.
In this tale of spacious love we're born.
[Refrain]

2 This whenua on which we stand,
this holy ground made by God's hand,
marred and scarred yet marked by grace.
Held and healed, in Christ we find our place.

[Refrain]

3 God of nations, at thy feet,
in the bonds of love we meet.
Strangers once now called as one,
Aotearoa wake to greet this love!

[Refrain]

Blessing

Our lights aren't meant to be hidden, they are meant to shine. They are meant to remind others that even in life's darkest moments there is still light. Even when we are unable to carry the light ourselves, there are others willing to carry it for us. As we consider the lights we carry and as we consider how we might shine them in the world may we be reminded that we are Christ to the world. Christ is no longer walking on this earth, we are.

Receive these words as our blessing this morning. These words by St Teresa of Avila.

Christ has no body now but yours.
No hands, no feet on earth by yours.
Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world.
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.
Yours are the hands which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Go in peace, carry your candle into the darkness, and may we light up God's world. Amen.

Music for our leaving "*Prelude and Fugue in A Minor*" J S Bach (1685-1750)

Serving today

Officiating Minister - Olivia Dawson
Associate Minister - Jordan Redding
Organist and Choir Director - Karen Knudson
Reader - David Richardson
Prayers for Others - Lincoln Coe

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*