



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

10am – Sunday 17 October 2021

Pentecost 21 / Ratapu rua tekau ma tahi o te Petekoha

Music to prepare us for worship

"Concerto in D minor" J S Bach (1685-1750)

"Allegretto" Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47) played by Grace Togneri

"Water Music" G F Handel (1685-1759)

"Adagio" Saint Seans (1835-1921)

Welcome to worship

Music "Erinnerung" memory, recollection - Gustav Mahler (1860-1911), Emma McClean/ soprano

Call to worship

(from Psalm 104)

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

Ma lhowa koe a manaaki. May God bless you.

Praise the Lord O my soul:

O Lord my God you are clothed in majesty and splendour.

You cover yourself with light as if it were a garment;

You have spread out the heavens like a tent.

You make the winds your messengers.

You fixed the earth on its foundations.

You wrapped it with the ocean as with a cloak.

How many are your works O Lord.

In wisdom you made them all.

The earth is full of your creatures.

Sung music (*we will stand and sing while masked*) CH4 147 - St. Francis of Assisi, Trans: William Draper (*alt.*)

1 All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing
alleluia, alleluia!

Bright brother sun with golden beam,
clear sister moon with softer gleam:

*O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

2 Swift rushing wind, so wild and strong,
high clouds that sail in heaven along.
O praise him, alleluia!
New-breaking dawn, in praise rejoice,
and lights of evening, find a voice: [*Refrain*]

3 Let all things their Creator bless,
and worship God in humbleness.
O praise him, alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three in One: [*Refrain*]

Prayer Kia inoi tatou – let us pray ...

Assurance of forgiveness

E te whanau a te Karaiti, family of Christ, we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

Words of peace

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.**

Please stand and make a gesture of peace towards people around you.

Among the young

Sung music (*we will stand and sing while masked*)

(The Servant King) CH4 374 - Graham Kendrick

1 From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled;
not to be served, but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the Servant King,
who calls us now to follow him
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

2 So let us learn how to serve
and in our lives enthrone him;
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.

[Refrain]

First reading: Job 38:1-7

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements--surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? "Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that a flood of waters may cover you? Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go and say to you, 'Here we are'? Who has put wisdom in the inward parts, or given understanding to the mind? Who has the wisdom to number the clouds? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens, when the dust runs into a mass and the clods cling together? "Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens, or lie in wait in their covert? Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food?

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

Gospel reading: Mark 10:35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my

right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

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

Sermon "From out of the whirlwind"

People new to the Christian faith are often surprised to find it has a depth they had not anticipated. They imagined that they would sign up to some basic beliefs and then get on with living them out. The Ten Commandments. The Beatitudes. The Golden Rule. But as they began to explore faith, they discovered many questions, and they found that some of the questions did not have answers. They discovered that being Christian involved being questioned and asking questions, as we uncover layer upon layer upon layer of truth.

The book of Job wrestles with questions – why are we in pain – why do we suffer – why do apparently good people get a poor deal – why do bad people succeed. The early part of Job is spent with the friends of Job offering pious yet unsatisfying suggestions in chapter after chapter. Then Job begins to realise the issues are bigger, wider, deeper than the suggestions his friends make.

Until finally, after many chapters, Job gets to ask God some questions. Job might have expected a nicely reasoned answer – this is God after all and isn't God the ultimate answerer. Job might have expected ... people suffer because of this ... or people experience pain because of this ... or good people aren't rewarded because of that ... or bad people succeed because ... But Job receives none of that. God answers Job with a question, and not just one question, 20 of them, one after the other. "I will question you," God says. And these are not questions with the purpose of shutting Job down or telling him to go away. No ... God asks questions to extend Job's imagination, to open up his heart, to maintain a dialogue. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" "Who determined its measurements – who stretched the line upon it?" "Who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?"

Yes, you might say, but what about that passage in 1 Corinthians 13 that suggests that one day there will be an answer. Verse 12 – "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known." People often speak of that day as the day we will finally have the answers to all our questions. But what about if, face to face and being fully known, God asks – "So what have you been doing?" What if at the end, there is another question for us? Or you might quote the book of Revelation chapter 21 to suggest that there will be finality, an absolutely clear answer. "See the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more ..." But do you notice that what is portrayed in that verse is an ongoing relationship – God will dwell with them. They will be God's people. What is portrayed is a relationship, and every relationship I have experienced involves questions, ongoing questions. An enduring relationship is inquisitive and curious and exploratory.

So it is possible to see the Christian faith as a dialogue of questions ... we ask ... God asks ... we ask ... God asks ... an inquiring relationship that keeps going deeper and deeper. It is called interrogative theology, a theology that wonders, that explores possibilities, that nourishes curiosity.

A person who had a great influence on my early life was a firm atheist, but he was an inquisitive person. As far as I have any inquisitiveness, I believe he helped instil that in me. When I became a Christian, I suggested to him that his inquisitiveness was precisely why I became a Christian, because I kept asking questions about whether the world view with which I had grown up was big enough. It was a kind of back-handed compliment. Sometimes people say to me "I don't believe in God." And I ask "What God don't you believe in?" When people are prepared to talk, it has invariably led to a fascinating conversation in which I learned something.

Can you remember conversations that made you wonder, consider alternatives, question your choices? Not questions that accused you - why did you do that? Not hostile questions – how can you believe that? Not questions that are really final statements – why won't you accept that? Rather with gentle curiosity that invites ongoing exploration. That is what God does to Job. Were you there at the foundation of the earth? Job is asked to imagine the time of creation, when earth began, when all came to be. And in so doing God is inviting Job out of imagining himself at the centre.

Carl Sagan is a writer, teacher and astronomer who attempts that same process through science. In his book *Pale Blue Dot*, Sagan describes a photograph taken by the Voyager 1 spacecraft that appears to portray only solid blackness. He writes that the photo was taken from 4 billion miles away from earth. Then he points out a faint, barely detectable object reflecting the sun's light. It is earth: small, feeble, seemingly insignificant. Yet this is the place where human thought, experience and action occur. He is aiming, it seems, to push us to embrace a diminished sense of the status of the human person in the context of a vast universe. Humankind is a small matter when it comes to the cosmos. Sagan asks us the question – Can we gain some perspective on our humanness in the context of such vastness?

Jesus often asked questions to encourage exploration. In the passage we heard read, the disciples are treating Jesus as the ready answer. "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And Jesus responds with a question ... "What is it you want me to do for you?" And when they respond with a statement about status, Jesus asks – "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?" It's a question that invites them to see beyond their own interests. And maybe that is a question that COVID is asking us. The God question might be – in the context of COVID how can we best serve others? How can we see ourselves not as the centre of life but as part of a closely connected creation? How can we live out our responsibility to others?

So I sense this ... Faith is not arriving at a definitive answer or a final conclusion. Faith is asking one question after another, prompted by God who is a question, in an eternal dialogue. St Anselm said that theology is faith seeking understanding. Note, not faith finding understanding, faith seeking understanding. And seeking is ongoing. God's questioning of us is ongoing, peeling back layer after layer as we encounter the opportunities and challenges of life.

We can keep practising that skill here and now, with each other. Among other things that is what it means to be church. So let's see how long we can sustain a conversation, based only on asking questions, sensing that our questions are themselves questioned by a wider, deeper, higher question, the question "God".

Notes from the Knox Plan 2021 - 2023

"We are captivated by the biblical vision of the realm of God, made known in Jesus, given in grace."

"We believe we are called to be a community following Jesus, alive to God's Spirit, living into God's coming realm."

"We want to grow in discipleship through all stages of life. We will provide opportunities for learning in addition to weekly worship. We will deepen relationships across the full breadth of Knox Church."

"We will gather to encounter God in Christ. We believe that in worship God transforms, enlivens, heals wounds, renews hope, shapes decisions, provokes change, inspires compassion and enlists people for God's realm."

Quietness

Music "Welche Labung" Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) (*The Seasons*), Emma McClean/ soprano

The soul awakes and hearts are gently lifted to new strength.

Prayer of thanks and for others

The Lord's Prayer in English and Te Reo Maori

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

Rachel Tombs speaks about the recent General Assembly. Rachel will be referring to a presentation by Theresa Cho who was a keynote speaker at the General Assembly. Theresa is based in San Francisco and her address sounded Knox-like in approach and commitment to inclusion. You can see her speaking here, if you scroll down the page. [General Assembly 2021 on Vimeo](#)

Offering prayer

Sung music *(we will stand and sing while masked)*

CH4 453 - Leith Fisher

1 Christ, of God unseen the image,
born before creation's birth;
through whom all things were created,
all that live in heaven and earth –
realms and rulers, thrones, dominions,
powers great and forces small
through and for him made and fashioned –
he is in and over all.

2 Christ in whom the very fullness
of the living God is found,
Christ who reconciles creation
turning earth to holy ground,
Christ the home of God's good pleasure
through whose blood is made our peace,
In whose cross, beyond all measure
Is our freedom and release.

Blessing *(please stand)*

Threefold Amen

Music for our leaving "Toccata Primi toni" Einar Sark (1921-2005), played by Grace Togneri

A whakatauki – E hara taku toa i te toa takitahi, he toa takitini. My strength is not as an individual, but as a collective.

Serving today

Minister - Kerry Enright

(minister@knoxchurch.net) 0274675442)

Associate Minister - Jordan Redding

(jordan.redding@otago.ac.nz 0274285234)

Organist and Choir Director - Karen Knudson

Reader - Peter Matheson

Prayers for Others - Russell Thew

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*

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