



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

10am – Sunday 9 January 2022

First Sunday after Epiphany

Music to prepare us for worship *Christ the Life of All the Living* - Anton Wilhelm Leupold (1868-1940)
Andante - Karl Heinrich Zolner (1792-1863), *Andante* - Adolf Hesse (1809-63)

Call to worship

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

Ma lhowa koe a manaaki. May God bless you.

God of promises,

Padraig O Tuama from Daily Prayer with the Corrymeela Community

Sometimes we wait generations

For the dawn from on high;

Sometimes only years.

We wait for justice and hope and light and kindness

To mingle in the tangles of our days.

And we age while we hope.

So may we age and hope
with tenderness and truth.

Because you are tender and true

even though we sometimes wonder.

Amen.

Hymn *Our Life Has it's Seasons* *(please stand and sing while masked)*

Shirley Murray

1 Our life has its seasons, and God has the reasons
why spring follows winter, and new leaves grow,
for there's a connection with our resurrection
that flowers will bud after frost and snow.

Refrain: So there's never a time to stop believing,
there's never a time for hope to die,
there's never a time to stop loving,
these three things go on.

2 There's a time to be planting, a time to be plucking,
a time to be laughing, a time to weep,
a time to be building, a time to be breaking,
a time to be waking, a time to sleep.

Refrain

3 There's a time to be hurting, a time to be healing,
a time to be saving, a time to spend,
a time to be grieving, a time to be dancing,
a time for beginning, a time to end.

Refrain

The cold, in their bones – Hayley Rata Heyes

Prayer Kia inoi tatou – let us pray ...

Assurance of forgiveness

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

Passing the 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.**

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

First reading: Acts 8: 14-17

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

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

Gospel reading: Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.' Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

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

Let's be bold - Peter Matheson

As we begin a new year, what are our hopes and dreams, our darker thoughts, our nightmares? There's a heaviness around. Not much good news. In the Church as well as society as a whole. We can't deny that. So how to ride the challenges? In the American football tv series Friday Night Lights they talk about having "clear eyes, full hearts." Didn't expect Peter Matheson to come up with s.t. like that, eh. You're right, too. Rachel put me onto it.

Clear eyes is a big call, of course. Full hearts, another.

Facing the reality that we're standing on a precipice right now, as a species and as a whole planet, is sobering, to say the least. But facing what is real opens the heart to grief, which somehow opens the heart to love even more deeply. . . .

Constance Fitzgerald

Facing what is real. But what is real? Norman Kirk used to say: people don't want much: someone to love, somewhere to live, somewhere to work, something to hope for. Not much. But how many of those we know and care for have all four of these. I think of the bright, high achieving student who responded to my question about how she saw the future: "What future? I don't see any future for us at all."

When planning this service about a new year Rachel and I were reflecting why we remain hopeful. We both draw on our rich, but realistic traditions of hope, Corrymeela in N. Ireland and Iona in Scotland, modern Reformation movements, still with us. In the violence and hate that ravaged Northern Ireland, splitting Catholic and Protestant apart, Corrymeela was such a brave, shining light for reconciliation. Costly, difficult stuff. In the misery that followed the First World War and the Great Depression Iona's genial inception, rebuilding an ancient abbey on a remote island, opened up hope for a better, non-violent, more compassionate world. These inspiring heritages continue to light up our lives. To hold us, embolden us. Fire us.

And of course, behind all that, there is this Jesus of Nazareth who cherry picked Judaism's ancient prophetic tradition and proclaimed a coming kingdom in which children and folk on the margins would hold the reins. The poor would inherit the earth. Crazy, of course. Folly to the wise.

Our readings today certainly take us into deep water. I won't be the only one here who stumbled on the fierce message of John the Baptizer, that desert figure who so haunts our art and imagination. Jesus, he says, will not be baptizing with water, like him.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Echoed in the Acts reading. None of here, I imagine, think this a verbatim record of what John said.

It gives us, though, a vivid insight into how the earliest Christian community saw the utterly new world Jesus was ushering in. A fiery faith. The stark metaphor attributed to John is taken from the ancient way of harvesting grain. **His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat. But the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.** Decisive and divisive. Jesus decisive and divisive.

We talk glibly about a New Year. We can go through the motions, baptize with water. But will there be real change? COP26 went through the motions in Glasgow. But we chug on globally on a path to disaster. Then there's the personal stuff. Recently a friend of a friend, after a two years wait, got admitted to the wonderful six week rehabilitation course at Hanmer for druggies. Hugely successful, till that person got home to the familiar environment which negated everything. Back to square one. Real change is hell. Or involves, as our creed says, a descent into hell. We express that in our Christian context by speaking of fire, by speaking of Resurrection.

Maybe that needs to be our message to our society today. We can change, yes, and we desperately need to change but change is hell. Baptism by fire, by the Spirit, is what the first Christians called it. But who would be listening if we as a Church tried to get that message across. It's strange, isn't it? The almost unprecedented moral and spiritual changes required of us coincide with the increasing marginalization of the Christian Church. Who listens to Bishops and General Assemblies any more?

Radical change. Sure, here in little Aotearoa we've done pretty well with Covid, but what about the toxic sludge in the social media. I don't need to remind you about the youth suicide figures, every third woman experiencing violence, outrageous housing problems. Worst of all, the shrugged shoulders. **Not my problem.** We continue to plan their summer holidays, refit our suburban homes, spend big on gas guzzling SUV's.

I want to leave you with this question: where in Kiwiland are our values coming from these days The smart set regard Christianity and the Churches as passé, for the silent majority we're just not with it.

But who are the gods **they** are worshipping?? Not recognized as gods, of course, but in Kiwiland so many just go with the flow. And we know, don't we, where that flow is taking us. Banality on a personal level. Climatic and political chaos globally. Where will our children get their values from? My hunch is that we have to be bolder as a church. Scholars are clear that the early followers of Christ were an **eschatological** community. Meaning they lived hope. Were lit up by the vision of a better future. On fire. People saw them as a third race, as different. So they were. In terms of power and influence a tiny mustard seed. But they outlasted, outthought, the mighty Roman Empire. Martyrs, scholars, saints. Let's remember that. That's our whakapapa, folks. The Rutherford Waddells. Our incredible heritage.

So could John the baptizer, be someone we need to hear? Decisive, and divisive. Jesus after all, initiated his ministry in solidarity with him. The fiery gift of the Spirit to broken disciples after the dark days, they'd been through. So if we dare to talk about hope it's a Resurrection hope, a defiance of the obvious. Bishop Tutu up against the racial prejudice, the hate, the tanks, the terror in the night. Against all the evidence let's hold on in this precarious present of ours to Resurrection hope, hope for Tuvalu, the Cooks, Samoa, hope for our poisoned rivers and burning forests and flooded plains. For endangered species. Hope for peace in Ukraine and justice for the Uighurs... Hope for young people having to cope with the mess our generation has made.

OK as Churches we've been pushed to the periphery of our society. Much of that our own fault. Maybe, though, that gives us some advantages, clear eyes, warm hearts. . Seeing things as they are, but also seeing beyond. The vision we have in our heritage. Our whakapapa. Paul Reeves and Sister Gladys here in Knox. Rachel and I wonder how we in this congregation, so privileged in our spiritual resources, can nurture hope for our wider community. Kerry Enright has challenged us to be **brokers of hope**.

People come to this church, the recent review has told us, for a huge variety of reasons. Because we're not fobbed off with easy pious answers. The great music. The care for children. Because of the people, what they stand for, who they are. The record of service out there in our daily life and work, in our hospitals, our schools, our social agencies, our neighbourhoods. Who cares about our survival as a church if we're not there for others. Full hearts. We've got that all right. The marvelous Advent film our Knox youth leaders produced shows the way. Our children dancing down the aisle, A little child shall lead them.

A lot of ignorant nonsense floats around about Christianity and the Churches these days. But what if we happen – no merit of our own - to be the kaitiaki of rare insights and tough disciplines which our society so desperately needs. Our feel for the sheer wonder of life. I remember standing in a Roxburgh orchard where I was working as a student. The clever, smart-arse guy I then was, and suddenly I was overtaken and overwhelmed by the beauty and wonder of the world. Changed me for ever. God saw the world and it was good. The deep satisfaction of living for the other. The transformation of broken lives, not least our own. All the Kingdom values.

Let's be bold. Find imaginative ways to body out our vision in what we do individually and corporately. Get across to the worried and harried folk of our generation that freedom is our mantra. That's what the old language about forgiveness is about. Freedom from self, freedom for others, for life, for joy. For hope. Bishop Tutu's giggles. Humour, too, is a direct fruit of freedom. For freedom Christ has set us free.

To giggle.

Taizé Chant (Remain seated)

With-in our dark-est night you kin-dle that
fire that nev-er dies a-way – that nev-er dies
a-way.

Prayer for others followed by the Lord's Prayer

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 and Offering prayer *(please stand)*

Blue Lake, St Bathans - Hayley Rata Heyes

Hymn Beauty for Brokenness *(we will stand and sing while masked)*

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

3 Refuge from cruel wars, Havens from
fear
Cities for sanctu'ry, Freedoms to share,
Peace to the killing fields, Scorched earth
to green
Christ for the bitterness, His 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

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

Sending off

Music for our leaving *Toccata Sexta oder Sechstes Musicalisches BlumenFeld (Toccata Six or the Sixth Musical Flower Field)* from 'Ars Magna Consoni et Dissoni' - Johann Speth (1664-1719)

Serving today

Leader - Rachel Tombs

Minister - Peter Matheson

Organist and Choir Director - Karen Knudson

Organ played by - Peter Stockwell

Reader - Charlotte Bell

Prayers for Others - Linda Holloway

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*