

'How do we, in the New Year and beyond... Embrace all Others?'

St Paul's Presbyterian Church, Napier. 22 January 2023 Epiphany 3

Opening Sentences

The people walking in darkness see a bright light, light shines on those who live in a land of deep darkness. ³The nation has been enlarged and given great joy. They rejoice as harvesters rejoice. *Isaiah 9:2*

Gathering in an Inclusive Church

All are welcome here **Easily said, but taking more effort in practice.**

All are welcome here **Not just the fashionable in group which needs support but also the regular, the ordinary, the sometimes irritating ones.**

All are welcome here **Even those who do not fall into any listed category**

All are welcome here.

And did those feet in former times

A hymn about Jesus walking Aotearoa NZ Tune Jerusalem Ch 4 106

1. And did those feet in former times, walk upon scree and tussock brown?
And did the man, Jesus the Christ, cross mountains high and rolling downs?
And did he know the morning mist? And did he know the harbour's sheen?
And did he love the cityscape, its terraced streets, the urban scene?
2. And does he still walk this our land, talking and laughing with us yet? And does he know that stab of need, when neighbours snub, and worse, neglect? And is he there when wine is poured? And is he there when bread's prepared? And does he smile when good is done? And does he weep when conflict's flared?
3. And does he still build up his church, here in the context of our land? And does he look for living stones, and are we ready to his hand? To be transformed by Spirit's power, may we be opened up to grace. Till we are builded here, fresh, anew, in this homeland, this pleasant place.
4. Be with us Christ, as we step out, come with us on our lifelong quest. Be our true guide, on our right hand, be with us, walking and at rest. So we will know life to the full, be there to see us through the night. For we would be your followers, pursue your Way with all our might.

Prayer of thanksgiving and lament

(from an Affirmation of the Spirit within and Psalm 1)

We give thanks for the flowing, underground aquifer of life,
The Spirit, refreshing and nourishing all those who root themselves in its cool
clear water.

We pray for increased trust in Life which never ends.

**We yearn for greening to spring forth from this Source of Life,
new growth unfolding in human hearts,
despite the drought-stricken deserts which lie around them
and the heart-stopping, bitter cold of evil greed.**

We pray that we might trust that deep down inside us the aquifer of life flows
unendingly, unpolluted and magnificent, delicately whispering its loving way
when our wounds need the salve of fresh hope.

We lament those times when we have not trusted, not acted, not loved

We ask that we may be able to do better in the future, forgive others and
forgive ourselves.

**We pray for the grace to plant ourselves beside and in this sacred stream of
living water**

so we may bear fruit in the season to come.

Midrash of the Lord's Prayer (said together)

O Parent of the Universe,
manifesting thyself as generative energy,

Bend over us and remove all that clutters our being
and set apart a place where thy sacredness may dwell.

Fill us with thy creativity,
so that we may be empowered to bear
the fruit of thy vision.

Then, moving to the heartbeat of thy desire,
make us the embodiment of thy compassion.

Drawing from the ground of our humanity
grant that we may renew each other
with love, understanding, and sustenance.

Empty us of frustrated hopes and despair,
as we restore others to a renewal of vision.

And let us not fall into agitation,
but save us from precipitous actions.

For thou art the ground
of the fruitful vision, the birthing-power, and the fulfilment,
as all is gathered and made whole once again. Ameyn.

By Mark Hathaway www.taofliberation.com
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Readings

Psalm 27

I have asked the LORD for one thing—
this is what I desire!

I want to live in the LORD's house all the days of my life,
so I can gaze at the splendor of the LORD
and contemplate in his temple.

⁵ He will surely give me shelter in the day of danger;
he will hide me in his home.

He will place me on an inaccessible rocky summit.

⁶ Now I will triumph
over my enemies who surround me.

1 Corinthians 1 Divisions in the Church

¹⁰ I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to agree together, to end your divisions, and to be united by the same mind and purpose. ¹¹ For members of Chloe's household have made it clear to me, my brothers and sisters, that there are quarrels^[f] among you. ¹² Now I mean this, that each of you is saying, "I am with Paul," or "I am with Apollos," or "I am with Cephas," or "I am with Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Paul wasn't crucified for you, was he? Or were you in fact baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so that no

one can say that you were baptized in my name! ¹⁶ ... ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel...

Hymn: I sing a song of the saints of God

1. I sing a song of the saints of God; all those who live right now. They're tall and short and in between, all saints, please take a bow! And one is a skateboarder, one is a geek, And some play basketball every week. And being a saint is what they all seek, and I want to be one too.
2. I sing a song of the saints of God, 'specially when they are girls. They wear pigtails, hang by fingertips, their life is just a whirl! You can meet them in studios, classrooms or labs, You can message, or text or just chill being fab. To be the best girl-saint they do seek, and I want to be one too.
3. I sing a song of the saints of God, 'specially when they are boys. They might like cars or dance like stars, being active they enjoy. You can see them in libraries and sportsfields and such. Maybe playing music or playing touch. To be the best boy-saint they do seek, and I want to be one too.
4. I like to meet all the saints at church, that's where a lot are found. They're boys and girls, they're young or old, and they're great to be around. It's trying to do what Jesus would that makes them fun, and makes them good, for every saint tries to do what they should, and I want to be one too.

Matthew 4 The Call of the Disciples

¹⁸ As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon (called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishermen).¹⁹ He said to them, "Follow me, and I will turn you into fishers of people"²⁰ They left their nets immediately and followed him. ²¹ Going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John, in a boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. Then he called them. ²² They immediately left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus' Healing Ministry

²³ Jesus went throughout all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and sickness among the people

Let us reach down deep inside us

A hymn about finding the Self within

1. Let us reach down deep inside us, to the place where quiet reigns; Find the Self who lives inside us, knows our joy and knows our pains: Let our ego stand aside there, shadow sharing space with light. Let our inner selves rejoice at how Love shines in darkest night.
2. Wind and fire and earthquake pass, but Spirit is not found in them; Still, small voice is hardly heard, but brings Love which does not condemn. In lives buffeted by windstorms, rocked by quakes, and scorched by fire, stillness brings surprising solace as we find there, hearts' desire.
3. Sacred calm means minds can settle, hearts grow quiet, souls grow still; Busy thinking slows its rhythm, gives compassion chance to fill. Even long-forgotten scars heal as new balm brings a new way; Every space, and every crevice fills, as Love arrives to stay.

Tune: Gaelic Traditional Melody Arranged by John Bell. (FFS 10 (i))

Reflection

Space of Silence

Offering

An Affirmation which Celebrates a Different Way

We celebrate the tumbling of walls of prejudice and hate and shattering of partisan treatment towards those not 'in' the approved group so enemies are loved and the unloved rewarded.

We celebrate moments when difference melts away like a snowflake in sunlight; When the just offers their umbrella to the unjust as the rain falls upon them all.

We celebrate difference when it enriches our lives; Bringing creativity where previously there was beige or grey uniformity; Exploding all the colours of the rainbow over a black and white world.

We celebrate the courage of those prepared to subvert the system to defy orders to annihilate to go to lengths to save another by fulfilling inconvenient promises.

We celebrate the spirit who moves in peoples' hearts, encouraging the finding of another way, supporting the alternative view, orientating them towards justice, so we may all be complete.

Prayers for Ourselves and others

When we were young our God was huge

A hymn of faith stages

1. When we were young our God was huge, grey bearded, distant, tall; He ruled the earth and knew each move, judged all, both great and small.
2. We learned of Love shown by the man, who walked here long ago, but others blotted out, with guilt, the peace we longed to know.
3. Then as we grew we changed our view, we questioned, thought and prayed; Our God became less gruff and cold, her colours more displayed.
4. So we have learned, that God is like a rainbow in the sky, embracing many different hues, straight, trans and gay and bi.
5. A rainbow God is colourful, accepting, bright and gay; Like joy which shines right through the rain, Joy which won't go away.

Tune: Amazing Grace (WOV 56)

Sung Benediction

May the mystery of God enfold us,
may the wisdom of God uphold us,
may the fragrance of God be around us,
may the brightness of God surround us,
may the wonder of God renew us,
may the loving of God flow through us,
may the peace of God deeply move us,
may the moving of God bring us peace.