

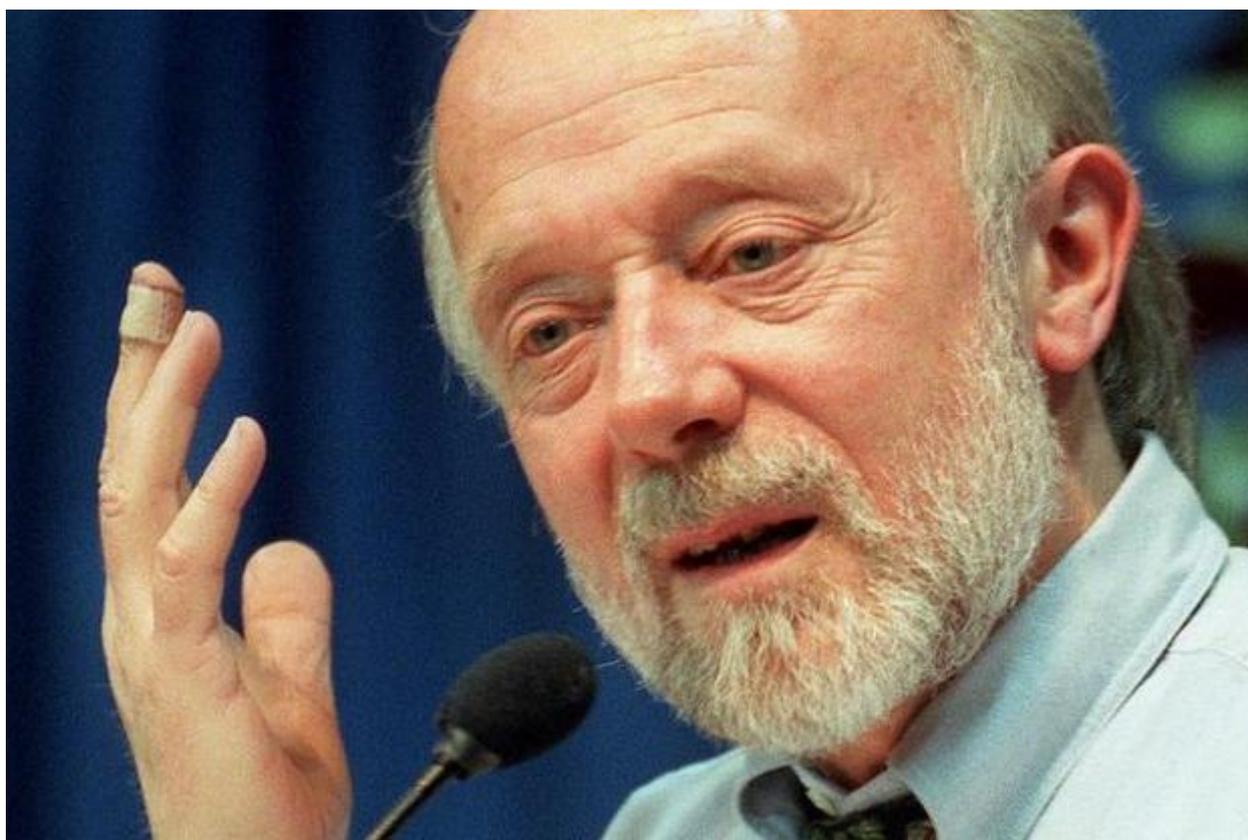


Eastwood Uniting Church

Epiphany 4

31 January, 2021

Seriously is better than than literally



Marcus Borg

An Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wallumattagal people of the Dharug/Eora nation,
the first inhabitants of this place.

We honour them for their custodianship of the land
on which we gather today.

MUSICAL PRELUDE

We Gather in Praise of God

A CALL TO WORSHIP

Before we speak or gather in worship, God is here,
***within us and among us,
knocking at our door.***

Let us pray.

Living God,
open what is closed
that your Spirit may be found among and within us.

Open our hands, to give, and to greet.
Open our minds to new truth and old wisdom.
Open our hearts to new hope and old assurance.
***Open what is closed
that your Spirit may be found among and within us.***

HYMN TiS156

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Morning has broken
like the first morning;
blackbird has spoken,
like the first bird.
Praise for the singing,
praise for the morning,
praise for them, springing
fresh from the word. | 2 Sweet the rain's new fall
sunlit from heaven,
like the first dewfall
on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness
of the wet garden,
sprung in completeness
where his feet pass. |
| 3 Mine is the sunlight;
mine is the morning
born of the one light
Eden saw play.
Praise with elation,
praise every morning,
God's recreation
of the new day. | |

Words by Eleanor Farjeon, *The Children's Bells*, OUP.
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A PRAYER IN HUMILITY

God in the universe,
who challenges us, often when we least expect it,

help us to enter this moment
with hearts that are truly open to your grace.

Reach deeply into our lives, God in all things.

Then hold us in your healing hands, Christ Jesus.

We confess that we do not always see
the ways in which our lives could engage with others.
We so easily become immersed in our own agendas,
holding smugly to our own biases
or consumed by our own struggles.

Reach deeply into our lives, O God.

Then hold us in your healing hands, Christ Jesus.

If we make judgments on vulnerable lives around us,
assuming that we all begin and end
equal in strength, resources and support:
Reach deeply into our lives, O God.

Then hold us in your healing hands, Christ Jesus.

Forgive us and transform us, we pray. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

The wonder of God's love
is that it is all-embracing and forever.
No one is rejected or excluded.
We are forgiven!

Thanks be to God. Amen.

BLESSING OF BACKPACKS

COMMISSIONING OF SUNDAY SCHOOL AND SCRIPTURE TEACHERS

God has given each one of us different gifts to use in serving. Some teach
little ones, others children, youth, or adults.

Teachers/leaders: ***We thank God for the wonderful gifts God has given.***

Our community offers untold opportunities to share the good news about
Jesus.

Sunday School and SRE enable us to reach out to children in love, with the
good news of Jesus.

Teachers/leaders: ***We thank God for the wonderful gifts God has given.***

The Bible is the text for our teaching, containing people's experiences and understanding of God as Creator, in Jesus, and through the Holy Spirit. God's words and actions guide us in our faith journey, as we follow Jesus.

Teachers/leaders: ***We thank God for the way God has spoken to people in the past, and speaks to us today.***

As teachers and leaders in Sunday School and SRE you have a special responsibility to teach and guide young people in the study of God's word, and how to apply the way of Jesus in their daily life.

Teachers/leaders: ***We recognise our great responsibility and commit ourselves to be faithful in it.***

As the people of Eastwood UC you have a responsibility to support in prayer these faithful people who teach Sunday School and SRE and to encourage them in their ministry.

Community: ***We thank you for your commitment; we will pray for you, the children and their families.***

We Listen for word of God

FROM BIBLICAL WITNESSES

Listen for a faith expressed by the ancient Hebrews.

Deuteronomy 18. 15-20

This is the witness of God's People!

Thanks be to God!

Listen for words of faith in early Christian writings.

1 Corinthians 8. 1-13

This is the witness of God's People!

Thanks be to God!

Listen for words of faith in the Gospel.

Mark 1. 21-28

In this is found the word of God,

words of life!

for us

and the world.

Lord let me hear, hear more and more:
Hear the sounds of great rejoicing, hear a person barely sigh,
Hear the ring of truth, and hollowness of those who live a lie,
Hear the wail of starving people who will die,
Hear the voice of our Lord in the cry.
Lord let me hear.

Lord let me care, care more and more:
Care for those who feel the loneliness, for those who have no say,
Care for friends who have no job and find it hard to face the day,
Care for those with whom we sing and work and pray;
And in care, Jesus Christ will be found.
Lord let me care.

Lord let me learn, learn more and more:
Learn that what I know is just a speck of what there is to know,
Learn from listening to my neighbour when I'd rather speak and go,
Learn that as we live in faith and trust we grow;
Learn to see, hear and care, with our Lord.
Lord let me Learn.

Lord let me love, love more and more:
Love the loveless and the fragile, help them be what they can be,
Love the way that I would like them to be looking after me,
For to know you is to love them and be free;
And in love Jesus Christ will be found.
Lord let me Love.

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AN EXPERIMENT IN FAITH

Let us, together, experiment in faith.

***I am not sure the world was created in six straight days,
but I am convinced God is the word of life
and all creation is held in the palm of God's hand.***

***I am not sure Noah's flood covered the entire earth
and that two of every animal
could be collected and fitted into that ark,
but I am convinced God's rainbow covenant is real,
that God's love for the environment is so strong
that it will bloom again in flood or in drought.***

***I am not sure bushes burn without being consumed,
but I am convinced God notices when people are enslaved
and chooses those least expected***

to liberate the captive.

***I am not sure the red sea parted just as we are told in Exodus
and that God drowned every Egyptian
who dipped their toe in the water,
but I am convinced
God longs that all people should be free from slavery
and live in freedom with each other.***

***I am not sure the walls of Jericho came tumbling down
after seven days of trumpet blasts,
but as with Rahab
I am convinced God notices and values every act of kindness done.***

***I am not sure Jesus was born of a virgin
or exactly where he was born,
but I am convinced God has put on flesh
and dwells among us.***

***I am not sure if the four horsemen of the apocalypse
will ever ride into town
but I am convinced no matter what ever happens
that because God is both Alpha and Omega
love is always stronger than evil
and evil will always be defeated.***

Roddy Hamilton, *I'm not sure...*, MP 30/1/09

COMPASSION AND COMMUNITY

OUR PRAYERS OF HOPE AND LONGING

God of history,
you share our joys and crushing sorrows;
you hear the cries of those who are afflicted,
you fill those who are hungry,
and you set free those who are oppressed.
We pray for an end to all injustice.

We are grateful for:

People who risk their own lives in these pandemic times
in seeking the healing of others
or ensuring a pain free death.

For politicians
who seek to serve the needs

especially of vulnerable ones
who live without voice and influence.

For those who feed the hungry
and who shelter the homeless.

The ones who do the works of mercy
and who speak out for justice.

People who take time with the elderly,
who work with children,
who journey with disabled ones
and share their vulnerability.

Peacemakers and peacekeepers
who stand in the crossfire of combatants
to seek a lasting reconciliation.

We are grateful for
those who listen to others in their need
and who proclaim equality for all.

All these live out your gospel for us and others.

And we are grateful.

Inspire us with the all-embracing love of God;
challenge us with the sacrificial love of Jesus;
empower us with the transforming love of the Spirit;
that we and all God's people may live and be free!

Amen.

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 in the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.***

***For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours now and forever. Amen.***

OFFERING

In our offering,
we honour the call of God
to be compassionate friends
of everyone we 'other'

Let us pray:

***Receive all that we bring to you now, O God,
in these our offerings
and in the gifts which we hold in our lives.***

***Take them and enrich them
so that others may experience
that we are those who seek to bear your love.
Amen.***

Dorothy McRae-McMahon *alt.*, *Words for Worship*, 2006

We Scatter to Serve God in the World

COMMISSIONING & BLESSING

May you always be blessed
by God within you
and within *all* Creation.

***We go in faith.
carrying God within us
and finding God already in the world.
Amen.***

HYMN *Maria's Tune* TiS 420

Holy Spirit, go before us,
every mind and heart prepare
for good news of life in Jesus,
for the joyful hope we share.
Gently lead the lost to safety,
gently teach them Wisdom's way,
till they come to seek you gladly,
till we find the words to say.

Holy Spirit, come and help us,
give us words to speak of Christ.
Teach us how to tell all people:
deepest darkness can be light!
Help us tell how faithful God is,
and how Jesus sets us free;
take our words, and make them gospel,
so that many may believe.

Holy Spirit, stay to show us
how to serve as Christ served us.
May our words of love be grounded
in love's actions, first and last.
Your good news is news of justice,
and the strong befriend the weak
in your service, till compassion
builds the peace the nations seek.

Elizabeth J. Smith CCLI 65422

MUSICAL POSTLUDE

Minister: Rev Ian Pearson