



Connecting Our Stories of Jesus

Annunciation – March 25

Harmony Day – March 21

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Injustice – March 21

MUSICAL PRELUDE

Creating Community with God

Acknowledgement - God's Land

Warami Mittigar! *[Darug: Warm Welcome]*

As we gather in this place,
we give thanks for the Wallumuttegall clans of the Darug-speaking People.
We acknowledge the commitment their ancestors made,
across the generations, to nurturing this Land.
Together, may we walk into the future,
recognising the sacred footsteps
that continue to lead us to the promise of Heaven.

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A CALL TO WORSHIP WITH THANKSGIVING (2 voices)

- 1 We are a cloth of diverse colours
made from many gifts and graces.
2. We are the people flowing forth from Creator God,
surprising ourselves with the things which can be done.
1. We are raw material for rewarding relationships as our lives interweave,
contributing one to the other, holding each other firm when one is weak or breaking.
- 2 We are each worthy of being respected and cared for
essential to the pattern, skilled in our appointed tasks,
sources of laughter and sharers of tears.
- All. **We commit ourselves to work together,
that one day, this world may be a place
where all people live in justice, freedom and peace.**

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SONG of PRAISE TiS 161 Tell out my soul

- 1 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his word;
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.
- 2 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name!
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age the same;
his holy name – the Lord, the Mighty One.

- 3 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by.
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.
- 4 Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore!

Timothy Dudley-Smith 1926- ã 1962, renewal 1990 by Hope Publishing Co
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CONFESSION and ASSURANCE of GOD's GRACE

Have mercy on us, O Lord,
according to your incomparable, extraordinary love.

You know about our wrongs and our mistakes and our brokenness.
Cleanse us through and through, renew us, and revive us.
Help us to forgive ourselves, for we are aware of our flaws and frailties,
and save us from false guilt, and from putting ourselves down.

We get things wrong, we know this, and we hurt you and others.
We are people with soiled hands and feet of clay.
Capable of great things, and of destructive things,
capable of healing and harm.

And you desire the best for us, you offer us a hope and a future.
Help us to face the truth about ourselves, and about you,
and as we do this we offer you our failures and successes,
our weakness and strengths, our dreams and nightmares.

You are not fooled, you see us as we are,
and you have the kind of compassion that we can only imagine.
So please, refresh us, cleanse us, rebuild our confidence, and renew our faith.
Enable us to act honestly, to care deeply, and to walk humbly with you.
Today and each day, in the name of your son Jesus,
Amen.

Human and Divine – encountering God's story

A TIME FOR EVERYONE

The Good Shepherd and the Table for Everyone
Prayer for Growing in Faith

SONG TiS 670 Jesus put this song into our hearts

1. Jesus put this song into our hearts,
Jesus put this song into our hearts.
It's a song of joy no-one can take away:
Jesus put this song into our hearts.
2. Jesus taught us how to live in harmony,
Jesus taught us how to live in harmony;
different faces, different races, he made us one:
Jesus taught us how to live in harmony.

3. Jesus taught us how to be a family,
Jesus taught us how to be a family,
loving one another with the love that he gives:
Jesus taught us how to be a family.
4. Jesus turned our sorrow into dancing,
Jesus turned our sorrow into dancing,
changed our tears of sadness into rivers of joy:
Jesus turned our sorrow into a dance.

Graham Kendrick 1950- © 1986 Kingsway Thankyou Music
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SACRED STORIES from SCRIPTURE

Galatians 3:23-29

²³ Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

For the stories of faith from across the ages

Thanks be to God!

Luke 1:26-38

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

For the story of Jesus' coming into the world

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

MESSAGE Connecting the Stories of Jesus

I grew up in a Buddhist/Taoist/Confucianist and Atheist home. My parents were not religious. My father came to Australia from Malaysia in 1962. His parents were from China. My mother was born in Sydney. She was a Scottish-Aussie. Her mother was a Cameron. Her illegitimate father had an Irish Protestant and Jewish background and had been sent off to Catholic boarding school by his single mother.

My parents met at university. My father was studying to be a doctor. My mother was studying to be a lawyer. They married in 1963. I was born in 1965. Our first home was with my grandparents in Roseville. My grandmother looked after me, so my mother could keep going to uni.

My parents started working. We moved to Forestville. I started school. In 1970 in Sydney, children would all go to 'Scripture classes' at school. It was before the days of respecting different religions. It was before the days of the option to go to 'non-scripture'. So I went to the 'default' class with the Anglicans.

In Scripture class, we learnt different stories in the Bible. The Bible was a collection of different books. There were many stories. They did not make sense. They often contradicted each other. I was a good reader and a good speller and I liked to write. The more I went to Scripture classes, the more I thought Scripture was a waste of time.

It was not until I went to high school that I learnt that the baby Jesus of Christmas and the Crucified and Risen Jesus of Easter were the same person. No-one had ever thought to mention it! I was shocked! The stories were connected. It changed my reading of both stories. Reading C.S. Lewis helped. There was a trilogy of fantasy books: Out of a Silent Planet, Voyage to Venus and That Hideous Strength. Lewis had written them to help us understand the great themes in the Bible. One of CS Lewis' books is very helpful in understanding how the different parts of faith are connected:

刘易斯 返樸歸真 (簡體版) Mere Christianity

I was 14 years old when I became a Christian. I started going to church, but it was confusing. As a new Christian, I was hungry to learn about God and the Jesus stories, but church seemed to focus on other things.

I got so frustrated with the lack of talking about God in church that I went to theological college to learn about God. After 17 years of part-time study I had completed all the courses available and I was still hungry to learn more. By then I was the Director of Lay Education in this Synod of NSW-ACT and I had a small team of Ministers who looked after the education for 450 congregations.

Around the country, Christian educators and mission leaders agreed: people struggled with biblical conversancy. They struggled to talk about the Bible.

At College, I remember going to a lecture given by the Theology Lecturer, Clive Pearson. He talked about different understandings of Jesus. I was shocked. At College, they knew there were many very different understandings of Jesus. There were many different experiences of salvation. There were many different ways to understand the birth of Jesus. There were many different ways to understand the cross. I was outraged.

So many times, I had heard arguments – this is the right story. No – this is the right story. No – my understanding of Jesus is correct and yours is wrong. No – my God would not be like yours!

In College, I was learning that the Gospel writers thought different things were important. Peter and Paul and James and John thought different stories were more important. Then I learnt more about Jewish culture. Conversation is not meant to result in a single meaning. Talking about the sacred stories is meant to give an appreciation of things beyond ourselves. We need the stories of a diverse community to better understand the God who is creator of all. Our different perspectives are important and when we hear only one interpretation, we are diminished.

I want to hear the stories of life and faith that make up the good news from this congregation.

How have you met God?

What difference does God make?

Which parts of the Bible speak to you?

1. When we read the books of the Bible, we see different things when we read a whole book, not just a small group of verses. We make connections between the announcement story in Luke, the life and ministry of Jesus and the cross and resurrection.
2. We read the Bible in community because different voices bring us a bigger picture. A lone voice will never be able to say enough about God... every voice, every person, has something to offer that will help us all go deeper.
3. Do we have a story of Jesus to tell? What things are most important to us in the Jesus story? Why are they important to us? How can we share our stories of Jesus?

Story - Six Faces of Easter...

REFLECTION

OFFERING and ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE

God of many names help us to see things like You do. Your scriptures say that there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for You are all one in Christ Jesus. We pray that You speak to our hearts so that we can remember that no one is better than another because of appearance or any other earthly attribute. We pray that we respect the diversity of humankind and embrace that we are all one, Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

HYMN – All are welcome (Let us build a house)

- 1 Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live.
A place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions
rock of faith and vault of grace,
here the love of Christ shall end divisions.

*Chorus All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

- 2 Let us build a house where prophets speak
and words are strong and true.
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness,
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus;

Chorus

- 3 Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat;
a banquet hall on holy ground,
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space,
as we share in Christ the feast that feeds us;

Chorus

COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING

There is a Time

There is a time
when you're asked to pause -
to be patient for change
to let things unfold
to just let it be
and you are tired
of waiting

There is a time
when you're asked for silence -
to keep the peace
to know your place
to just let it go
and you are tired
of being voiceless

There is a time
when you're asked for calm -
to smooth things over
to meet in the middle
to just chill
and you are tired
of being compliant

There is a time
when you're asked to honour -
to value tradition
to uphold the status quo
to just respect
and you are tired
of being humbled

There is a time
when voices shout hope
when mountains shout for justice
when wild prophets show courage
and a new day is coming
This is such a time, this is such a place
Prepare the way!

Sung Blessing from Tasmania

[Words and Music: © John Macrae, Hobart 2019]

May the west wind breathe softly on your shoulder
and the gentle rain refresh all life around.

May the light across the mountain paint your world with brighter days
as the tall trees lift their heads from fertile ground.

May the pain of the past meet truth and healing
and our hoping, loving, giving, bloom and grow.
May the wonder of our island nurture caring in us all
and the sacredness of land and living grow.

May the deep waters carry us to others
and the gleaming skies direct our thoughts above
may the beauty all around us fill us body, soul and mind
and regenerate our world with peace and love.

Minister: Rev Dr Amelia Koh-Butler