



Order of service
Date: Sunday April 26th, 2020
Easter 3A

We acknowledge that we are worshipping on the traditional lands of the Boon Wurrung people, of the Kulin nation, and pay our respects to elders past and present.

DON'T FORGET YOU CAN LOG INTO THE CHURCH WEBSITE AND SEE MUCH OF THIS BY VIDEO ON THE FRONT PAGE!!!!

INTROIT – Hearts of love, verse 1,2.

1. And who are we that gather in this ordinary place?
To share a meal and friendship
and to warm some empty space,
But people seeking beauty and to offer what we hold
Such gifts as we've been given:
Hearts of love and gifts of gold.

2. And who is this who joins us in the sharing of this meal?
This God, who fashioned all we know,
with loving unconcealed.
So, as we break this bread of life,
we're drawn to seek its goal:
That all would share in living
Hearts of love and gifts of gold.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

CALL TO WORSHIP

ONE: God, our Shepherd, invites us to this place.

ALL: **God invites us to rest in grassy meadows, and leads us beside restful waters.**

ONE: God has set a table for us in the presence of our enemies.

ALL: **God has given us so much, it is as if our cup overflows!**

ONE: God has given us life in abundance. How then shall we live?

ALL: **we shall live with glad and generous hearts!**

ONE: Come, let us worship God.

Sing – TIS 477

1

Jesus calls us here to meet him
as, through word and song and prayer,
we affirm God's promised presence
where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise;
praise the Son who calls us friends;
praise the Spirit who, among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.

2

Jesus calls us to confess him
Word of Life and Lord of All,
sharer of our flesh and frailness
saving all who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story;
tell his tales that all may hear;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.

3

Jesus calls us to each other:
found in him are no divides.
Race and class and sex and language
such are barriers he derides.
Join the hand of friend and stranger;
join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter
in their common search for truth.

Opening prayer

God, who calls us and leads us,
we long to know your voice through thick and thin.
We long to rest in your care for all of our needs.
We hold out our hands as a sign of our desire to hear you
and follow you.
And we hold the hands of our neighbours, grateful that
through them we also encounter you.
Amen.

Prayer of confession

When self-serving agendas
dismantle the heart of the ministry we share...
(*silence*)

When interpersonal conflicts

tear at the soul of community...

(silence)

When history becomes exclusive
and relationships become insular...

(silence)

When expressions of faith
erode the freedom of life-giving Spirit...

(silence)

When the energy of the church is invested
in self-preservation rather than acts of love...

(silence)

When our differences
destroy the foundation we share in Christ...

(silence)

...forgive us.

Held in a common Love
that is within, between, and beyond all,
we know forgiveness
and are formed into
a community of love in all things.

Christ is risen! We are a forgiven people.

Thanks be to God.

EARLY WORD – By name!

Hello to the children who might be reading or hearing this.

Today I want to think about something we will all be familiar with, either as a parent or as a child, or as a parent remembering when you were a child.

I will for the sake of not embarrassing anyone else I know, use myself as an example.

When I was younger, let's say late primary-early secondary school, I recall my mum (not my dad, he wasn't the administer of justice or caller-outer of the house), would often call out my name, or my brother or sister, for a variety of reasons.

Depending on the reason for calling out, the sound, or tone of the calling-out would be different.

For example, if the calling was just to find where you were it was kind of like this, with a questioning tone – Sco-ooot! You know the one. It is gentle but with enough volume to know that mum is looking for me, with that echo-ey quality to it.

Then there is the short sharp – SCOTT! Note the capital letters and exclamation mark. The tone is clearly annoyed, but not yet angry. It is the call from mum that says – I need you to come right now because I need to talk with you about something...now. This call could be ambiguous, because it might mean I have done

something wrong, or it might mean dad needs to take me to gymnastics where am I? So because it is a little unclear what the call is about, I would readily go to mum. The next one is this – SCOTT JOHN FINLAY! GET HERE RIGHT NOW!

This call was always clear. This call, using capitals, and my full name, meant I was clearly in trouble. Big trouble. I envied my sister then who only has first and last name.

This was the kind of call that sent me climbing up the pine tree in the back yard, a place that mum had no hope of getting to me, and if I was quiet would not even know I was there. Despite this the first call was usually followed by calling from the back door – I KNOW YOU ARE OUT HERE. YOU BETTER GET IN HERE NOW OR THERE WILL BE TROUBLE WHEN YOUR FATHER GETS HOME!

This was the call that all the neighbours heard also and knew the problem. Do I go inside now and get in trouble, but not as much trouble if I kept hidden until dad came home? You could almost here the smiles of relief from the next-door neighbour kids, that it wasn't them this time.

Finally there was the call when mum was flustered for some reason, and would go through the names of everyone else in the household including the cat and dog (yes really) before she got to me. This was the call that was confusing, but not threatening, which usually led to going straight to mum with a – really?

What this story indicates is that we can tell from such calls not only who is being called, but what is expected, even how the caller is feeling at the moment.

In our gospel reading today from John chapter 10, we hear the idea that Jesus, God, know us by name, and we are called by name, and we are cared for by name. At Easter we often hear the story again from John's gospel, when Mary arrives at the tomb on Sunday morning and sees Jesus but thinks he is the gardener, until he says her name, then she knows who it is.

All of us, of any age want to be known and called by name. Even if it means we might be in trouble, it also means this person knows us and that we belong.

Today's gospel story is talking about how we belong to God and how important this is for God and for us.

SHARING OUR STORIES – offer opportunity for anyone to share a time of feeling welcomed by a host that we thought of last week.

READINGS:

There are two readings today, firstly from Acts of the apostles, then from John's gospel.

Acts 2:42-47

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous

hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

John 10:1-10

¹⁰“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁷So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

PREACHING – Living with glad and generous hearts.

(Text supplied below.)

Ok let's do a word definition game.
Here is the first word.



Sufficient.

(Ask for definitions. After some feedback suggest that they are all partially correct or even wrong. Then show image...)

This is the meaning of the word sufficient – a cat full of milk. How so you may ask?

A child, little Johnny, at school is asked the meaning of sufficient. Little Johnny says he does not know. The teacher offers a hint – a cat is drinking a bowl of milk and cannot finish it because it has had sufficient. So, little Johnny sufficient means...

A cat full of milk he cries.

Now let us move onto the real word of the day, here it is.

Abundance.



(Ask for definitions. Again after some feedback suggest again they are partially correct even wrong. Show image...)

This is the meaning of a-bun-dance.

Ok now that I've had my fun let's agree that sufficient means something like having or had enough, whilst abundance means having much more than you need or can use.

Today as we reflect on our Easter theme of, “How then shall I live?”, let’s consider two aspects in relation to the readings today.

The first is the notion of abundance.

First a little about the passage, because this saying of “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”, comes at the end of this passage about sheep, sheepfolds, gates, thief’s, shepherds, strangers.

How does the abundance saying relate to this?

(The following is from someone online, whom I no longer remember...apologies)

Jesus is talking about a gate, a shepherd, a gatekeeper, a group of sheep, and a group of thieves and bandits. And that’s all well and fine, but Jesus explicitly claims to be the gate. Then he explicitly claims to be the shepherd.

And, depending on how you look at it, he might even be the gatekeeper at the same time.

So Jesus-the-shepherd enters Jesus-the-gate because Jesus-maybe-the-gatekeeper opens it for him...so that he can get to the sheep.

Confused?

Jesus is either having an identity crisis, he’s mixing his metaphors...or he’s trying to make a larger point.

Which is what I actually think he’s doing.

But...there’s a little detail that is easily missed, and which brings the whole thing into focus.

The sheep aren’t the ones entering the gate—Jesus is going in the gate.

The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

And Jesus leads the sheep out. Not in.

Not into the enclosure—not into the pen—not into the fenced in area.

Jesus enters and leads them—us—out.

Which, of course, begs the question: if Jesus is leading us out, where is he leading us out from?

And, maybe more importantly, where is he leading us to?

What Jesus says is that he’s not here to lead us into constraint...he’s here to lead us out!

What Jesus says is that the old way of life—the ‘world’s’ way of living, with all it’s excesses and addiction—is actually the constrained, fenced in existence from which Jesus is here to free us.

Now, admittedly, all excesses and so called worldly ways of living don’t end up in addictions, per se, but when you talk to people who are addicted to alcohol, to drugs, to shopping, to food, to sex, to their work, to their looks, etc, they don’t talk about how “free” they are because of all they can eat, buy, smoke, or do.

They talk about how they just can’t stop.

And they talk about it in terms of bondage.

And, what Jesus does...is he sets us free.

He breaks us out of the pen and takes us to: life abundant.

Let me ask you another question.

What does life consist of? You know, what goes on in life?

(Ask the congregation for responses)

Life consists of everything - happiness, joy, sorrow, sadness, stress, relief, light, dark, anger, gentleness etc. These things all make up life.

I got to thinking that when Jesus talked about giving us life in abundance, it wasn't just about puppy dogs and kittens, but about everything that makes up life.

We will get loads of it.

An abundance of joy as well as sorrow etc.

Why am I thinking this? Because that is what he lived. He had an abundance of joy as well as sorrow, pain as well as wellbeing, hostility as well as friendship, loyalty as well as betrayal. He had it all in spades.

How then shall we live? Accept that this is what abundance consists of.

Abundance is not only good stuff plied on us, but bits of everything. It is not that this abundance is about all the nice positive stuff coming our way, but that every now and then the negative stuff gets in its way.

It is all part of it.

There is an anecdote of a man who began his Christ following in mid-life. As a successful businessman, he chose to attend the flashiest and seemingly, most successful church in town. All was well whilst he parked the Mercedes with the other upscale cars in the lot on Sunday.

This seemed to be just the right community of affirming and encouraging folk that would help him to follow Jesus. Some months into this adventure, the man went through an economic crisis which saw him lose everything, including the Merc.

Now walking to church, and wearing the same clothes week after week, he began to stand out from the congregating crowd. It wasn't long before he was approached by two of the church elders, who asked to come and see him at home.

During that visit in his home, (now emptied by the Sherriff and the debt collectors), he was asked please to find another church community, as his circumstances "*no longer witnessed to the abundant life*" that members of that church were called to live!

What a curse! To be unable to see abundance other than in material terms.

Dr Wayne Dyer, now deceased but known as a philosopher and author coined this phrase:

"Abundance is not something we acquire. It is something we tune into."

This is what Jesus was declaring.

The abundant life is all around you, you just have to see it. Kind of like the glimpse of a different world on the mount of transfiguration that Jesus gave his disciples, where he kind of says – there it is, get up and do not be afraid, go take it, life in abundance.

Only trouble was it led off the mountain all the way to a couple of big chunks of timber with nails in it.

Hard to convince anyone that this is abundance.

But that is how it is.

On one day we might have an abundance of rain. It just keeps coming and coming.

So much so that the rivers fill up, then overflow, then break their banks and flood a nearby town.

But over a mountain range, this same abundance brings water to crops drowning in heat and dust and the farmers dance the dance of those who know they have been saved.

Life in abundance brings – life – all of it, in abundance.

And the offer is on as we leave the sheepfold.

Jesus intends for us to have this life together.

Christ calls us to fields where following him means tending to one another—to our sheepmates. In the midst of our resistance to being herded, we have to take care not to forget that there are good reasons to travel in flocks. “Shepherding stresses the communal nature of the sheep. Our singular noun **flock** is one made of many. The church proclaims the good news that I am not alone. We are the flock, and we share a common life.”

This is the essence of the Acts passage today.

And it gives to us the punchline for our theme of Easter this year.

How then shall I live?

I shall live this abundant life with a glad and generous heart.

I shall share with you, with others, my joy, my sorrow, my tears, my laughter, my anger, my peace, my poverty, my prosperity.

The idea of community simultaneously attracts and repels most of us. We long for the life-affirming benefits that community can bestow, but we resist the demands that community makes. No wonder that we find it difficult to know what to do with passages such as this one.

So much tempts us to dismiss these verses as quaint, even as we claim to yearn for such conditions as a sign of God's reign among us.

It may represent the best of what God's people are capable of, in the power of the Spirit, but after Ananias and Sapphira defraud the Jerusalem community in 5:1-11 one looks in vain for any description of community life that approaches the radicalism seen in Acts 2. This does not mean that hospitality, charity, mutuality, and worship are not characteristics of the communities that the Spirit still creates; they are, and they continue to be commended elsewhere in Acts. But Acts likewise concedes the flawed nature of believers and their struggles to achieve and maintain unity.

But such is this abundant life we share. We share our strengths and our liabilities. It is the nature of being.

And yet we look to this passage not for a calling back to a way of community that is clearly not going to happen, rather we look to it because it is vital that we continue to pursue justice, generosity and meaning because we are a rag tag community of abundant living brought into being by the one we embrace as saviour, friend, giver of life.

We must not assume that this passage celebrates community or church for its own sake. The community of faith exists to serve others and be a face of God to the world, and offer healing and wholeness whilst all the time seek this also for ourselves.

The challenge before us all is to believe this about ourselves.

We need to see ourselves not as a collection of individual churchgoers, but a community of people united in purpose and identity.

Even in isolation.

The audacious claims of a resurrection faith demand this from us.

Friends, like it or not, we are all in this together.

Therein lies our future.

We are all in this together.

We here at Beaumaris Uniting Church, with our sister churches in Beaumaris, those in the streets around our churches, those in the suburb of Beaumaris, those who vote the same as us, who vote differently to us, who look like us, who look different to us...we are all, all of us, in this together. Let us pray.

We give thanks for our friends. Our dear friends.

We anger each other; We fail each other.

We share this sad earth, this tender life, this precious time.

Such richness. Such wildness. Together we are blown about.

Together we are dragged along.

All this delight.

All this suffering.

All this forgiving life.

All this abundant life. With glad and generous hearts,

We hold it... together. Amen.

Sing – How then shall I live? (verses 1,3)

1.
Took a walk outside of my walking. Stepped inside another's shoes.
Walked the dusty borders between us. Paths I'd never chosen to choose.

*How then shall I live? How then shall I live?
How then shall I live, O God? How then shall I live?*

3.
Saw the world outside of my looking. Gazed upon the eyes of its soul.
Held the hopes and fears of tomorrow, found the pieces making a whole.

*How then shall I live? How then shall I live?
How then shall I live, O God? How then shall I live? (repeat)*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

ONE: God our Shepherd, we give you thanks for the world you have created, for Your presence in our lives, and for the care that you give to all beings.

Jesus said, "I came so you might have life –

ALL: life in abundance!

ONE: You lead us beside grassy meadows and restful waters. You keep us alive!

Jesus said, "I came so you might have life –

ALL: life in abundance!

ONE: You guide us in proper paths, for that is what you do. We pray that we might follow you with openness to the ways in which you lead us.

Jesus said, "I came so you might have life –

ALL life in abundance!

ONE: When we are faced with huge challenges, remind us that we are not alone. Now let us offer our own concerns in prayer, in silence or spoken.

Lord in your abundant mercy hear our prayers.

ONE: When we find ourselves at odd with others, break down the barriers between us, and help us to be friends, working together for your realm.

You have promised always to pursue us, to seek us out, so that you might always love us and care for us. Thank you, God, for the many ways you have chosen to be with us.

Jesus said, "I came so you might have life –

ALL: life in abundance! Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

And so we offer our praise, saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full

of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

All these words we bring in the name of the Risen Christ who taught us to pray together, saying:

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**

Sing – God of gumtree and of quandong (To TIS 152 Ode to joy)

1

God of gumtree and of quandong,
granite rocks and rolling plain;
God of pasture sheep and cattle,
fallow land and crops and grain:
You are always here around us
even when we do not know.
Help us realise your presence
that our Spirit life may grow.

2

Ploughing, seeding, patient waiting
for the harvest of the soil;
Shearing, branding, culling, feeding,
You are with us in our toil.
In the workshop, store and office,
classroom, kitchen, garden, too.
Help us see your gift and glory,
serve you well in all we do.

3

Scattered in our congregations
yet one body called to be;
reaching out to fellow Christians,
serving the community.
Thanks to You for love that binds us;
for the strength to do your will.
Father keep us true and faithful;
may we love and serve you still.

BLESSING –

Day by day, God will lead us:
**to those pools of peace where we can
gather with our friends and strangers.**

Day by day, Jesus will call us:
**to give ourselves in service,
to anoint others with hope.**

Day by day, the Spirit shows us:

**the people we might be,
the community we might become.**

Friends, go as the people of God

Blessed with life in abundance. Amen.