

August 27 2023 Blackwood Church Communion Service Draft 2

Music: Taize Laudate omnes gentes (recording)

The Communion table is in the centre of the space. The people sit in a square formation about it.

Statement:

When the new settlers came to this land they thought that they were bringing light. But the light of knowledge and spirit were already here. At all times and in all places, God's love is ever present and for us today in this space it is symbolised in the Christ candle.

In the light, the word, the bread and wine, today he is in our midst.

Candle is lit.

Flute accompaniment while the lighting ritual takes place. (Be still and know that I am God. One verse - no singing)

Call to Worship

Welcome.

Today you are not attending a concert. Here, there are no performers. Only us. Just us. People who already know the script and who have learnt, sometimes from childhood, the patterns of silence and sound. Other patterns too....

The pattern of gratitude,

The pattern of wonder,

The pattern of giving,

The pattern of forgiving.

Here there is no parade of experts. Here, no soapbox to whip your fervour. No, this, this is a special place of symbols tooled in timber, filigreed in musical notation, lit by a single candle with enough warmth to comfort and inspire us.

The air in this space surges in song, as we, the people, the followers of Jesus, gather in trust. Rehearsed and unrehearsed, confident yet timid, expectant while already knowing the plot, its words and rituals.

Today's tickets are free, just like the gift of this day.

Entwined in this morning's swirl of things thought and felt and heard and shared, is the ancient quest for a messiah, then finding him, holding him close, telling and retelling his life, the profundity of his passion and his overwhelming belief that death is never the end.

Song: Be still and know that I am God

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Father,

At any time, sometimes when we least expect it, our lives can be upturned. Things we thought would last forever slip from us. Notions we had about ourselves or others are challenged. And the clock ticks. Time passes and is not replaced. Our youthful energy wanes. And we need to constantly assess what we do now.

Things we held dear, are questioned, even our faith is stretched to the edge of doubt. But today we pause to say thank you for all the days that have been and a pledge hope for those that are to come.

Father, despite all those things we cannot do, we are thankful for the things we can do. For the simple things, a smile, an outstretched hand, money quietly slipped into a rough sleeper's cup.

We thank you for breath, for people around us, family and friends, and for the satisfaction in living and working alongside others.

So too we thank you for the gift of sleep and the mornings when we wake refreshed.

Thank you that in this space this morning we can meet each other on common ground, get close enough to observe in each other a humility, an openness, a recognition that just by being here shows there is more to this adventure we call life than accumulating things and seeking our own comfort. Here in this space, all around us, are people inspired to attend to the needs of others. Thank you for the life of Jesus whose clear sight and deep understanding of who we are and what we need for our own good, defined for us, a love that changes the world.

We count ourselves fortunate in having heard his words, marvelling at his deep insight into the lives of those he encountered and his defiance in accepting suffering and forgiving those who sought to silence him. We are grateful for this story, this never ending story.

Amen

Song: Be still and know that I am God (1st verse only)

Prayer of Confession

Where did it go? Our innocence? So much of what we held to be sacred and spoke in hushed tones and whispers of wonder is now brash and loses its value. Even our very language debases us. Words lose their power.

We are often not content; we chase after the smallest thing that sparkles; we are drawn to others who promise the world and our stillness and wonder and our deep sense of you is sacrificed on the altar of our selfishness.

We are diverted and deceived and we sense the simplicity and innocence draining from us

So blasé, bored and over stimulated have we become that the words of the sermon on the mount no longer cut through, nor the crucifixion shocking enough, nor the self giving of the innocent Christ, extraordinary enough. We are lost in our own distractions and the weaving of our own webs.

Who do you say I am? he asks.

And as if to answer his own question, he gives us this...

I am the gentle lamb in you...I am the lion of justice in you.

And as the bombs fall and jets fly their missions overhead and drones smash the lives of those who never asked for war, and whose cultures are erased in its madness, a small figure appears, dusty, unarmed, except for a few loaves and fish, given to him.

We are sorry that in all the chaos, we lost sight of him.

Today we commit again to using only what we need and giving what we can.

We commit to peace, your peace, the kind that comes when we look beyond ourselves.

We are only too aware of our failings and are never more aware of our need to change, for your sake, for our sake and the sake of the world.

Father, we are made in your image and nature and we accept as our life's work, expressing to others and ourselves the quality of love which is at your heart.

Amen

Song: Father I have sinned by Fr. Eugene O'Reilly (Sung by singing group)

This is a safe and sacred space where we can be honest, vulnerable.. We know we are not as good as we wish or as good as we wish others to think of us. Our actions and our thoughts are not always honourable but here in the company of fellow pilgrims we allow this time to take stock as we seek to walk in step with Jesus, into the drama of our world, stronger for his company.

Amen

The Communion table is uncovered.

Commentary::

The table is ready, special in its ordinariness.

It is the people's meal: simple and nourishing. An invitation has been sent by the host; we will not refuse.

For, this is the host who gives not takes, who sits at the bottom of the table and yet, when he speaks, all the the guests stop to hear him. They will later, remember all he has said.

Today it is we, in the shadow of those first disciples, who sit at this table. We come freely and in expectation, vowing again to make way for him and let his kingdom in.

Song: Make way. Graham Kendrick

Commentary:

We have participated in this ritual all of their lives, hundreds of times for some, but today is special because it is today. Now. And our hunger and thirst are as great as ever.

When life leaves us hollowed, we need bread just as we need wine, living water in our veins to keep us alert and vital and courageous.

So, at this moment in our lives, this moment, pray that the sanctity of this ancient rite be as filling and as intense as ever it was.

Jesus speaks:

For many days we have travelled together side by side, stopping to talk, to listen, to observe, to risk, to intervene in people's lives. Together we have been inspired to promise healing and declare God's kingdom already come.

When we walked, words became flesh.

How often have we been hungry? You well know that we need food to sustain us. But from this day, whenever you sit to break bread, think of me.... think of me..... Remember me... remember me... remember me. Remember that with a few loaves we fed a hillside and with a few words we can change the world.

So too with the wine, the grape's blood, the living water. I give all of myself to you.

When you drink, then remember me. I will remember you. Remember me.....Remember me....

I am the word of God made into human life and freely give myself to you in life and in death.

Feast on me and believe that this love I feel for the world and the love we have experienced together is never lost and is always renewing.

Communion: (Michael)

During Communion the following songs:

Song: Here at this table. J. S Whittaker

Song: I am the bread of life. Suzanne Toola

Song: In the breaking of the bread. Bob Hurd

(The number of these songs at the discretion of the band.)

(These songs sung or recordings played.)

Song: O lord , you're beautiful

Declaration:

In the name of the Father. **Chord**

In the name of the Son. **Chord**

In the name of the Spirit. **Chord. Chord. Chord. Chord. Chord.**

(Diminishing)

The people say: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Amen. Amen.
Amen.

Children's talk: Who am I and why does it matter? (Michael)

Readings:

Sermon:

Prayers for others: (Michael)

Community time; (Michael)

Offering. Pass the peace. (Michael)

Song: In Christ alone

Benediction: (Ashleigh)

Prayer of St Francis; (Optional)

Lord make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
And where there is sadness, joy.

O divine master grant that I may
Not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love,
For it is in giving that we receive-
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen

Who do we say this Jesus is? He is the one we remember; the one we must not forget. In the taking of bread and wine, we become his heart of tenderness and love. When all hope seems lost, he is there in our darkest nights, prompting us to trust in a power beyond ourselves.

Who do we say that he is? He is the one who takes up residence in the lives of those people everywhere, who have welcomed him and honoured him and called him their own.

All praise to the Father. All praise to the Son.

All praise to the Spirit, three in one.

Amen

Taize: Magnificat (recording)

***** None of the songs will be introduced.**

*****The lights will be dimmed until after Communion.**