



Kaurihohore Historic Church

P O Box 4118, Kamo, Whangārei 0141



Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish Sunday 22 May 2022 – Easter 6

Our service today has been prepared by Alan Upson, retired minister.

Opening Prayer

Creator God,
May your ways be known throughout all the earth.
We come together to praise you, to worship you.
We give you thanks for sending your son, Jesus the Christ.
We give you thanks for the gift of the Holy Spirit.
We pray that our lives may reflect your light and love in us;
and that we may reflect the peace of Christ.
May this time of worship be an offering of praise and adoration.
We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen

Call to Worship *Based on Psalm 67*

Let the peoples praise you, God:
let all the peoples praise you.
Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
**for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon the earth.**
Let the peoples praise you, God:
let all the peoples praise you!

Hymn HIS 157: Wisdom far beyond our knowledge

1 Wisdom far beyond our knowledge,
Word of endless mystery,
God, in whom is comprehended
all that was, is now, shall be;
you have set us free to wander,
world on world, through time and space,
haunted by our hope of heaven,
nurtured by your constant grace.

- 2 Unimaginable lover, faithful to eternity,
God, fulfilling and in-dwelling
 all that was, is now, shall be;
we can never stray beyond you,
loving Presence, you are here,
called to join your great adventure,
forth we go to find you there.
- 3 Beating heart of all creation,
first and final unity,
God, who draws all things together,
 all that was, is now, shall be;
we have heard your distant music,
shared your dream of harmony:
now we go as reconcilers,
makers of community.
- 4 Focus of our search for meaning,
truth in our perplexity,
God, the one by whom we measure
 all that was, is now, shall be;
centre of our hearts devotion,
magnet of our questing mind,
Spirit's birth and soul's companion,
journey's end in you we find.

Tune: Coronation Road by Colin Gibson

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Prayer of Approach

Loving God,

You who touched the early earth of chaos, with love,
and from it brought order, life, flourishing with health,
touch each person here this morning.

Before you, you see us, refugees from a week of life -
words said that were instantly regretted,
a look given that betrayed feelings of resentment,
actions designed to foil, get in the way of another,
advice given in ignorance,
promises that were never kept,
good intentions never acted upon,
and evil intent carried to fruition;

Like a bad lot at an auction, collected together,
we come with an unease, a reluctance,
a sense of being tainted, spoilt, a sense of unworthiness
into your presence.

Yet we come with hope.

Rather than wanting to punish,
we hear that you, instead, want to release us,
to let fly away, the things that have soiled our days,
and bring us, fresh as daisies to this new day,
jubilant in the wonder of your healing presence.

So deal to the cold south westerly, that chilled our wakening,
be the thaw of the suns' warmth in our souls;
let the fresh air of your spirit breathe into us again
and let us walk tall into today, this week,
redeemed by the wonder of your touch.

May this worship time be one of restoration,
may we celebrate the joy of being human,
may we know the mystery of your presence,
the wonder of your guidance
and the beauty of your friendship.

May we live this week, eager to do things your way,
keeping you in focus in all things,
and bringing your healing touch to others.

(Words - Healing touch - Alan Upson)

The Lord's Prayer Our Father

Congregational Time - What kind of week?

Hymn WOV 91: Morning has broken

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Rifby1tVE8>

Readings

Acts 16: 9 – 15

John 5: 1 – 9

Revelations 21:10, 22:1-5

Reflection Truth and Authenticity - keys to our future

Text: When [Lydia] and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. *“If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.* (Acts 16:15)

Subject: Paul, Lydia and the paralysed man acted on impulse and their action led to major life changes. We might never know the readiness these three possessed, but the evidence is of clear decisions to enter into the unknown that were followed through.

Our world is enmeshed in deception, misinformation, ill-informed advice and a future that is daunting on many fronts. Can the truth and authenticity of God's life-giving Spirit reach us, to impel us into taking part in God's purpose for our day?

May what I say and what you feel as I say it, bring joy to the heart of God

When was your last spontaneous decision that took you from day-by-day to everyday? You might want a minute or two to think that through, so I'll start and then come back with the question to you. I've had quite a few major changes over the years but the most recent was this month. It all started with the realisation that if I was to continue driving legally, I'd need to renew my licence within a few weeks. That gave me a couple of hours to think while I sat in the AA office with all my papers ready, moving one chair at a time, closer to the one person on the counter. There were others in the office but they were busy - at one time it took four of them five minutes to work out how to accept a young woman's choice of paying by I-phone. Back to one at the counter again, I got to thinking of simplifying my lifestyle by retiring from three groups that I belonged to. In fact, within the week, I found it easier to retire three times than it was to renew my licence. The vision of having more discretionary time in my future was a great incentive.

So back to the question, 'when was your last spontaneous decision that took you from day-by-day, as it comes, to *everyday* with intention? Hopefully, you will now be thinking of some life change that has recently taken place. Or possibly, something you've been going to do for a long time, but have been waiting for that 'impulse' to give you the jolt to make that first step. Bring that impulse with you as we look briefly, at three people who made the crossing from routine into a new way of doing things.

Paul's first vision noted in the Book of Acts, was disastrous for the new Christians. Not just in Jerusalem, but in a widening circle, Paul used his position as a Roman Citizen and a Jewish leader, to hunt down and persecute the followers of the crucified Jesus. Paul started his persecution of Christians after the killing, by stoning, of Stephen. Luke writes, "[Throughout the provinces of Judea and Samaria] Saul [as he was known then] tried to destroy the church, going from house to house, he dragged out the believers, both men and women, and threw them into jail'. (Acts 8:1-3) That all started after he had been looking after the coats of the Jerusalem Councillors, and then, had approved of Stephen's murder.

Hardly visionary, but something had triggered in him a violence and obsession that must have led to widespread fear for the Christians. However, not long after, as he 'kept up his violent threats against the followers of the Lord.' (Acts 9:1) he found himself on the Damascus road, blinded by a bright light and fallen to the ground. He heard the Risen Jesus calling him by name and asking, "Why do you persecute me?"

And that, certainly, was life changing for him. So much so that today's Bible reading has Paul visioning a man in Macedonia begging him to come over. His response this time? Luke writes, 'As soon as Paul had this vision, we got ready to leave'. (v10) Maybe Paul had been feeling it was time for a change. The vision of the man in Philippi was just the trigger he'd been waiting for. You may recognise in yourself the time when ideas, lingering just out of reach, finally come out into the open. All they need, then, is the moment of acceptance.

And so we come to the second person in today's readings, who had a life changing vision. But this vision was something more along the lines of how God might move you and me to a totally new way of seeing things.

In Paul's times, gender equality meant women of Philippi undertook many leadership roles. Women could pay for public works, such as statues on which they inscribed their names and status. In the first-century Roman world, women owned and managed businesses. Lydia was a dealer in purple cloth, a luxury item that needed significant capital investment. She possibly belonged to the Roman equestrian class, (not horses) or she was a relatively wealthy commoner. Lydia was probably an independent business owner.

Paul came across Lydia at a women's meeting at the river 'where the Jews gathered for prayer'. Luke continues, ' On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.' (NIV Acts 16:13 - 15)

Several things are surprising about Lydia. She not only owned her own house, but it was large enough to have Paul's group to stay. She was also not afraid of what the neighbours would say about her being host to a group of men. It sounds like she had made up her mind on the spot and agreed for her and her household members to be baptised.

Lastly, Luke adds, '*and she persuaded us*'. He sounds surprised! But it also sounds like Lydia had come across a message of truth and authenticity, that she envisioned to be the best kind of investment and she acted on it.

Now. Are you still pondering the question, 'when was your last spontaneous decision that took you from day-by-day, just as they come along, to *everyday* with intention? For there's just one more visionary to consider before I pop the question for the last time.

The Biblical Jerusalem Bethesda pool, near the sheep gate, is described as having five porticoes, suggesting an unusual five-sided pool, which many scholars dismissed as an unhistorical literary creation. Yet when this site was excavated, it revealed a rectangular pool with two basins separated by a wall—thus a five-sided pool—and each side had a portico. Looking at a photo of the excavation, I wonder how many disabled people could wait there and how they got down all the narrow steps. It also must have taken a strong gust of wind to ruffle the surface of such a sheltered location. But that's looking at this story through a narrow, present-day, Western, mind-set. Actually, life is bigger, stranger and much more liberated in the Bible account.

In the Bible story he doesn't have a name. He is just someone who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years, who wasn't quick enough to be the first to enter the water when the surface was stirred up. We don't know if he'd been born with some deformation, or injured later in life. Was he taken there each day, or did he crawl, or use a crutch? We just don't know if he'd been at the pool each day for thirty-eight years, or just part of that time.

One thing we do know is that he was plain speaking, perhaps tended to talk too much. To Jesus' question, ' "Do you want to get well?" he could have simply said, "Yes please." Instead he explained his problem. "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

Maybe he was an injured politician trained to never say 'yes' or 'please'.

Whatever.

He knew what to do when Jesus said, "Get up, pick up your mat and walk."

It was probably what he'd dreamed of doing one day and thought that the day would never come. But the prompt was there and he stood. The Bible says, 'Immediately he was well. He picked up his mat and started walking.'

Can you picture that? The man has been prone, lying flat, perhaps for years. His back must have hurt standing for the first time. Perhaps Jesus gave him a hand up. Did the man look around as if seeing everything differently from a height? Maybe he looked at Jesus eye to eye which would have been a new experience. Then taking a step. First little one, then another. Whoops, steady up. Look down at the pool. Look at the familiar faces around the pool sides. Should he say something? Like, "See you guys. I'm off out of here."

It must be puzzling seeing everything you know as if it was all new.

It's even more puzzling when the difference is that this time it's authentic. Not a dream. Not someone saying, 'the day will come' when you know they're just trying to be kind.

We, in our troubling times are not inclined to be positive when envisioning the future.

Kerry was saying Covid has ruined the meaning of positive and negative. Imagine waiting for the test result and the nurse saying, "We've got a positive result for you - it's negative." These days are so confusing that we might think that it's better to put off decision-time till things are more normal. Tomorrow's normal might seem strange today, but be much better.

So back to the question we started with.

When was your last spontaneous decision that took you from day-by-day to everyday?

Our world is enmeshed in deception, misinformation, ill-informed advice, a social media that simply can't be trusted and a future that seems daunting on many fronts. Can the truth and authenticity of God's life-giving Spirit reach us, to impel you and me into taking part in God's purpose for our every day? Are we prepared to enter God's future for the world? Will we become an active, not nominal, member of God's team for righting the wrongs? Will we tell only the truth and live authentically? Can we be part of Christ's team that works to stabilise a dizzy day-by-day, helter-skelter reckless take-what-comes, turning our children's future into something that is life-giving and hope-giving for all God's children of all ages?

For our three Biblical decision makers, I'd say their knew future began when they recognised a truth and a person who was authentic. For you the moment of acceptance has come.

For me, the hymn that follows has a real truth in the words, 'in the heart's cry, in the healing, in the moment of acceptance Jesus Christ. It's time to be swept up in Creation's everyday movement to heal the peoples and the world. Amen

Hymn FFS 38 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJ6nv5E5Z5I>

1 In the singing, in the silence,
 in the hands expectant, open,
 in the blessing, in the breaking,
 in the Presence at this table,

*Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ,
be the wine of grace:
Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ,
be the bread of peace.*

2 In the question, in the answer,
 in the moment of acceptance,
 in the heart's cry, in the healing,
 in the circle of your people,

*Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ,
be the wine of grace:
Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ,
be the bread of peace.*

Tune: Bread of Peace – Carlton R. Young

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Prayer for others

(based on the words of the song 'Jesu Jesu' WOV 561)

Loving Spirit of God,

We pray for those waiting in hope of good news,
for the results of the biopsy, blood test,
court sentencing, possible pregnancy, whatever;
that they have a sign that they are not waiting alone,
..... *Yesu, Jesu*
Yesu, Yesu, fill us with your love
show us how to serve
the neighbours we have from you.

For those who lie sleepless at night,
afraid of things expected, or unexpected, unknown,
fearful of what others will find out or think,
..... *Yesu, Jesu*

For those who fill their day with busy-ness and sound
to keep reality at a distance,
those who wait for the phone to ring,
people who go again and again to the empty letterbox
..... *Yesu, Jesu*

For people who hope for an answer in political change
who fear that society is falling apart,
for the peoples of Sri Lanka, Ukraine, Tonga
and other countries of desperate need
..... *Yesu, Jesu*

For those who hold tight to their wealth
and live only to make more,
who find it hard to love
or give away what they don't need,
..... *Yesu, Jesu*

For people trapped in dependency, on drugs, money, whatever,
controlled by their desires,
addicted to alcohol, food, comfort,
longing to feel good, to find the truth of themselves,
those living only for today as if there's no tomorrow,
..... *Yesu, Jesu*

For the signs of these things that we see in ourselves,
of known need, or sense our need,
may we find in You, our Christ,
our hope, peace, joy, and love
..... *Yesu, Jesu*

Amen *(words - Alan Upson)*

Communion Thanksgiving Order

The Lord is here

God's Spirit is with us

Lift up your hearts

We lift them to the Lord

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

It is our joy to give you thanks and praise

With saints in this and every age
we remember the tradition
that stretches back to Abraham.
In love you called him
to journey into a future
he could not imagine
yet was filled with promise.
We rejoice that we know you
as one whose call
disturbs our lives
and invites us to become pilgrims.

**Holy, holy, holy, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory;
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord;
Hosanna in the highest!**

When the time had come
for your light to shine radiantly,
Jesus was born into a Jewish family.
He healed the sick,
cast out demons
and broke the powers of evil.
Calling every rejected one
into your way, in him we have seen
your hope and hospitality.
Though crucified on a cross
death could not contain his spirit.

On the night before he offered up his life
Jesus took bread, and after blessing it
he broke it, gave it to his disciples
and said: "Take, eat, this is my body."
After supper, he took the cup, offered thanks,
and gave it to them saying:
"Drink from it, all of you,
for this is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for many
for the forgiveness of sins.

**We remember Christ's death:
we proclaim his resurrection;
we await his coming in glory!**

We celebrate your Spirit's presence
in every time and place:
in patriarchs and matriarchs
in prophets and pharisees
in sages and saints
in martyrs and evangelists.

We honour the faithful ones
hidden, holy and hounded
in whom your grace
inspires discipleship.
Come Spirit of God
bless us and these gifts
that your new creation may be revealed.

**Blessing and honour and glory be yours,
here and everywhere, now and forever. Amen**

The bread which we break
is a sharing in the body of Christ.

The cup of blessing for which we give thanks
is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

(Eucharistic prayer for All Saints - Words Rev Terry Wall)

- 1 Great and deep the Spirit's purpose,
hidden now in mystery,
Nature bursts with joyful promise,
ripe with what is yet to be.
In a wealth of rich invention,
still the work of art unfolds:
barely have we seen, and faintly,
what God's great salvation holds.

- 2 Great and deep the Spirit's purpose,
making Jesus seen and heard.
Every age of God's creation
grasps new meaning from the Word.
Show us, Holy Spirit, show us
your new work begun today:
eyes and ears and hearts are open,
teach us what to do and say.

- 3 Great and deep the Spirit's purpose:
all God's children brought to birth,
freed from hunger, fear and evil
every corner of the earth,
and a million million voices
speak with joy the Saviour's name;
every face reflects his image,
never any two the same.

- 4 Great and deep the Spirit's purpose,
nothing shall be left to chance.
All that lives will be united
in the everlasting dance.
All fulfilled and all perfected,
each uniquely loved and known,
Christ in glory unimagined
once for all receives his own.

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Blessing

Go now and walk in the light of God's glory.

Love Christ and keep his word.

Do not let your hearts be troubled,
but lead others to the waters of life.

And may God's face shine on you with favour;

May Christ Jesus mark you as his own;

And may the Holy Spirit lead you into all truth and peace.

We go in peace to love and serve God,

In the name of Christ,

Amen