



Held In God's Love Called and Sent

Gathering

Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.

*This week, it would be appropriate to find a **green** cloth or scarf as we worship now in "ordinary" time, a season for exploring and growing together.*

Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.



Light Candle

As we begin this morning, we light a candle.

Light the candle

The candle reminds us of the presence of Jesus Christ, the one who is the Light of the World, the One who guides our thoughts, our prayers, our gathering, our worship, our very being.

The beginning of the gospel attributed to John claims that:
"[this] light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

John 1:5

Acknowledgement of Country

As we gather together in this time and place, we acknowledge the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation who have cared for this land, who have gathered, collected and shared food, and who have nourished each other in story and song for thousands of years.

We pay our respects to their elders, past and present who have handed down stories, songs, and wisdom. Let us learn from the First Peoples of this land, listening to their innate knowledge of how to live in this land in harmony with all living things.

May we walk gently and faithfully upon these lands.

Call to Worship

We are a people of the water!

We worship God whose love flows through water.

Love, like a rain shower, awakens the sleeping seed within the soul and lures it to blossom.

We worship God whose love flows through water.

Love, like a wading pool, inspires the delight of children, jumping, splashing, spraying each other, shivering with wet joy.

We worship God whose love flows through water.

Love, like a warm shower in the morning that cleanses us and awakens us.

We worship God whose love flows through water.

Love, like little drops from fingertips to forehead,
through baptism, the family of faith makes room for one more.

***Today we celebrate and give thanks that through baptism,
God claims us, loves us, and names us.***

Sandy Rooney

<https://rrcb.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/12-4-22-baptism-bulletin.pdf>

Sing - All Are Welcome

We sing a song that reminds us of the community we are called to build and that all are welcome here...

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

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:
All are welcome...

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
frees us:
All are welcome...

Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and love the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
All are welcome...

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
All are welcome...

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Introduction

Today, we reflect on what is referred to as Reformation Day.

Just over 500 years ago, on 31 October 1517, Martin Luther, a catholic priest who had been struggling with what he saw as failings of the church, pinned a piece of parchment to the doors of the church in Wittenberg. He chose the day deliberately - knowing that everyone would be coming to church the next day, All Saints Day.

On that parchment, he had written 95 of his concerns, most of which had to do with the practice of paying indulgences - a fee demanded by the church in return for prayer and forgiveness.

Martin Luther argued that God's forgiveness did not need to be mediated by the church, God's grace is freely given and is not dependent on any payment offered but on a person's inner spiritual confession and transformation.

Luther's stand is said to have sparked the Protestant Reformation, splitting the Reformers from the Roman Church and beginning to shape the Reformed tradition in which the Uniting Church stands today.

And if you want to know more about Martin Luther, Halloween and All Saints Day, there is a link in the notices to an article on our website.¹

Prayer

God of the Living Water,
we come together today to celebrate the gift of Baptism,
in celebration of God's promise and in communion with God's people.
We gather to witness this act of faith and in celebration of God's faithfulness.
May this time seal in our hearts a celebration of what God has done.

We, who live surrounded by water, rejoice in its beauty and its life -
we are awed by the power of waves breaking on the beach,
the passing whales share their joy as they leap and play on their way back to their feeding grounds,
the rivers draw fresh water through the fields on which animals graze and food is grown,
and we find our rest and refreshment in or on or beside the cooling waters of rivers, lakes and ocean -
and all of it is shaped by you, God of all Creation.

Sky-shattering God,
when Jesus was baptised by John,
you broke open the heavens and declared your love for him.
So often, we doubt our own belovedness,
we question our belonging, feeling isolated and estranged.
We don't always see ourselves as standing in cloud of witnesses marked for service.
Yet you have called us by name, knowing each of us, and loving us.
We are astonished by this.

We know that we have behaved in very unloving ways and in ways which do not promote your love and peace.

We know that we have often tried to buy your approval rather than doing the hard work of allowing you to reshape our hearts and minds.

Forgive us for our blindness, our ignorance, our apathy.

Turn us around.

Help us to be people who not only recognise the light,

but who are willing to live in that light,

bringing light, love and care to others in your name.

For we pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Words of Assurance

There is nothing we have done that cannot be forgiven.

There is nothing in all the world that can separate us from the love of God.

God's grace embraces you and holds you.

¹ <https://kiama-jamberoo.unitingchurch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Musing-201028.pdf>

And the Spirit of God invites you to be transformed,
heart, soul, mind and body, to live in the light and life of Christ.

Thanks be to God!

We will live into our baptism, living, loving, serving, in the name of Christ. Amen.

Sing - The Pilgrim Song (NCYC 2003)

There are lots of different ways to express who we are as followers of Jesus, as the people of God, and what we believe. This song is one way...

This song is a statement of who we are together - a pilgrim people seeking God's promised way...

We believe in God
in whom the universe
in all its beauty was born.
We believe in Christ,
the Saviour of the world,
and the Spirit who travels with us.

We believe in Christ,
God come as one with us,
who died to set the world free.
We believe Christ lives,
His Spirit is with us,
that in our lives God's new world will come.
For we are the people ...

*For we are the people
who travel in Christ's way,
yes we are the people
seeking God's new day,
we are the people
the Spirit binds as one,
together in faith we journey on.*

There will come a day
creation will be free
and love will rule all the world.
Until then we'll seek
to care for all the earth
and to live for the glory of God.
For we are the people ...

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Listening for God's Voice

Reading: Matthew 3:13-17

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptised by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?' ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus had been baptised, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'

Reading: Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God!

Reflection

*Let us pray,
As we reflect on the stories of Scripture,
we ask that you will refresh us with your Living Water,
and remind us of our call to be good news in the world. Amen.*

The stories we have just heard almost bookend the account of Jesus' life recorded in the gospel attributed to Matthew. This gospel begins with an account of Jesus' birth and family tree but quickly moves to his adult life beginning with his baptism by John in the Jordan. And we have this image of the heavens being opened ("torn apart" in Mark's gospel (Mark 1:10)), God's Spirit descending in a way that looks something like a dove and Jesus hears God's affirmation of him - you are my Son, whom I love and with whom I am pleased (Matthew 3:17).

And at the other end of the gospel, Matthew has Jesus sending his disciples into all the world to baptise, and to teach of the things he has taught, with the assurance that he is with them always (28:20).

In these two stories, are captured the depth of meaning, symbol and sending that is held in the ceremony or celebration of baptism that we participate in today.

On a day when we remember the beginning of what we call the Reformation, a time when the church was split into lots of different parts over different understandings of the Scriptures and what it means to be Jesus' followers, Baptism is one of the few things we still all agree on - well, mostly...

Putting to one side our continuing conversation about whether baptism should include children like Eli or be reserved for adulthood - in the Uniting Church, we believe firmly that Baptism is entirely appropriate for all ages - the one thing that marks membership of the Christian Church across the world is baptism - in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

So why is it so important?

Ruth Duck, an American pastor and writer of song and liturgy puts it this way:

*Baptism is an act of naming and knowing one's identity.
Baptism is a recommitment of a creation with its Creator.
Baptism is a bond of love.*

Baptism is an act of naming and knowing one's identity.

In Jesus' baptism, God names him and claims him as God's own - loved and cherished. "You are my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." (3:17)

In baptism, each one of God's children are named and claimed as God's own - loved and cherished - each one.

You are loved.

You are cherished.

You - just as you are - you are named and claimed as God's precious child.

Baptism is a recommitment of a creation with its Creator.

Baptism is a commitment on our part.

For an infant, it is commitment from our parents or carers - a commitment to the way of Jesus, a commitment to bringing up this child in the ways of Jesus, teaching their children to know their Creator, and to love as God loves, to serve others particularly

those who are more vulnerable, to care for the creation, to seek justice, to be peace-makers. Teaching them how to pray, and a love of the Scriptures and to seek the deep wisdom found in them.

For an adult, it is our own commitment to live the way of Jesus - to shape our lives in prayer and Scripture, to love and to serve and to work for justice and peace and to care for the whole of creation.

Baptism is a bond of love.

And just as Baptism is a commitment to the way of Jesus, it is also a commitment to being part of the family of God, part of the Body of Christ, part of a local Christian community of faith. Because none of us can follow this path on our own - we need each other for support, encouragement, correction at times and because none of us can be a "body" on our own. God calls each one of us, with our own individual gifts and skills to be part of something bigger, to share in the mission of Christ in the world.

Your baptism means you belong - without condition.

Your baptism means you have a place here - loved and held.

Your baptism means you have a task here - to love and hold others

And so Baptism is a commissioning, that even though our hands might be small, God calls us to carry God's life and light in the world, to offer our hands and hearts to loving every soul that we encounter along the way.

So I invite you now to take a moment to reflect...

For you who have been baptised - as a baby or more recently - just think for a moment about those people who brought you to the church, who, in faith, marked you with water and the sign of the cross, who committed themselves to loving you and raising you to love Jesus. And give thanks for them.

And if you confirmed your faith as an adult, then perhaps the service today will remind you of the commitments and promises you made and will renew and refresh your commitment today.

For you who have yet to take that step, may you know the love of God and God's call to you - and come and talk to me if this is a step you would like to take.

And if you have been baptised but want to renew your commitment or you want to make a commitment to this particular family of faith here at Kiama, then come and talk to me, and we will make that happen.

Let's pray...

God of Grace,

we give thanks for your love that extends beyond our imagination to enfold each one of us here today. As we reflect on the gift that is the pouring of water and the naming of your Spirit in our lives, stir in us a passion for your way of love in the world, and a renewed commitment to your people, the church, the community of faith in this time and place, that we might together reflect your light, your hope, your love. Amen.

Responding

Sing - Borning Cry

As we come to baptise Eli, as we pray for God's presence with us in this special celebration, this song reminds us that God is with us through all the stages of our lives.

I was there to hear your borning cry,

I'll be there when you are old.
I rejoiced the day you were baptised to see
your life unfold.
I was there when you were but a child
with a faith to suit you well;
in a blaze of light you wandered off to find
where demons dwell.

When you heard the wonder of the Word
I was there to cheer you on.
You were raised to praise the living Lord to
whom you now belong.
If you find someone to share your time,
and you join your hearts as one,
I'll be there to make your verses rhyme
from dusk til rising sun.

In the middle ages of your life,
not too old, no longer young,
I'll be there to guide you through the night,
complete what I've begun.
When the evening gently closes in
and you shut your weary eyes,
I'll be there as I have always been with just
one more surprise.

I was there to hear your borning cry,
I'll be there when you are old.
I rejoiced the day you were baptised to see
your life unfold.

© 1985 John Ylvisaker

*Celebrating the Baptism of
Eli Julian Walsh*

Prayer for Others

God of love, we rejoice again to receive your grace in hearing your word and sharing in
this Sacrament of baptism this morning.
We have heard your call once again and we are made new by your Spirit.

As you have loved him from the beginning, continue to guide and guard Eli all his days.
May your love hold him, your truth guide him, your joy delight him.

Bless Julian and Chelsea and their family. We thank you for your goodness to them.
Help them to keep the promises they have made.
May their homes be secure and happy.
Give all of them wisdom and courage, laughter and peace,
and the love that endures all things.

This baptism marks a preparation for the work of the Holy Spirit.
May this water act as a visual reminder that we belong to God.
May every baptism remind us of our own spiritual journey and whisper into our hearts our
own spiritual identity.
May we be reminded of what our parents and church family have prayed over us as the
waters covered us.
May we be pressed into mission by our own baptismal identity.
We pray that these baptismal prayers will remind us that we belong to each other and to
you, God of Grace.

And as we are reminded of our connections, one to another,
so we are mindful of people in our world who are hurting and struggling today:
people in places of war and conflict (*pause - count to 5*)
people impacted by domestic and family violence (*pause - count to 5*)

people who are recovering from surgery or facing life-changing illness (*pause - count to 5*)
people who care for older parents, children with special needs, or loved ones who are ill
(*pause - count to 5*)
people who are mourning the death of someone they love (*pause - count to 5*)
people who are hungry (*pause - count to 5*)
people who are sleeping rough (*pause - count to 5*)
people who seek to bring aid and hope. (*pause - count to 5*)

God of Grace, may each one know your healing, peace, justice and hope,
God of Life, strengthen and inspire each one of us to play our own part in bringing healing,
peace, justice and hope, that the world may come to know your love and be made whole
once more. Amen

Offering

*This part of our service is about considering how we will respond to what we have seen
and heard and experienced this morning, or perhaps throughout the week - how is God
prompting you, nudging you, inspiring you - and what will you do about it?*

Each one of us is precious.

*Each one of us has something to offer in terms of resources - time, energy, skills, money.
How will you respond?*

We praise and thank you, God of the Living Waters,
for the wonder of your creation,
the wisdom of your word,
and the generosity of your grace.
Let the gifts of our lives bear witness
to your goodness and mercy,
your faithfulness and justice,
and your steadfast love for all peoples always. Amen.

Sending

Sing - One Body In Christ (Seasons 8-23)

*We go singing a song that reminds us that in baptism we are called into one body, each
one of us with much to offer in gifting, in story, in love.*

*One Body in Christ
called to share the Good News with the
world.*

*Each of us gifted,
made in God's image,
we have a story to tell,
a story of love.*

We have been baptised in Christ,
the love of our God
poured into our hearts.
Called to share the mission of Christ,

the Spirit of God alive in our hearts;
to be a light of welcome
in the darkness of exclusion,
an out-stretched hand of love to ev'ryone.
We are one body in Christ...

To give voice to the voiceless,
the unheard in the wilderness,
an outstretched hand of love to ev'ryone.
We are one body in Christ...
(*repeat chorus*)

© Amanda McKenna

Candle

A candle is lit from the Christ candle and presented to the child.

At the beginning of our service we lit this candle to remind us that Christ is the Light of the World.

Eli, may this candle remind you that you belong to Christ, the light of the world.
And as Jesus is Light, so he calls each one of his children to share that light.

May you always walk as a child of the light.
Don't hide your light under a bush, instead -
Let your light shine that all may see the good things you do
and give glory to God our Creator.

(Matthew 5:16)

Sending and Blessing

As you look into the heart of another, try and recognise the touch of God.
As you look into the face of another, try and recognise the Christ within.
As you hear the words of another, listen for the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

And be blessed in the name of God, the source of all life and inspiration.
Be blessed in the name of the Christ whose life liberates our expectations.
Be blessed in the name of the Spirit as she breathes new life through us all. Amen.
Keree Casey, Of Ashes and Rainbows

Liturgy drawn from a Service of Baptism in Uniting in Worship 2 and various sources as noted.

Rev Kath Merrifield
27 October 2024