

Parramatta City Uniting Church

3rd October 2021

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come worship the one who has brought all that is into being. Let all creation sing, with the strangely melodious and haunting voice of the magpie, the chattering chorus of the lorikeets, the joyful laughter of the kookaburra, the raucous self-confident screech of the sulphur-crested cockatoo, all around us giving praise to the sculptor, the artist, the creator of each one of us and all that is.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge the Burramattagal people of the Darug Nation, the first inhabitants of this place, as the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to their ancient culture, their elders past and present and their emerging leaders. We acknowledge the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now reside within this area. We honour them for their custodianship of the land, on which we gather today.

We acknowledge that “the First Peoples had already encountered the Creator God before the arrival of the colonisers; the Spirit was already in the land revealing God to the people through law, custom and ceremony. The same love and grace that was finally and fully revealed in Jesus Christ sustained the First Peoples and gave them particular insights into God’s ways.” (*Preamble to the Uniting Church Constitution para 3*)

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good

The candle is lit

OPENING PRAYER AND AFFIRMATION

Creator of All,

We are grateful that from your communion of love you created our planet to be a home for all. By your Holy Wisdom you made the Earth to bring forth a diversity of living beings that filled the soil, water and air. Each part of creation praises you in their being, and cares for one another from our place in the web of life.

With the Psalmist, we sing your praise that in your house “even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young.” We remember that you call human beings to keep your garden in ways that honour the dignity of each creature and conserve their place in the abundance of life on Earth.

But we know that our will to power pushes the planet beyond her limits. Our consumption is out of harmony and rhythm with Earth’s capacity to heal herself. Habitats are left barren or lost. Species are lost and systems fail. Where reefs and burrows, mountaintops and ocean deeps once teemed with life and relationships, wet and dry deserts lie empty, as if uncreated. Human families are displaced by insecurity and conflict, migrating in search of peace. Animals flee fires, deforestation and famine, wandering in search of a new place to find a home to lay their young and live.

In this Season of Creation, we pray that the breath of your creative Word would move our hearts, as in the waters of our birth and baptism. Give us faith to follow Christ to our just place in the beloved community. Enlighten us with the grace to respond to your covenant and call to care for our common home. In our tilling and keeping, gladden our hearts to know that we participate with your Holy Spirit to renew the face of your Earth, and safeguard a home for all.

In the name of the One who came to proclaim good news to all creation, Jesus Christ. Amen.

(From Season of Creation Resources 2021 - <https://seasonofcreation.org › uploads › 2021/05>)

SONG – Canticle of Daniel

(Don Stewart 1998 Permission OneLicense#A727308)

- 1. And you sun and moon and stars
oh bless the Lord
and all you show'rs of rain
oh bless the Lord
and all you breezes and winds
oh bless the Lord
and you fire and rain
oh bless the Lord**

Refrain

**To God be highest glory
and praise forever more.**

- 2. And you dew and frosts and snow
oh bless the Lord
and you night time and day
oh bless the Lord
and you darkness and light
oh bless the Lord
and you light'ning and clouds
oh bless the Lord**

Refrain

**To God be highest glory and
praise forever more.**

- 3. And you mountains and hills
oh bless the Lord
and you all plants of the earth
oh bless the Lord
and you fountains and springs
oh bless the Lord
and you rivers and seas
oh bless the Lord
to God be highest glory and
praise forever more.**

Let all the earth bless the Lord

Let all the earth bless the Lord
Let all the earth bless the Lord
Let all the earth bless the Lord

ALL AGE SHARING

“All things of creation are children of God. They are brothers and sisters of human beings.”

This quote from St Francis of Assisi reminds us that we are closely related to all creatures of the earth. God made all of us—plants, animals, birds, fire, wind, rain.

Action:

Is there a place you like to walk regularly? What creature do you look forward to seeing on this journey?

Is there a cat who sleeps in a window? A tree whose bark you like to touch? A pile of stones you play with?

Spend some time with this creature on your next walk. Think about how you might show them respect. It could be by learning their name. Or by picking up the rubbish nearby. Sometimes just sitting quietly with another creature is an act of love.

On my next walk, I am going to spend some time with an old banksia tree that marks the halfway point of my journey. I might even write a poem about him!

For more ideas for connecting with nature during lockdown, check out [Uniting Earth's Kids and Creation](#).

SCRIPTURE READING – Genesis 2:18-25

Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.’ So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of

the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

‘This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken.’

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

RESPONSE

*O God our nurturer,
may your word live in us.
And colour our living. Amen!*

REFLECTION

REV NIALl REID

It is said that a dog is a man's best friend.



John Bulley presented us with this dog and we saw that it was good, there was evening and there was morning and every day it was good. We named the dog “Bulley” and he is very good – quietly standing by our front door without a bark, a fart or a snore, never needs to be fed or taken for a walk, never wants a tickle on the tummy or a stroke of his neck – he has no beating heart or endearing scamper when we come in the door, truth is he is hard to love, in fact our Bulley is a little bit of a bore.

In our scripture reading today, in the story and it is a story, but not just a story, as Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sachs writes *“Genesis is truth as story”* having also said that the Hebrew word for “Genesis” does not have the sense of *“First of a chronological sequence”* but rather

“...implies the most significant element, the part that stands for the whole, the foundation, the principle. Genesis is Judaism’s foundational work, a philosophy of the human condition under the sovereignty of God.”

That is a helpful way of looking at it that really takes us out of the whole unfruitful conversation focussed on science pitted against the Bible.

The story is about us and this bit of the story is significant in a number of ways. Let us begin where this part of the story begins – the man God has created needs a helper and obviously that helper is not God although in other parts of the Bible God is described as such, so in Psalm 121:

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

But not here. God is not the helper envisaged here.

However, it is not good for the man to be alone. The man needs a helper to be a partner.

The helper is to come from that which was created and so God forms all these creatures and gives the man permission to name them, one might see this as participating in God’s blessing of creation – naming was a sacred act, it reflected that Godness that is within us which we reflect in our humanity. In Judaism God cannot be cast in images so it is a surprising passage in Genesis 1:27

*So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

OT scholar, Walter Brueggemann comments “Within...Judaism’s... critique of every religious temptation to idolatry, our text makes a surprising counter-assertion. There is one way in which God is imaged in the world and only one: humanness. This is the only creature, the only part of creation, which discloses to us something about the reality of God.”

So, this naming of the animals was an act of human creativity reflecting God’s blessing of creation and thereby the image of God.

The naming and blessing of animals is what we do, over the animals we are given responsibility, even sharks and crocodiles are worthy of our protection. And animals, unlike our Bulley, do give joy and companionship – they are part of God’s good, beautiful, blessed creation – they are far from boring and easy to love, even the ones that scare us a bit or we know are dangerous.

But as for being the helper the man needs, not what was required. The text says, no, even though these creatures are a wonder to behold and worthy of blessing and care, and can be a blessing to man, man’s best friend (as the saying goes) none are what was needed.

Then God embarks on a second creation one which would be the fulfilment of God’s work. Without the man being aware God creates woman.

Rabbi Lord Sachs writes of how in Judaism immortality is in our children and he goes on to say this:

“Until he became aware of his mortality Adam could think of his wife as... ‘a suitable helper’ - as an assistant not an equal. ‘She shall be called ‘woman’ [ishah] for she was taken from man [ish]... he says. She was in his eyes, an extension of himself.

Now he knew otherwise. Without her, he could not have children – children were his share in eternity. With this awareness he ceased to think of her as an assistant. She was a person in her own right – more even than he was, for it was she, not he, who would actually give birth. In this respect she was more like God than he could be,

for God is He-who-brings-new-life-into-being” It was when he saw her as a person that he “gave her a personal name, Eve, meaning, ‘she who gives life.’”

This was a blessing, yes, a sacred act but it was also an acknowledgement of Eve’s status as one at least equally mirroring the image of God.

Brueggemann references Phyllis Trible who “...points out that the creation of woman is a second full creation story which is necessary to the completion of creation (*God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 1978, chap 4).”

In a sense, as Brueggemann writes;
“Woman is the crowning event in the narrative and the fulfillment of humanity.”

Although Rabbi Sacks speaks of Judaism as the most child centred of all faiths with that understanding of immortality being gained through our children, I think Walter Brueggemann’s insight is helpful when in reference to Genesis 1:27 he writes,

“...it is worth noting that humankind is spoken of as singular (‘he created him’) and plural (‘he created them’)... on the one hand, humankind is a single entity. All human persons stand in solidarity before God. But on the other hand, humankind is a community, male and female. And none is the full image of God alone. Only in community of humankind is God reflected. God is, according to this bold affirmation, not mirrored as an individual but as a community.”

Thus, it is not about our individual blood lines in which immortality is found but all of humanity in community with God.

The naming of the animals speaks of our creative responsibility which recognises the image of God mirrored in human life. If God sees creation as good what does that mean for us as those who bear the image of God?

The creation and naming of Eve rather than creating a hierarchy of male and female is about the creation of wholeness – man without woman is nothing. How does this way of looking at this story impact our understanding of role of men and women?

References:

Rabbi Jonathan Sachs Genesis: The Book of Beginnings. Covenant and Conversation, A weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible
Walter Brueggemann Genesis Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching

SONG – Sing a New Song

(James Phillip McAuley 1917-76 Permission OneLicense#A727308)

Refrain

**Sing a new song sing a new song
and wait upon the promise of the Lord
sing a new song sing a new song
and wait upon the promise of the Lord**

- 1. Creation sings a new song to the Lord
the universal energies rejoice
through all magnitudes of space and time
creatures proclaim the grandeur of Christ**

Refrain

**Sing a new song sing a new song
and wait upon the promise of the Lord
sing a new song, sing a new song
and wait upon the promise of the Lord**

- 2. The mountains and the valleys and the plains
the cattle and the wild beasts and the birds
the shadows and the clouds the rain and snow
praise and reflect the bounty of Christ**

Refrain

**Sing a new song sing a new song
and wait upon the promise of the Lord
sing a new song sing a new song
and wait upon the promise of the Lord**

- 5. The human eye the shaping hand the mind
with number and symbol and design
in work and play and artistry and prayer
praise and reflect the wisdom of God**

Refrain

**Sing a new song sing a new song
and wait upon the promise of the Lord
sing a new song sing a new song**

and wait upon the promise of the Lord

6. The love of man and woman clear as dawn
the will for truth and justice broad as day
the wisdom of the heart profound as night
praise and reflect the glory of Christ
Refrain
Sing a new song sing a new song
and wait upon the promise of the Lord
sing a new song sing a new song
and wait upon the promise of the Lord

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God, our Creator, help us to love
all creatures as kin,
all animals as partners on Earth,
all birds as messengers of praise,
all minute beings as expressions of your mysterious design
and all frogs as voices of hope. Amen.

Jesus Christ, teach us to empathise with Earth. Make our
spirits sensitive to the cries of creation, cries for justice from
the land, the seas and the skies. Jesus Christ, make our faith
sensitive to the groans of the Spirit in creation, groans of
longing for a new creation. Jesus Christ, make our hearts
sensitive to the songs of our kin, songs of celebration from
the sea, the forest and the air. Christ, teach us to care. Amen
(From Season of Creation resources 2021 – <https://seasonofcreation.com/>)

INVITATION

You are invited to the table, the table on which are set the fruits
of creation, grain of the field now bread, grapes from the vineyard
now wine... the table around which gather we who are mere
humans yet made in the image of God... the table which speaks
of beginnings, of a new creation in Christ. No-one is turned away
from this table... a table big enough to encompass all the world.

OFFERING PRAYER

We bring our offerings to this table, our offerings of bread and wine, together with all that we are and all that we have.

GREAT PRAYER OF 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

For this we give thanks and praise:

Leader In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said,

Woman 'Let there be light';

Leader 1 and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.

Leader 2 And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Leader 1 And God said,

Man 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.'

Leader 1 So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky.

Leader 2 And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

Leader 1 And God said,

Woman 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.'

Leader 1 And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said,

Man ‘Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.’

Leader 1 And it was so... And God saw that it was good.

Leader 2 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Leader 1 And God said,

Woman ‘Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.’

Leader 1 And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars... And God saw that it was good.

Leader 2 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

Leader 1 And God said, ‘Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.’ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, ‘

Man Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.’

Leader 2 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

Leader 1 And God said,

Woman ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.’

Leader 1 And it was so....And God saw that it was good. Then God said,

Man 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

Leader 1 So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them,

Woman 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'

Leader 1 God said,

Man 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food...

Leader 1 And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Leader 2 And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Leader 1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done,

Leader 2 and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

(Sanctus – sung)

**Holy holy holy Lord,
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.**

Leader 1 Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed,
took bread,
gave you thanks,
broke it,
and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Leader 2 Take this and eat it.
This is my body given for you,
Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper,
he took the cup,
gave thanks,
and gave it to them, saying:

Man Drink from this all of you.
This is my blood of the new covenant
poured out for you and for everyone
for the forgiveness of sins
Do this, whenever you drink it,
in remembrance of me.

Leader 1 So today we do as Jesus commanded:
We take the bread and the cup
A prayer, a promise
an offering to follow in his way.

Woman Holy Spirit in creation, Holy Spirit in Christ
Holy Spirit in our presence

Leader 1 Bless this bread and this wine
That they may be for us the body and blood of Christ
That we might be the Body of Christ
existing for the sake of the world.

**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 for ever. Amen.**

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

The Body of Christ broken for you

The blood of Christ poured out for you

WORDS OF MISSION AND BLESSING

Go now into the world...
knowing yourself made in the image of God
and seeing the image of God in others

As God blessed all creation
May you know
The blessing of the one who created you
The blessing of the one who embodied God in his humanity
The blessing of the one who inspires us to be the humans we are created
to be
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

BLESSING SONG – For you Deep Stillness

(Julie Perrin with permission OneLicense#A727308)

**For you deep stillness of the silent inland
for you deep blue of the desert skies
for you flame red of the rocks and stones .
for you sweet water**

from hidden springs

**From the edges seek the heartlands
and when you're burnt by the journey
may the cool winds of the hovering Spirit
soothe and replenish you
in the name of Christ
in the name of Christ.
in the name of Christ.**

Questions for discussion after the Service or for contemplation at home

The naming of the animals speaks of our creative responsibility which recognises the image of God mirrored in human life. If God sees creation as good what does that mean for us as those who bear the image of God?

The creation and naming of Eve rather than creating a hierarchy of male and female is about the creation of wholeness – man without woman is nothing. How does this way of looking at this story impact our understanding of role of men and women?