**MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE – Epiphany 1b**

**8th – 10th January 2021**

You may like to follow our service on our video. You can find it on our Worship Services page on our website at <https://www.macedonrangesunitingchurch.org.au/worship-services> or on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/VLfqIyx9csA>. Our service invites you to read the scriptures, pause, meditate and pray. Allow the stories told to lead you. We suggest reading the passages when suggested below. We are touching on several of the scripture readings in one way or another this week.

If you would like to look at previous videos on our YouTube channel, go to <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCb4hzdO-YgzmrIRVC-oby_w>.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

We acknowledge all the Aboriginal Groups who have cared for and nurtured the land on which we meet: the Wurundjeri; Woi Wurruung; Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung.

We acknowledge their leaders: past, present and emerging for it is in them that Australia’s future lies.

You are welcome here, as we reflect in different rooms and districts, States and Countries around the world, our spiritual connectedness through Christ Jesus, is remembered.

**WELCOME and CALL TO WORSHIP**

Welcome to this service of worship, recorded at the Macedon Ranges Partnership Service at St Andrews Church, Kyneton on Sunday 17th January, 2020. The service marks the conclusion of the placement of Rev. Peter Cannon with the Partnership.

However you join us in this worship, whether in person or watching on a screen, whether near or far you are welcome and we are delighted to be able to share this time with you.

In a time when not many were given visions

the lamp of God had not yet gone out

and the voice of God

called God’s servant from slumber

And Samuel replied:

Speak, Eternal One. Your servant is listening

In our time, do we dare to hope

that this might be a time of

dreams and visions

that the lamp of God might blaze

into our lives and into our world?

Will we listen,

will we be called from our slumber?

What will be our answer?

This is the time

Here and now

The Holy Three in One

calls us, individually and together

to hear, to wonder, to worship

Response:

**Leader:** And so we say

**All:** Speak, Eternal One. Your servants are listening

**SONG:** “Listen in the silence by Linnea Good

Listen in the silence,

Listen in the noise

Listen for the sound of

the Spirit’s voice x 2

**PRAYER**

God we hear your words of love for us

and we are left speechless

To be fully known and loved by you

is the greatest gift imaginable

Whether as old as Eli or as young as Samuel

whether steeped in tradition

or hearing your voice for the first time

you see us as cherished and beloved.

As mysterious as the furthest stars

as close as our next breath

You are beyond our imagining

*(Silence)*

And yet, there are times we would hide from you if we could.

We know the depths of our insincerity

We know the times when we have forgotten

to live out of our deepest values,

allowed your voice to be drowned out

walked past suffering

and turned a blind eye to despair

In the silence,

in the generous spaciousness of your grace,

we allow ourselves

to acknowledge about ourselves

what we would rather not

*(Silence)*

When *we* forget who we are,

*you* never do

and the invitation into your grace

reminds us again and again.

Brothers and sisters,

allow yourself to be reminded once more

that you are known

you are loved

you are free.

Thanks be to God

**Response:** Song: Listen in the silence (as above)

**BIBLE READINGS:** 1 Sam 3:1-20, Jn 1:43-51.

You may like to read today’s other readings: Ps 139:1-6, 13-18, 1 Cor 6:12-20,

**REFLECTION** *by Rev. Peter Cannon*

When we start to go to sleep, our mind goes into what psychologist call an “alpha” state. It is a phase when our mind can go into dreaming but is also quite receptive. It is the state hypnosis uses to help people.

It is no wonder then that it is such times when God seems to speak with people so often in the stories of scripture. So many stories of visions and callings occur when people go to sleep or some kind of meditative state. It seems our minds are more receptive and less cluttered with thoughts and pressures.

In our reading from 1 Samuel, Samuel hears God’s voice as he tries to go to sleep. He is open to hearing and responds immediately – just not to the right one! He doesn’t understand and needs guidance to recognise the voice of God. Elli is able to give this to him.

Our 2nd reading differs in that Nathanael’s call comes instead from Jesus’ deep insight of him. The Psalm for today speaks of God’s intimate knowledge of us and this reflects God’s love of us.

Together the passages affirm that God’s call comes from a deep love and knowledge of us. We are invited into an intimacy with God that draws us into God’s ministry and mission in the world.

There was a time when it was thought that only “special” or specific people were called. The New Testament however makes it clear that the call of God is for all followers of Jesus. In the letter of Peter, we are even told we are all a “Royal Priesthood” – this designation is not just for the ordained.

I have heard people often suggest they have not heard a calling but they are drawn into caring for those struggling. Others are generous with hospitality. Others are able to organise in such a way the church is built up. Sometimes we just need to pause and listen for the voice of God while at others we need the wisdom and insight of those who know us and God.

So what is your calling? Here are some clues to help:

Ask what is it about your relationship with God that is life-giving? What is it that moves you to want to bless or make a difference? What ways have you seen that expressed so that others are blessed?

Still not sure, ask someone who knows you and God, an elder or Annette.

And give it a go. Be prepared to make a mistake but say to God, “Here am I Lord. I am listening. Show the way.” God is gracious and will guide you.

**SONG: Like a Candle**

**PRAYERS FOR OTHER**

The voices of the lost and the lonely cry out

We hear news of terror and tragedy

Near and far

This is not your vision for our world

**Leader:** Eternal One, open our ears

**All: May we listen for greater things you have in store**

We see around us signs of your Creation groaning

Our screens bring us stories of sadness and need

Near and far

this is not your vision for our world

**Leader:** Eternal One, open our eyes

**All: May we see the greater things you have in store**

You entrust us with your vision

and call us to live into it and out of it

To be prepared to suffer with you

in service to your world

near and far

**Leader**: Eternal One, open our hearts

**All: May we yearn for the greater things you have in store**

In the places where despair has settled in

and people have no hope for the future

where the light of your lamp has gone out.

Wherever people are voiceless

Wherever your good news is unheard

near and far

**Leader:** Eternal One, open our mouths

**All: May we sing and speak of the greater things you have in store**

Wherever there is a need for wholeness

Wherever there is grasping instead of generosity

Wherever there is a need for welcome and hospitality

Wherever we can paint a picture of joy in the world

near and far

**Leader**: Eternal One, open our hands

**All: May we work for the greater things you have in store**

**Song: Listen in the silence (as above)**

**CONCLUSION OF THE PLACEMENT**

**Ms Iris Blythe (representing the Presbytery of Port Phillip West) -**

The Church lives by the power of the Word. She is assured that God has never failed to provide a witness to that Word.

We, the Presbytery of Port Phillip West, in response to the leading of the Holy Spirit and by the affirmation of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania and the Presbytery of Port Philip West, called and inducted the Rev. Peter Cannon into ministry as part of a team with the Macedon Ranges Partnership on 6th March 2016.

At that time, we witnessed Peter promise to accept responsibility for sharing in the work of ministry in this partnership and we also affirmed his gifts and calling for this ministry. At the same time, you the members of the congregations that make up the Macedon Ranges Partnership affirmed your commitment to work with and to care for Peter in the fulfilment of his role in this placement. The time has now come to mark the end of Peter’s particular responsibilities in this placement, and to send him, with God’s blessing, to a new ministry God will call him to.

**Ps Annette & Rev Peter***: We committed ourselves as a Partnership to be bound together in your Spirit O God. We thankyou for the commitment and faithfulness of those who have brought us to this point.*

*We likewise committed ourselves to work together as a ministry team to live in mission together. The time for the ministry team as we have known has now reached its conclusion.*

Annette: Those of us called to continue in ministry and mission in the Partnership will now seek a new approach to ministry leadership.

**Rev Peter Cannon**: Brothers and sisters in Christ, you called me to minister with you, and charged me to care pastorally for you and to share in the work of ministry within this partnership. Now I must lay down the tasks you committed to me.

I therefore return to you the trust you placed in me and thank you for the privilege of serving among you.

I ask you to continue to care for one another and to advance the work of mission, discipleship and care in the Macedon Ranges Partnership. From small towns and communities, from agency to active engagement in new re-generational frontiers, you will continue to serve our God. In the exploration of call; in the exercise of congregational care; in the engagement with the community, in the expression of the good news of Jesus Christ, and in the exhaustion of committee meetings we have worked together in faith hope and love.

Through the work of the Spirit and in the quiet moments of personal and corporate prayerfulness we have heard God speak to us. And God speaks and God breathes and God still calls, and so I move on.

**Congregation:**

*Loving God, we give thanks for Peter’s ministry amongst us. We pray for ourselves, as we move into an as yet unknown future. Companion God, continue to share our journeys in ways we can recognise and understand, that we may be strengthened in our ministry, grow in our love of you, and bring glory to your name. Amen.*

**Iris**:

And now Peter, we thank you for your ministry of grace, concern and care amongst the peoples of this region.

We release you from this particular ministry, and we will continue to pray for you.

Be strong and of good courage, do not be afraid:

for it is the Lord who goes with you.

Your God will not fail you or forsake you.

**SONG: The Aaronic blessing:**

The Lord bless you and keep you

The Lord make his face to shine upon you

And be gracious unto you

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you

and give you peace

**SONG: Here I am, Lord**

**PRAYER – Ms Iris Blythe**

Let us pray.

O God,

be with those who leave, and with those who stay; and grant that all of us,

by drawing nearer to you, may always be close to each other in the communion of saints;

through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord.

Amen.

**OFFERING**

You may like to consider giving an offering to your congregation via direct deposit. Details for each are:

* Gisborne: Gisborne branch, Bendigo bank, B.S.B. 633 108, A/C: 1512 83736
* Romsey: Bendigo Bank, B.S.B. 633 000, A/C: 161501200, Account name: UCA Romsey Uniting Church
* Mia Mia – Kyneton: Commonwealth bank, B.S.B. 063 517, Account no.: 1002 1775

 *I will publish other congregation’s details as they come to hand. Contact you congregation’s treasurer for details if they are not here.*