

# ONLINE SERVICE

during COVID-19

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6 December 2020

Welcome and Notices

Amanda Fairs  
viola

Sunday of Christ the King  
Call to Worship

Prayer of Invocation

Young at Heart  
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: Mark 10:35-45  
Amanda Fairs

The Christmas gift all wrapped up  
Mark 10:45

Prayers of Intercession  
and  
The Lord's Prayer

Benediction



# NOTICES

6 December 2020

Wednesday 9 December 1.30 pm Sweet Hour of Prayer  
Sunday 13 December 11 am Advent #3

For your prayers this week:

Congregational member: Grace CHIA

and



Douglas & Jeanette  
BENNETT are with WBT based at  
Kangaroo Ground but working from  
home during the pandemic.

Members who wish to continue their freewill offerings during the COVID 19 restrictions may post to our Treasurer. Vic Ansell, 59 Queen St Kangaroo Flat, Vic 3555 or use the electronic banking details below.



Electronic Banking Details: ANZ Forest Hill,  
Account name: Blackburn Presbyterian Church  
BSB: 013-328. Account number: 2970 40694

BLACKBURN  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
53 Gardenia Street,  
Blackburn 3130



Minister: Rev Graham Bradbeer  
tel. 9041 7911 mobile. 0409 978 690  
Session Clerk: Mr Keith Ferres 98305466  
Treasurer: Mr Vic Ansell 5447 7118



GARDENIA ST.  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
BLACKBURN

## saviour

*noun* [ C ] UK (US savior)

UK  / 'seɪ.viə/ US  / 'seɪ.vjə-/

a person who saves someone from danger or harm

▶ the/our Saviour

in the Christian religion, a way of referring to Jesus

# WELCOME



6 December 2020  
Second Sunday in Advent



All parties to the conflict in Yemen committed serious violations of international humanitarian law. Huthi forces, which controlled large parts of the country, indiscriminately shelled residential neighbourhoods in Yemen and launched missiles indiscriminately into Saudi Arabia. The coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which supported the internationally recognised Yemeni government, continued to bomb civilian infrastructure and carry out indiscriminate attacks, killing and injuring hundreds of civilians. All parties to the conflict suppressed freedom of expression, using arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and torture and other ill-treatment.

Amnesty International 2019

The church in Yemen is composed mostly of Christians with a Muslim background. As an Islamic and clan-based society, converting to Christianity in Yemen is viewed as a betrayal of one's tribe. Tribal law prohibits members from leaving, the punishment being banishment or death. If the convert is a woman, the clan may force her into a marriage, pressuring her to abandon her faith in Jesus.

Due to the civil war that began in 2015, there are critical shortages of food and water. 79% of the Yemeni population lives below the poverty line. Emergency relief is mostly distributed through Islamic organisations and local mosques, which discriminate against non-Muslims. In this environment, persecution is intense and Islamic extremism is flourishing.

Despite the country's political instability, authorities actively persecute Christians, detaining and interrogating converts if they refuse to return to Islam. Extremist groups including al-Qaeda and the Islamic State have also been known to arrest, harass and violently attack Christians as they seek to implement the strict interpretations of Islam.

Open Doors, Australia, 2020



In the four Sundays of Advent we are exploring the meaning of Christmas in each of the four Gospels. (quotations below from Reta Halteman Finger)

We noticed that Matthew opens with "a human genealogy; Jesus descends from the kingly line of David, his DNA reaching back to Abraham, father of the Hebrews". The key word is *Immanuel*. Luke sets the stage with "unexpected embryos and the unusual women who carry them; Jesus begins life as a human baby." From these two Gospels, and the surrounding traditions, we get the main scenes for our Christmas cards.

We shall discover that "John is a philosopher, a seer, and a mystic. He has penetrated the earthly story of the human Jesus to give its profound implications." Meanwhile Mark's adult Jesus bursts on the scene on the wings of prophets and is identified by a messenger crying in the wilderness. Today we explore the meaning of Jesus' presence among us from Mark's Gospel. The key word is servant.

**1 James, John and the kids** The disciples all wanted leadership roles in the kingdom of God. (Mark 9:33ff) They were embarrassed when Jesus enquired about their discussion. He taught them then by a dramatic and unforgettable visual illustration. Embracing a small child before them he said "If anyone welcomes one child like this in my name, they welcome me".

James and John still wanted to be near the top. They were up front about it (Mark 10:35). Another power struggle argument arose!

As Eugene Peterson puts it "Nobody aspires to be a servant. We have a higher opinion of ourselves." Nevertheless, up is down with God.

**2 The Christmas Gift** Here Jesus tells us why Christmas happened. His purpose is to serve. He expresses the reason for His coming both negatively and positively. (Mark 10:45)

His coming was not to experience the humble or devoted service of human creatures. Even the glitterati achieve this. What counts with God, is goodness. This is where we all seem to have deficiency in our DNA. As Mrs Holdaway, English teacher at my old school used to say "A man wrapped up in himself makes a very small package".

But it was not so with Jesus. He came as a servant.

**3 Jesus, all wrapped up in us** The three verbs (doing words of verse 45b) each deserve our attention. He came to *serve*, to *give* and to *redeem*.

Alan Cole notes that in these words Jesus brings together strands from the Psalms, Ezekiel, Daniel and Isaiah with "the great ransom theme". The focus is on redeeming human lives.

A. to serve: There is no greater service, no greater love than that which Jesus came to share with us.

B. to give: Christmas is about Jesus' birth, but the gift is the life that was lived for us and that was intentionally given for us. Some mocked that "he saved others, but he cannot save himself" (14:31). But saving Himself was not his purpose.

C. to redeem: this means to be set free - Jesus gave his life to free us from sins, and for God. In this liberty is purpose!

**4 Many People** Not everybody welcomes the service Christmas ushers in or receives the gift Christ offers.

"There are only two kinds of people" says CS Lewis "those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'All right, then, have it your way.'" The Great Divorce, 1945.

But redemption is offered to the redeemed of the LORD, and they are *many*. Jesus mentions them again (Mark 14:24) at the last supper.

We hear them singing "Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head, they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away" (Isaiah 51:11).

Let's make this our song this Christmas!