

# ONLINE SERVICE

during COVID-19

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13 December 2020

Welcome and Notices

Hymn 55 (RCH)

O come, all ye faithful

Call to Worship

Prayer of Invocation

Young at Heart

Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: Luke 2:1-12

Amanda Fairs

Your Saviour was born

Luke 2:11

Prayers of Intercession

and

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 164 (Rejoice)

While shepherds watched

Benediction

# NOTICES

13 December 2020

Wednesday 16 December 1.30 pm Sweet Hour of Prayer  
Sunday 20 December 11 am Advent #4  
Friday 25 December 9.30 am Christmas Day Service

For your prayers this week:

Congregational member: Carey and Cathy COX

and

C and N and family, returned from from SE Asia, duly quarantined and currently on home assignment.

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

WELCOME

YES!  
WELCOME BACK

What a great pleasure to recommence gathered services once again. Please join in making every effort to maintain Covid Safe practices for your own sake and also for the safety of others.



13 December 2020  
Third Sunday in Advent



An estimated 8 million people were facing starvation in Zimbabwe and 2 million had no access to clean drinking water. The health delivery system has almost collapsed, with many hospitals facing shortages of medical personnel, essential medicines and equipment.

The authorities continued to restrict the right to freedom of expression. In January, the government instructed Internet service providers to shut down the internet, ostensibly to curtail sharing of information and reporting during the public protests against fuel and food price increases.

Despite many promises, the authorities failed to license any community radio stations and the country still has had only one television station with a broadcasting license since its independence in 1980, resulting in lack of media plurality and diversity.

Human rights defenders, activists and civil society groups continued to hold the government to account through protests in the streets and via social media. Many people joined and participated in demonstrations to protest price increases of basic commodities such as fuel, and the erosion of incomes. The authorities continued to use overly broad laws to crack down on dissenting voices.

Civil society space continued to shrink as the authorities continued to suppress, persecute activists and curtail peaceful protests. State security agents continued to use excessive force in dispersing protests and assemblies. The authorities continued with forced evictions despite constitutional provisions prohibiting the practise. Amnesty International 2019



In the four Sundays of Advent we are exploring the meaning of Christmas in each of the four Gospels. In Matthew we discovered the keyword was *Immanuel*. Mark, who has no account of Jesus' birth, records Him saying Jesus came to be a *Servant*.

Today Luke sets the stage with "unexpected embryos and the unusual women who carry them; Jesus begins life as a human baby." Our key word is *Saviour*.

**1 Shepherds and Angels** Luke gives a background to Jesus' birth in the parallel pregnancies of Elizabeth and Mary. These throw into relief the doubt of the elderly priest, Zechariah, and the acceptance of the youthful Mary.

There is a lot of joyful singing. Expressed as the songs of Mary and Zechariah, followed by the anthem of the angels [and later, Simeon's song of adoration]. The anthem of the angels intimates the birth of Mary's child.

This announcement is a summons for shepherds outside Bethlehem, 'Royal David's city'. Remember how a shepherd boy was summoned from those fields? The demands of shepherds work made it virtually impossible for them to keep the hygiene laws, so religious participation was difficult, and it was common to suspect their honesty.

To them the message came, and they were expected to know the meanings of Master and Messiah and understand the work of a Saviour.

**2 Augustus: earthly saviour** Following the recent collapse of the Roman Republic the Roman Empire emerged.

Luke specifically mentions Augustus (2:1), who became, after the battle of Actium in 32 BC, the sole ruler of the Roman world. The Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus.

Augustus claimed to have brought justice and peace to the world, and as the adopted son of Julius Caesar he left numerous Latin inscriptions describing himself *divi filius* - son of god.

The Empire's spin doctors worked this overblown claim into songs and poems as history was written to explain how Rome's greatness had climaxed in Caesar Augustus. He was hailed as saviour and lord of the world. His massive empire was built on brutal military power and inhumane slavery.

**3 Jesus' saving work** The message of the herald angels to the shepherds could not communicate a greater contrast. Their Master and Messiah has come. 'You will find him in an animal feeding-trough'. He is their 'Saviour'. But what kind of rescue does Jesus bring? Throughout his Gospel Luke presents Jesus interacting to bring inclusion to the last, the lost and the least important people.

- A. the LAST: Samaritans were not held in high regard in Judah. Consider their place in Luke 9:51, 10:25 and 17:16.
- B. the LEAST: like shepherds, women were not highly regarded in the ancient world. In Luke they dominate the opening chapters and are inserted uniquely as supporters of the disciples in Luke 8:1-33. Jesus even noticed the widow's mite [21:1].
- C. the LOST: some of the best loved of Jesus' stories are unique to Luke and concern the lost; the coin, the sheep and the sons. [Luke 15]. At the close of Jesus' public ministry notice the story of Zacchaeus. Jesus says *the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost*. [19:10]

**4 An inclusive kingdom** There is a lot of talk of inclusion today. We are all inclined, when feeling on the outer, to create our own small group of "insiders". The terrible price we pay is a shrinking world. Religion too can reduce us to such pettiness, but with God there are no outsiders. God brings us into a larger world. Is it so in our churches?

Jesus brings forgiveness of sins to all who receive him. His great gift of acceptance and inclusion is for "all nations". [Luke 24:47]. Here is good news indeed, "your Saviour was born".