

# ORDER OF SERVICE

Sunday 10 October 2021

Chit Chat  
Welcome and Notices  
Christine Bradbeer

Prayer of Invocation

Young @ Heart  
Anne Sullivan, Helen Keller and  
Fact Checking  
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: Acts 17:16-34  
Amanda Fairs

Sermon  
Dion and Damaris:  
Daring to Think Differently

Meditation  
Jesus, Joy of Man's Desiring  
from Church Cantata 147 JS Bach  
Amanda Fairs (viola)

Prayer of Intercession  
and  
The Lord's Prayer

Benediction



## NOTICES

10 October 2021

[www.blackburnpc.org.au](http://www.blackburnpc.org.au)

Wednesday 13 October 1.30 pm Covenanted Prayer Time.

Sunday 17 October 11 am Divine Service. Online Only.  
Live stream on Facebook, later with  
closed caption option on YouTube.

### For Your Prayers



Congregational member: **Amanda FAIRS.**

and



**Laszlo & Eva MIHALYI** are from Donvale and  
located in Hungary where they minister with  
the Hungarian Reformed Presbyterian Church.

## GARDENIA ST

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

53 Gardenia Street,  
Blackburn 3130

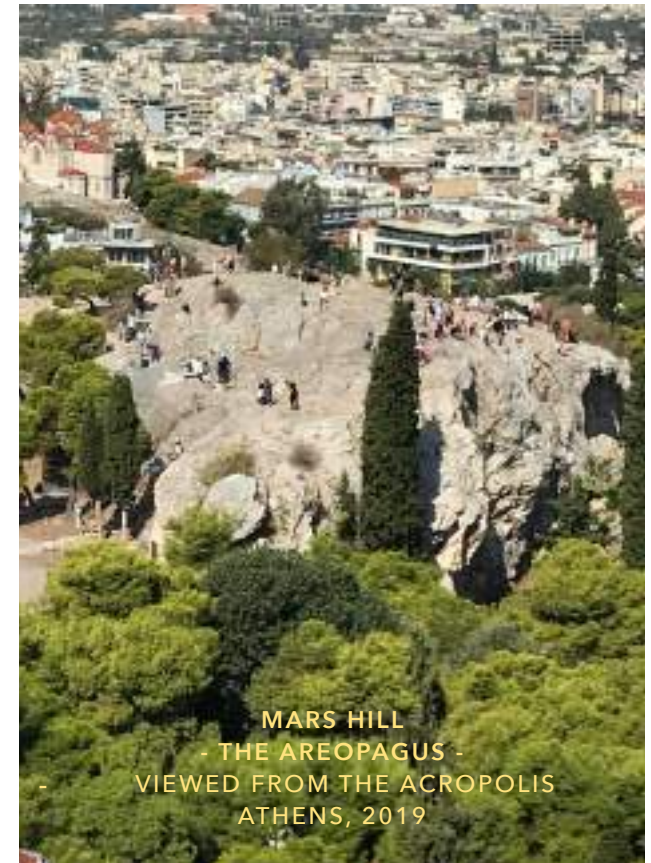


Minister: Rev Graham Bradbeer  
tel. 9041 7911 mobile. 0409 978 690  
Session Clerk: Mr Keith Ferres 98305466

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

# GARDENIA ST. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BLACKBURN

10 October 2021



MARS HILL  
- THE AREOPAGUS -  
VIEWED FROM THE ACROPOLIS  
ATHENS, 2019

# WELCOME



Turkmenistan remains an isolated and repressive country under the authoritarian rule of President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov and his associates. The country's economic crisis continued through 2019. The government abandoned subsidies on water, gas, and electricity. Emigration from the regions most affected by the crisis continued, but authorities attempt to bar people from traveling abroad to seek work.

The government brutally punishes all forms of religious and political expression. Access to information is tightly controlled by the state. No independent human rights monitoring groups are allowed. Dozens of forcibly disappeared are presumably held in Turkmen prisons.

Human Rights Watch 2020

Religious meetings in private homes are banned. There are just 20 registered churches – the only places where it is legal for Christians to meet. In 2016, all state-registered religious communities had to apply for re-registration. The previous requirement of five adult members was increased to 50. Churches find it almost impossible to get registration. Christians are not only isolated from believers outside this very closed country but also the various Christian groups inside Turkmenistan have little contact with each other.

The religious context is dominated by Islam and a pervasive presidential personality cult. Ethnic Turkmen, whose identity is bound up with Islam, account for around 80% of the population. There is a small, growing community of Muslim-background believers, who are normally rejected by their family and will often lose their job, be removed from any public office and come under intense pressure to return to Islam.

Yet they are full of joy and have a great thirst for the Word of God and the leaders long for training and equipping for ministry. Turkmenistan's Council for Religious Affairs is staffed entirely by Muslims and rarely grants permission for Bibles to be imported. Missionary activity is considered harmful to society. Christianity is associated with negative foreign influences.

Open Doors 2020

Sermon Outline

## Dion and Damaris: Daring to Think Differently

In Athens, Paul spoke at *Mars Hill*, a public site just below the Parthenon. Today at the site you will discover a brass plaque with the text of Paul's address embossed on it (in Greek). Luke gives us what is effectively a two minute summary of Paul's address.

### 1. Apostle in deep distress (17:16)

Arriving in Athens Paul went to the synagogue as usual. However, he was deeply troubled by the blatant idolatry of the city and spoke in the market square as well. His theme was unchanged - Jesus and the resurrection.

In the minds of the philosophers this morphed into 'foreign divinities'. Presumably they took *anastasis* (Greek for 'resurrection') as a female consort (*Anastasia*). Paul's *Mars Hill* address begins with what they did not know.

The words on the altar to 'an unknown god' reflect the conversations within Plato's 'Academy'. (Founded 390- 380 BC), and located about a mile away.

There scholars reasoned that such questions as *Do the gods really exist?* can only be answered agnostically. Paul generously assumes the altar inscription implied '*consistent agnosticism*' (NTW). And he offers a very Jewish response.

### 2. Epicurean and Stoic views (17:18)

The words *Epicurean* and *Stoic* did not carry the idea of *enjoying fine food* and *uncomplaining endurance* commonly attributed to them today. There are elements of Paul's address which speak to both:

- (a) the Epicurean idea that the gods were remote and uninterested, and
- (b) the Stoic belief that the gods are close (eg., reference to 'life and breath'), and we are in a sense 'all his children' (as the Athenian poet Aratus, had written, v.28) and the creator invites us to know him.

### 3. Of playwrights and poets (17:24, 28)

Paul's theme was unchanged, but his presentation is very different. Since they had no shared Scriptures, he began with their culture; altars and poets.

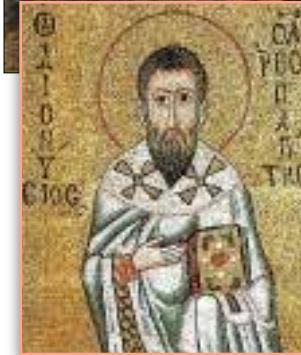
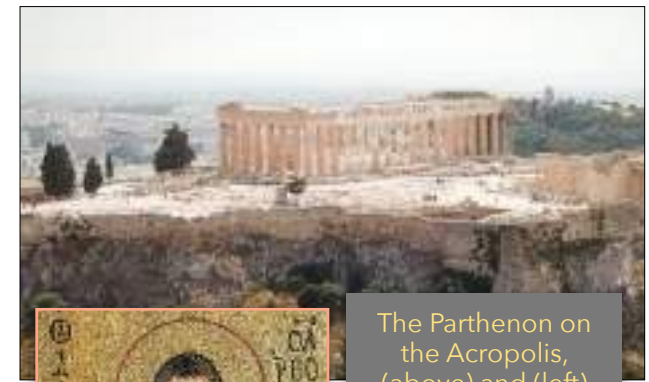
There is a lesson for us here. We need not always begin with the Bible. Sometimes we have no shared Bible. So we must exegete the culture - starting where we are - and working to the Biblical revelation. In our post-Christian culture there may be residual Bible knowledge, but also loss of that knowledge and its transformative global impact. See CS Lewis (column at right)

### 4. Our appointment with the Creator (17:24, 31)

The creator will judge the world. He will do so by a man whom he has appointed, by raising him from the dead! This is directly contrary to the script of Aeschylus, Athenian playwright, who scripted the god Apollon to say: 'when a man dies, and his blood is spilled on the ground, *there is no resurrection*'. So he ends with what they did not know! (v.30) That God had overlooked the time of ignorance, but now calls the world to account.

### 5. Dionysius and Damaris (17:34)

Three responses are recorded, ridicule, deferral and conviction. Of those who believed two are named. Their names are noted for posterity.



The Parthenon on the Acropolis, (above) and (left) Fresco of Dionysius the Areopagite, an Athenian judge at the Areopagus Court, in Hosios Loukas monastery.

Granted that Reason is prior to matter and that the light of the primal Reason illuminates finite minds, I can understand how men should come by observation and inference, to know a lot about the universe they live in. If, on the other hand, I swallow the scientific cosmology as a whole, then not only can I not fit in Christianity, but I cannot even fit in science.



If minds are wholly dependent on brains, and brains on bio-chemistry, and bio-chemistry (in the long run) on the meaningless flux of the atoms, I cannot understand how the thought of those minds should have any more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees. And this is to me the final test. This is how I distinguish dreaming and waking. When I am awake I can, in some degree, account for and study my dream... The waking world is judged more real because it can thus contain the dreaming world: the dreaming world is judged less real because it cannot contain the waking one.

For the same reason I am certain that in passing from the scientific point of view to the theological, I have passed from dream to waking. Christian theology can fit in science, art, morality, and the sub-Christian religions. The scientific point of view cannot fit in any of these things, not even science itself. I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen not only because I see it but because by it I see everything else.

CS Lewis  
*Is Theology Poetry?*  
1962