

ORDER OF SERVICE

Sunday 31 January 2021

Welcome & Notices
Session Clerk: Keith Ferres

Prayer of Invocation

Hymn 325 (R)
Jesus stand among us

Young at Heart
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: Romans 12:1-13
Tibor Kosa

Offering

Hymn 144 (R)
Jesus shall reign

Sermon
MEMBERS OF **One Another**
Romans 12:5

Prayers of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 386 (R)
Amazing Grace

Benediction
Threefold Amen

NOTICES

31 January 2021

Website: www.blackburnpc.org.au

Wednesday 3 February 1.30 pm Prayer Meeting.
Sunday 7 February 11 am Divine Worship. All Welcome,
Covid safe practices.

For your prayers this week:

Congregational member: Ms Helen Fernee (no image)

and



Ian and Dorcas Denness are now Australia based
and minister in the Glebe Market in NSW. They
also ask prayer for the Akko van workers in Karachi.



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GARDENIA ST.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BLACKBURN

31 January 2021

THE NUMBER 1 BESTSELLER
BILL BRYSON
THE
BODY

A
GUIDE
FOR
OCCUPANTS

'Classic, wry,
gleeful Bryson ...
an absolutely
fact-rammed book'
SUNDAY TIMES

we, though many, are one body in Christ,
and individually members one of
another.

Romans 12:5

WELCOME



Various armed groups committed serious human rights abuses including unlawful killings, sexual violence and illegal taxation. Armed groups continued to profit from the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Impunity persisted despite important efforts made at the national and international levels. Authorities infringed freedom of assembly..

Amnesty International

The Central African Republic has seen near-constant conflict and fighting since 2013. Much of the country is occupied by various armed militia groups, who are responsible for a range of human rights abuses. Many of these groups—whether Islamic extremist or otherwise—specifically target Christians, so life is constantly uncertain for believers in the areas under militia control.

Christian leaders who have publicly denounced the violence have been threatened; church buildings have been burned and ransacked. The conflict has resulted in the displacement of thousands of Christians who have lost their homes and livelihood, now forced to live in displacement camps.

In addition to the insecurity and violence that all Christians suffer from, converts to Christianity from Islam also face persecution from their immediate family members. The local community will often ostracise Christian converts and might also try to force them to renounce Christianity through violence.

Open Doors Australia

MEMBERS OF *One Another*

ἄλλήλων
(ah-LAY-loan)

Sermon
Notes

This is our second reflection on the phrase "one another" which is found in the New Testament 100 times in 94 New Testament verses. Last week we took as our focus John 13 and 14, with Jesus' command to his disciples to "love one another".

Today we turn to Romans 12, and especially verse 5: *we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another*. Let's consider this statement in the light of the whole letter.

1. One body in Christ (The centrality of Christ)

The apostle is talking about people who have become followers of Jesus the Saviour. He has detailed his case to the believers in Rome (whom he has not yet met). In his letter (Romans 1-11) he tells the story of the hopeless human situation.

Everything we do is marred with our own corruptibility. The best we can offer God is so flawed that it needs redemption. Humanity is a dead loss. (Roman 3). But God has always come graciously to men and women.

Though sinful Abraham found peace with God through faith (Chapter 4). God has no favourites, it is the same for both Jews and Gentiles. Trusting the promise of God Abraham looked forward, today we look back and see how the Messiah (Christ) brought mercy and justice together in his death. "The Messiah died for us while we were still sinners" (Romans 5:1, 8). Our 'peace with God' is on the same faith basis as Abraham.

Our baptism represents our union with Christ in his death and resurrection. Believers are "in Christ" as St Paul never tires of pointing out. When God looks on them he sees them in "the beloved". This is a place of unimaginable richness. Everyone incorporated into Christ is precious for His sake.

Christ must be central in the church.

2. We, though many... (The church as a divine reality)

What was that!? How *many* are we? When Paul says *many* he knows of the rapidly growing numbers of Christian disciples in Rome. Through the message God is gathering people for himself.

The church is the *ekklesia*, those gathered by God's call. In the New Testament this is always people. Sometimes people gathered locally, sometimes thought of as spread throughout the world, but always people, and people "in Christ".

Today we think of churches as buildings and organisations, but this is not what the Bible means by 'the church'. These ideas came later, but they are not primary. The primary understanding of church is *organic*, and the metaphor of "the body" is used to help us understand it (Romans 12:4,5).

We need to see the organic reality beyond organisational structures and denominational peccadilloes. We need to ask if the DNA of Jesus is present. Does any professed Christian community reveal the mind of Christ (Romans 12:1,2; Philippians 2:6ff).

In history there have been times of great oppression when professed Christian communities have fallen short. Consider the German Confessing Church in the Nazi era. Eg., Deitrich Bonhoeffer' book *Life Together* and his underground seminary.

Also the confession of Martin Niemoller: "they came for the socialists, and I didn't speak up... they came for the unionists... they came for the Jews... and then they came for me..."

However, affluence can also induce lethargy and indolence. How do we test for the DNA of Jesus?

3. Individually we belong to one another (A community of love)

The fundamental confession of all Christians is that *Jesus Christ is Lord*.

It is clear to us all that words are cheap. Jesus makes clear in His Sermon on the Mount that His disciples will be blessed, not in the recitation of key phrases, or in knowing his will, but in doing it! (Matthew 7:24,26)

So, in Romans 12, Paul presents us with the body, in all its diversity. We noticed that all Christians are *in Christ*. He is also called "the Head of the body" (Colossians 1:18 compare Romans 12:5)

However, we are not identical clones! Far from it. This very passage mentions that we are individuals, each graciously endowed by our Creator with gifts and abilities. It is as individuals *we belong* in the body.

Our purpose as Christians is to contribute to the health of the body which exists, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the world.

It is precisely our differences that enable us to contribute to and support one another in this enterprise. In Romans 12 the apostle goes on to mention a range of things that he has in mind by which the church can pursue its spiritual health.

If we look for our *Church Health Report* we have to make a personal assessment of the following criteria:

1. A personal connection to Christ? Is it the organisation and the ritual that matter to me, or is my hope in Jesus Christ?
2. An opportunity to contribute. What can I share, what can I offer?
3. Connectedness to one another. Do the other worshippers matter to me? Is there antipathy or warmth in my relationships?

Please feel free to discuss these points with one another, and with the elders! As we do so I am confident that our Health Report will be encouraging.

Amen.