

ORDER OF SERVICE

Sunday 12 December 2021

Welcome and Notices
Mr Keith Ferres, Session Clerk

Hymn 388
Jesus shall reign.

Prayer of Invocation

Young at Heart
Christine Bradbeer

First Reading, Isaiah 7:1-9
Tibor Kosa

Offering

Hymn 53
Child in the manger

Second Reading, Luke 1:26-38
Alistair Ross

Sermon
The Kingdom

Prayer of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 63
As with gladness

Benediction



NOTICES

12 December 2021

www.blackburnpc.org.au

- Wednesday 15 December 1.30 pm Prayer Meeting.
Sunday 19 December 11 am Advent Service. [Gathered](#)
Also streamed on Facebook Live.
Saturday 25 December 9.30 am Christmas Day Service
There will be a retiring offering for Whitehorse Churches Care

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Congregational members:

Geza and Sidonia KOSA



and

Motor and Julia Yat serve with
Australian Presbyterian World Mission
travelling within Kenya and Ethiopia
ministerial to Sudanese refugees.



GARDENIA ST

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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For your Prayers



The human rights situation continued to be marked by a systematic crackdown on dissent. The justice system remained plagued by unfair trials and torture and other ill-treatment in detention. China still classified information on its extensive use of the death penalty as a state secret.

Amnesty International

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is increasingly clamping down on Christians. New regulations in February 2020 gave it control over almost every aspect of religious life. The measures state that religious organisations must submit to the leadership of the CCP and spread its "socialist policies". Sophisticated electronic surveillance and the removal of social welfare benefits from vulnerable Christians who refuse to renounce their faith are amongst its latest tools for persecuting believers.

Since 2018, there has been an intensification of government action against unofficial congregations, known as "house churches", and official state-registered churches, called three-self churches. Christians in China are thought to number at least 150 million and increasing fast.

The intensity of the persecution varies across the vast country, but many house churches have been forcibly closed, some even demolished, and leaders and members arrested and imprisoned. Authorities have removed crosses from churches, and ordered that portraits of, or quotes by, President Xi Jinping replace Biblical paintings and verses. In some provinces children are barred from attending church.

During Covid-19 lockdown, Christians were prevented from accessing livestreamed church services; certain churches were banned from using WeChat, the main Chinese messaging app, to communicate together. After lockdown some churches were only allowed to re-open if the pastor preached sermons extolling President Xi for leading people "in defeating the epidemic". Cash rewards are given to individuals who inform on house church activities, with the highest sums given for informing on foreign pastors. In 2018, the government announced a plan to "sinicise" (make Chinese) Christianity and interpret Scriptures according to secular socialist views.

Barnabas Fund 2021

Sermon Outline

Concerning this salvation: The Kingdom

As we think this Advent, at the suggestion of St Peter, (1 Peter 11:12) of things about salvation into which angels longed to look, we discover a kingdom!

1. The needed king (Isaiah 7:10-17,)

Judah was on the cusp of war. Faced with the threatening forces of a Syria/Israel coalition, King Ahaz was frightened and confused. To whom should he turn? Isaiah speaks into this situation. (Isaiah 7:4ff)

Kings were meant to guide in righteousness and provide justice. Ahaz failed both personally and professionally. He spurned the prophet's Immanuel sign, and turned to Assyria. Israel was annihilated in 722 BC and Judah became a vassal state.

Is the threat of war real today? What world leaders pursue justice?

2. the promised reign (Isaiah 9:6,7, Luke 1:32,33)

From the chaos of the past the promise of Immanuel remained. Isaiah enlarges on it in 'the Immanuel book' (Isaiah 6-12). The faithful looked for God to return and reign.

Matthew says Jesus is Immanuel (Matthew 1:22,23). Mary is told that her child will be king and his kingdom will never end.

3. Jesus' favourite theme (Matthew 6:10)

As an adult Jesus taught his disciples to pray for the coming of the kingdom. It is about God's will being done on earth. Nothing less than a transformed humanity is in view. Jesus taught in parables. The kingdom of God is like... seed which a man sowed, like yeast, a drag net, etc. The kingdom of God was Jesus' favourite theme. Matthew, writing for Jews, uses 'kingdom of heaven'. This is a way of not using the word G-d). It has nothing to do with "going to heaven", the reign of God is for this world and the earth longs for it! (see Romans 8:19)

Our king wears a crown...but of thorns. What does this mean for us?

4. the king's people (1 Peter 2:9)

All who are subject to King Jesus, our Immanuel, have a divine calling on their lives. It is there in the prayer he taught us. It is also there in the letter we looked into last week. The King's people are 'a royal priesthood'. As the King's priests we have the vocation of making Him known to others, and bringing others into the care of the king.

This calls for wise and consistent living and listening and speaking. Exactly where Ahaz and so many of Israel's kings failed. Where David struggled but sought forgiveness and renewal. Have you ever thought of yourself as a 'royal priest'? How does it make you feel? Who are the people God has given you to serve? How is it going?



THE AUSSIE FOREST MAKER HELPING TO HEAL THE PLANET

The current issue of *Eternity* features Tony Rinaudo 'the forest maker'. Tony's autobiography was crowdfunded by Christians in Science and Technology (ISCAST) and is due to be published early 2022.

His pioneering method, Farmer Managed Natural Resources (FMNR), is simple, sustainable, and cheap. This is great news, as the benefits include:

- It protects families from famine, starvation, disease, and death.
- It enhances essential biodiversity, holding moisture in the soil and reducing land and air temperatures.
- It has the potential to draw down millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide from the air, providing a nature-based solution to climate change.
- And it feeds people! In Niger alone, local farmers have rehabilitated more than five million hectares (that's over 200 million trees!) while doubling their crop yields and income.

Tony says, "In Niger, our calculations show the crop yields feed an extra 2.5 million people every year."

It's almost too good to be true. The news is out: according to Chris Reij at the World Resources Institute, "FMNR is probably the largest positive environmental transformation in the Sahel and, perhaps, in all of Africa."

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