

ORDER OF SERVICE

6 February 2022

Doxology 708
Now to Him who loved us

Prayer of Invocation

Hymn 7
Glory be to God the Father

Young at Heart
Christine Bradbeer

Welcome and Notices
Mr Keith Ferres, Session Clerk

Offering and Dedication

Hymn 31
God moves in a mysterious way

Reading: John 1:1-18
Suzanne Hart

First, that personal Word
John 1:1-5

Prayer of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 29
Now thank we all our God

Benediction



NOTICES

6 February 2022

www.blackburnpc.org.au

Wednesday 9 February 1.30 pm Prayer Meeting
Sunday 13 February 11 am Divine Worship. **Blueprint #2**
The Care Takers: Genesis 1:27
MEETING IN PERSON **AND** streamed on Facebook.

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Congregational members:
Nola and Manfred RICHTER

and



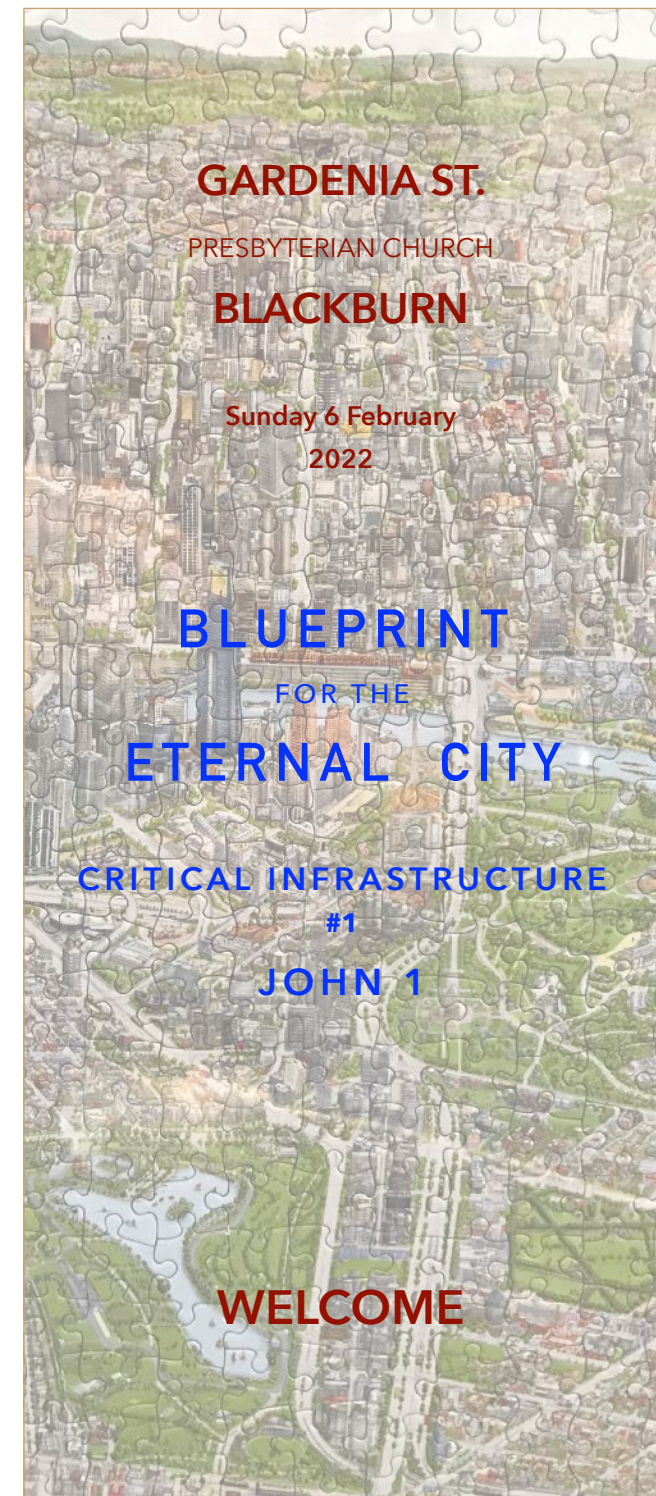
S and D from the Frankston Church who are serving with IRFA in South Asia. For guidance and wisdom in church planting. No image by request.

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The death in custody of the wrongfully imprisoned human rights defender Azimjan Askarov in July was one of the low points of Kyrgyzstan's rights record during the year. Kyrgyzstan held parliamentary elections in October, which international observers found to be competitive but tainted by claims of vote buying. Protests and political turmoil followed the announcement of the results, leading to President Sooronbai Jeenbekov stepping down.

Authorities misused lockdown measures imposed in response to Covid-19 to obstruct the work of journalists and lawyers. Measures put in place to protect women and girls have yet to end impunity for domestic violence, which is still the norm. Parliament advanced several problematic draft laws including an overly broad law penalising manipulation of information. Thousands of children with disabilities live in institutions and have limited access to inclusive education.

Human Rights Watch 2021

Often small churches are unregistered and therefore operating illegally. Also, Christians can be punished for sharing their beliefs in public places and religious literature requires state censorship before it is imported or given away. However, most persecution comes not from the authorities but from Muslim clerics, relatives, employers and the community, especially in rural areas.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Christians were very active in helping the needy. When the authorities saw one congregation's zeal in feeding those quarantined in their church building (including the homeless), they gave them a list of isolated elderly people to feed as well.

Emigration is affecting the economy and also the Church, as church leaders leave the country in search of work.

Barnabas Fund 2022

Sermon
Notes

First, that personal Word

The opening line of John's Gospel is unforgettable. It is also deeply confronting, suggesting a re-writing of the creation story, of new life for an old world. It is in fact a new creation story.

1. Old Creation in Decay (Genesis 1)

John intentionally draws our minds to the opening of the Bible. God has created a good world, a *very* good world (Genesis 1:12,31). It is awesome to contemplate and magnificently provides for human needs. (Eg., Job 38, Psalm 104). In this setting humans have a unique role and purpose (which we will consider next week).

Like the Bible, we can imagine a better world (Romans 8:20-22). A world without earthquakes and tsunamis, war, famine, pain and disease. For such reasons some people deny or abandon any hope in God. Some are so stridently opposed to God that they embrace meaninglessness, believing that everything came from nothing.

In the face of atheist protestations John affirms that world did not create itself.

2. New Creation is Brilliant (John 1)

He begins with a word. The word is *logos* - meaning 'word'. This can also mean 'reason'. Both ideas create further powerful links to Genesis. The Word *was* (uncreated), and *with* God (fellowship) and *was God* (equally God).

The new creation he wants us to see is totally dazzling. It is full of life, light, love and glory. All unimaginably wonderful.

These become his themes, but they are not arid abstract philosophical notions. They are earthed in the experiences of many people. The first person he mentions another man called John. Others follow shortly. Each of them encountered a person called Jesus.

3. The Word was The One (v.2, 6)

John says Jesus *is* the Word who '*became a human being ... and he lived among us*' (v.14). The vocabulary he uses is laden with meaning.

At the climax of his message John records the story of Thomas who wouldn't believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. He needed proof. Then Jesus appeared to him and he confessed 'My Lord and my God'.

It is this conviction, shared by John, that made him write the Gospel. He wants to share their message of life, light, love and glory; their message of new Creation through personal encounter with the Word of God. the one and only: Jesus.



Dear Friends

As a young man Leonard Cohen wrote a song called 'Last Year's Man'. It's a song about Jesus. One verse says: 'the corners of the blueprint are ruined since they rolled/far past the stems of thumbtacks that still throw shadows on the wood'.

There is no doubt that the Bible's message can seem opaque, and is an enigma and puzzle to many people. But was the blueprint ruined?

I have picked up Cohen's term 'blueprint' for a series of reflections designed to explore the overall message of the Bible. We will discover it is indeed a blueprint revealing God's purpose for humanity. In the fourth century Saint Augustine wrote about it in his great work: 'The City of God'.

The Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament) is written as a unified but unfinished story. The gospels of Matthew Mark, Luke and John, plus the apostle Paul (in his letter to the Romans) present the climax of that same story. They write for different readers, but each is clearly focussed on Jesus.

This series will help us understand the unity the Bible. As the blueprint unfolds, our selection of key texts (bound to exclude some favourites), will guide us through major infrastructure developments. The scope of the blueprint is glorious; it opens up to us the most liveable of cities!

GB.