



Bathurst Uniting Church

Sharing God's love by connecting people to God;
people to people; and people to community.

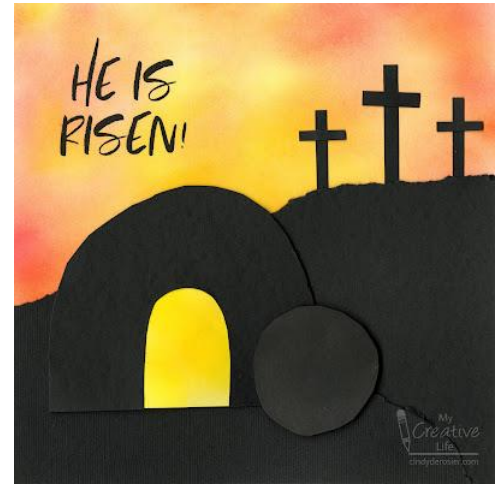
Newsletter

April 2024

Reflection

Mark 16:1-8

1 When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early in the morning on the first day of the week they came upon the tomb as the sun rose. 3 And they said to themselves, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?" 4 And looking up, they discovered that the stone had been rolled away, and it was exceedingly big. 5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right clothed in a white robe, and they were utterly amazed. 6 But he said to them, "Do not be utterly amazed. You seek Jesus, the Nazarene, the one who has been crucified. He was raised, he is not here; see the place where they put him. 7 But go tell his disciples and Peter, "He is going before you to Galilee; you will see him there just as he told you". 8 And going out they fled from the tomb, for trembling and terror had them; and they told no one nothing for they were afraid. (Translation by Keith Hamilton)



Worship Services

9.30am in the church.

You can join worship on Zoom by going to

<http://www.bathurstunitingchurch.com.au/> and pressing the purple button.

7 April Rev Keith Hamilton Holy Communion

14 April Anthony

21 April Rev Keith Hamilton

28 April Rev Keith Hamilton

5 May Rev Keith Hamilton Holy Communion

'Sunday @ 5'

At 5pm – contemporary, informal, all ages worship in the Activities Hall.

On the first Sunday of each month there will be Holy Communion and a shared meal.

Paul Tillich, (Paul Tillich "Born in the Grave," *The Shaking the Foundation's*, New York, Charles Scribner's sons, 1976, 165) tells this story.

In the Nuremburg war-crime trials a witness appeared who had lived for a time in a grave in a Jewish graveyard, in Wilna, Poland. It was the only place he – and many others – could live, when in hiding after they escaped the gas chamber. During this time, he wrote poetry, and one of his poems was a description of a birth. In a grave nearby a young woman gave birth to a boy. The eighty-year-old grave digger, wrapped in a linen shroud, assisted. When the newborn child uttered his first cry, the old man prayed: "Great God, hast Thou finally sent the Messiah to us? For who else than the Messiah himself can be born in a grave?" But after three days the poet saw the child sucking his mothers' tears because she had no milk for him.

That story led Paul Tillich to ponder:

This story, which surpasses anything the human imagination could have invented, has not only

incomparable emotional value, but also tremendous symbolic power. When I first read it, it occurred to me more forcefully than ever before that our Christian symbols taken from gospel stories, have lost a great deal of their power. We have forgotten that the manger of Christmas was the expression of utter poverty and distress before it became the place where angels appeared and to which the star pointed. And it has been forgotten that the tomb of Jesus was the end of his life and of his work before it became the place of his final triumph. We have become insensitive to the infinite tension which is implied in the words of the Apostle's Creed: "Suffered . . . and was crucified, dead and buried . . . rose again from the dead." We already know when we hear those words what the ending will be: "rose again;" and for many people it is no more than the inevitable "happy ending". The old Jewish gravedigger knew better. For him, the immeasurable tension implicit in the expectation of the Messiah was a reality, appearing in the infinite contrast between the things he saw and the hope he maintained. The depth of this tension is emphasised by the last part of the story. After three days the child was not elevated to glory; he drank his mother's tears, having nothing else to drink.

Tillich suggested that the child born in a grave probably died and the hope of the old Jew was frustrated once more, as it has been frustrated innumerable times before.

Who else than the Messiah can be born in a grave?

Paraphrasing Hans Urs Von Balthasar, (*You Crown the Year*, 87) what happened on Easter Day could be translated in this way: imagine a friend or relative of yours is dying. We visit them; we watch them becoming weaker and weaker; we hear their final words and exhortations, their last will and testimony; we see the no longer intelligible movements of the lips; we are privileged to be present, embarrassed and weary, at what some might describe as a sacrament in which another person is stripped to ultimate nakedness of soul and body; perhaps wearing no more than a hospital gown; we hear the drawn-out rattle that finally subsides in a terrible gasp. The end. We deal with the cold corpse, perhaps privileged to wash and anoint, wrap it in cloths and bandages according to an ancient custom, lower the coffin into the ground, throw earth on top, fill the grave, slide the gravestone into place, seal the grave and set a guard. We go home in the disorientation of beings 'whose present is submerged in the past and to whom the future blows as down a drafty pipe.' The next day the person we buried stands before us and greets us as if they have just come back from a journey. Do we gasp, laugh or cry? Shock might be a reasonable response. It is beyond our human capacity to comprehend the boundaries of pain and joy.

The answer of Easter does not logically follow the question of Good Friday. It does not logically follow that because Jesus was dead and buried, that he would rise from the dead. Jesus was dead and buried. Thereafter he was raised from the dead. It does not happen every day, but it happens on the day of the Messiah. It is a novel event. Eternal life, resurrection life is a discontinuity with the past. The new life of Christ would not be new life if it did not come from a complete end to the old life. The Christ must be buried to be the "Christ", namely, he who has conquered death. If it is new life that has come from a grave, it could be nothing else than the Christ, the Messiah who has appeared?

Back to Mark. The women fled from the tomb. Shock and horror had hold of them. It is important that in hearing Mark's gospel, we stay with Mark. Don't import ideas from other gospels. Obviously, the women did tell someone something, or else we would not know. On the way to Galilee their fear was changed. In that moment at the empty tomb the enormity of what has happened and who is Jesus is pressed in upon them. The cross and the empty tomb change everything. Without the cross and empty tomb Jesus is a prophet, a teacher, a healer and an inspiring person. But the cross and empty tomb points to something else. When we say Jesus Christ, we are not using a first name and a surname. We are declaring that Jesus of Nazareth, is the Christ of God who overcame death. This Jesus is indeed the Christ.

The women of Mark have both fear of what has and is happening and of being in a sacred place, on holy ground, and they have awe of God who has come in Jesus.

Mark speaks to our fears. It is a gospel written in a time of fear. Many were fearful. Mark reminds the people that Jesus is the Christ. Mark reminds the people that the question who is Jesus Christ? is the key question for everyone, and the answer is framed by the cross, tomb and empty tomb. Mark says, there is only one to fear, and that is the living God. Others might hurt, even kill the flesh, but God raises the dead. God is the God of the living and the dead.

Inside our tombs we see only fear. To take up this new life in Christ, our old life must end. We must leave our tombs of death. But how can we leave if all we can see are the inside walls of the tomb? We must turn around - the meaning of repentance. Better put, we must be turned around. Our lives must be reorientated. Our lives are turned towards God's future that beckons us. A reorientation of the self from fear and despair to faith and courageous hope. It is both an act of the will and a calling out to God to turn us around. It is like the person who cried out to Jesus in Mark 9:24: "I believe, help me in my unbelief." And then with the new faith, new hope, even if it is only a little, take the first step out of the tomb into God's life-giving future.

We can be fearful even while going to church, locked into the tomb of death. In such a situation the first response to any new proposal is rejection, "no." When our fear has been transformed into faith then when we are called, challenged, invited or prodded to step out into the unknown, to the new, we can. We can step into the unknown because we know that the God of the unknown, who has come in Jesus, who has experienced crucifixion and the empty tomb, is there, and will change what fear we have into faith and courageous hope to embrace God's future.

The young man clothed in white tells the women to go to Galilee. If we want to find Jesus we will have to follow him, through all the stuff of life.

Blessings

Keith Hamilton

Good Friday_9.30am worship In the Church and on Zoom

After the Service at 11.15am Hot Cross Buns

Please bring hot cross buns to share

Holy Saturday

Working bee & morning tea: 9.30-11 am

Bring your cleaning cloths etc, dust down the pews upstairs and downstairs, polish the tableware, put up Easter day banners, flowers, etc, share morning tea

Easter Day - 9.30am - worship In the Church and on Zoom

Celebration of the resurrection of Jesus.

Congregational reaffirmation of baptism & Holy Communion

Please note there will be no 5pm Service on Easter Day

BUSS UPDATE

The BUSS programs are continuing to run very well. The café is very busy on Saturdays and Sundays with the number of meals being used increasing. A big thank you to those who make the meals and if you would like to help in this way Lynne Collett would love to hear from you.

Last Sunday was the Café's Easter barbecue which had over 60 people enjoying a wonderful time under the tree at the back of our building. They were entertained by Music BUSS who were protected by the new gazebo that was purchased with a generous donation from Moodie's Pharmacy.



Mowing Roster

6 April Brian
20 April Ian and Allan
4 May Aisea

Staying Connected

For pastoral support, please contact your Pastoral Partner, or one of the Elders, or email BUConnect@gmail.com and we'll put you in touch with someone.

You can also contact our minister, Rev Keith Hamilton on 0417 487 446 or email keith.hamilton.bathurstuc@gmail.com

PLEASE NOTE

The newsletter email address is bathurstucanews@gmail.com. Please send items by 9pm on the last Wednesday of the month

Please send news or information for the website to allanwray@hotmail.com



UCAN Climate Conference: Faith in a Better Future

We are excited to announce our second Uniting Climate conference to be held on Saturday May 11. The **“Faith in a better future: Organising for climate action”** conference is aimed at our Uniting Climate Action Network and everyone in our Uniting Church community, who wants a **safer climate future**.

At the conference we’ll hear **engaging speakers and inspiring stories**. We’ll consider how climate change is impacting all of us and especially the already vulnerable. Most importantly, we’ll consider the solutions, and the actions we can take as individuals or together to **make those solutions a reality**.

You can be part of the conference community **face to face, or online**. If you're interested in helping shape what it looks like **get in touch!** There will more information on the program in coming weeks, but **you can register early [here](#)**.

WHEN: Saturday 11 May

WHERE: Online and In person (Centre For Ministry - The Uniting Church in Australia 16 Masons Dr, North Parramatta NSW)

RSVP Page: <https://events.humanitix.com/ucan-conference>