

**This worship service incorporates a celebration and release of the Reverend Rosalie Rayment-Hewitt from her ministerial role in the life of the Shepparton Uniting and Shepparton Rural congregations 30<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Introductory music -

Call to Worship: Let us worship God. - Loni

We wait in faith with your people here and scattered. We long for your peace and forgiveness now and always. Embrace us with your love, heal us with your Word, inspire us by your Spirit to seek your presence in this hour of worship, to the glory of your name.  
**Amen**

Welcome/Greeting and acknowledgement of traditional custodians of land

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also, with you.**

We pay our respect to the traditional custodians of this land where we live, work and worship. To the elders and members of the Yorta Yorta nation past, present and emerging.

Hymn/Song: 93 (TiS) 'Praise the Lord, you heaven adore him'.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession – Rev Joan Fisher

Declaration of Forgiveness – Rev Joan Fisher

Doxology: 771 (TiS) 'Now to him who loved us, gave us every pledge that love could give'.

SERVICE OF THE WORD

Gospel: Mathew 16: 21-28 (Lorraine Threlfall)

Hymn/Song: 473 (TiS) 'Community of Christ'.

Preaching of the Word – Rev Loni Vaitohi

Isn't it only last week that we heard that great confession by Peter "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God?" (v. 16) And Jesus responded, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, (Petros – rock) and on this rock I will, build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth will be loosed in heaven?" (v. 16 – 19)

One week and a few verses later in Mathew's gospel, Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." (v. 23b)

You might feel a little sympathetic toward Peter, after all, when he gets it right – it is not him but the Father who revealed it to him. When he gets it wrong, he is told to stand behind, the place where Satan should always be.

I would like to suggest that because of Peter's revealed confession "you are the Messiah the Son of the living God", and his failure "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you", Jesus saw the opportunity to teach his followers about the church that he is going to build upon the 'rock'.

That church will always live in the tension between confessing her faith and confessing her failure. That church will exist between the joy of baptising new members and grieving the loss of loved ones. That church will carry out her mission in the tension of seeing and setting her mind on divine things and on human things.

And the good news, as Jesus puts it, if you want to be a disciple of that church, if you want to be a follower of that church – "let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

I said that it is good news because Jesus is giving us a clue as to the character of that church. That church is a self-denying, cross-bearing and following community.

It is not easy to deny oneself in a culture that says you must fight for your right. A culture where might is right and power can be bought. It is not easy to deny oneself if you believe you are better than others, and that you are entitled to certain privileges because you have earned it or because of your status.

It's not easy because it's a bit like the athlete who came second in a race. In his interview after the race he said, "I can't handle being second". Or the person who says, "I'm very proud to be humble."

And if you think self-denial is tough, cross-bearing is equally tough. This cross-bearing is not about searching for a cross to bear. It is a humble letting go of self for the neighbour that the whole of the law may be fulfilled. It is about letting go of what we cannot have in order to receive what we cannot lose. It is about letting go of one's life in order to gain it.

Jesus is not saying to his followers to take up the cross he is going to bear nor should we carry a cross that someone else has forced upon us. He is saying to us, find a way that will enable us to let go of the things that separates from God, from one another and from our deepest selves.

As Peter learned, it is about releasing the desire to dictate the actions of others in ways we are not meant to do and letting go of our attachment to outcomes that lie beyond our control. As the poet Marge Piercy puts it “To have without holding.”

Then we follow. We follow the One who promise to be with us to the end of the ages. We are called to follow God in the midst of being human, into the depths of our own humanity to know God’s desire for our lives. There we may find that all the tensions of life find an intersection, a crossing, that cross that Christ invites us to take up where human and divine meet.

And it is all possible if our focus is on divine things and not on human things. It is when love is given that we discover the value of it. It is when we fulfill the needs of others that our deepest need is met. It is the essence of life and the key to the kingdom.

That is, I believe is the ministry we are called to. It is the church’s ministry. It is Christ mission of self-denial, cross-bearing and following!

It is the ministry that you called Rev. Rosalie Rayment-Hewitt to lead, to teach and to practice in your congregations. It is the same ministry that she will continue in her new placement.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Prayers of the People – Kim Reid

The Lord’s Prayer:

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

Hymn/Song: 687 (TiS) ‘God gives us a future’.

A SERVICE TO MARK THE CONCLUSION OF REV. ROSALIE RAYMENT-HEWITT’S PLACEMENT

Letting go of the Pastoral Relationship

Presbytery Representative – Joan McRae

Since the Church lives by the power of the Word, it is assured that God has never failed to provide a witness to that Word.

On the 13th of February 2008, the Presbytery of North East Victoria inducted Rev. Rosalie Rayment-Hewitt as a minister of the Word among you.

We witnessed your promises to take part in the public worship of God, to contribute to the work of God, and to make a Christian witness in the community by word and action.

The Presbytery believes that God has called her to minister in another place. It has confirmed her call to Bairnsdale Congregation.

The time has come to mark the end of her particular responsibilities in these congregations, and to send her with God's blessing to her new ministry.

Rev. Rosalie

Brothers and sisters in Christ, you called me to minister with you, and charged me to preach the Word, preside at the sacraments and to oversee the pastoral life of the congregations. Now, I must lay down the tasks you have committed to me.

I therefore hand this pastoral list to you with the names of the people for whom I have cared and ask you to continue to care for these people, and to share in ministry with the Revd. Loni Vaitohi.

*(The secretary of the Church Council receives the list)* - Lorraine Threlfall

Presbytery Representative:

And now, on behalf of the Presbytery of North East Victoria, we thank you for your ministry of God's grace in these congregations. We release you from this ministry and commend you to the pastoral care of the Presbytery of Gippsland.

As you take up a new placement at Bairnsdale we will pray for God's blessing on your continuing ministry.

Be strong and of good courage, do not be afraid:  
for it is the Lord who goes with you.

Your God will not fail you or forsake you. *Deut. 31: 6*

Presentation from representatives of the congregations:

Anni Russell

Ray Luscombe

Response:

Revd. Rosalie Rayment-Hewitt

FINAL PRAYER – Presbytery representative:

Let us pray.

O God, be with those who leave and with those who stay; and grant that all of us, by drawing nearer to you, may always be close to each other in the communion of saints; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord.

**Amen.**

Hymn/Song: 569 (TiS) 'Guide me, O thou great Redeemer'.

Grace: Loni

666 (TiS) 'We are marching'.