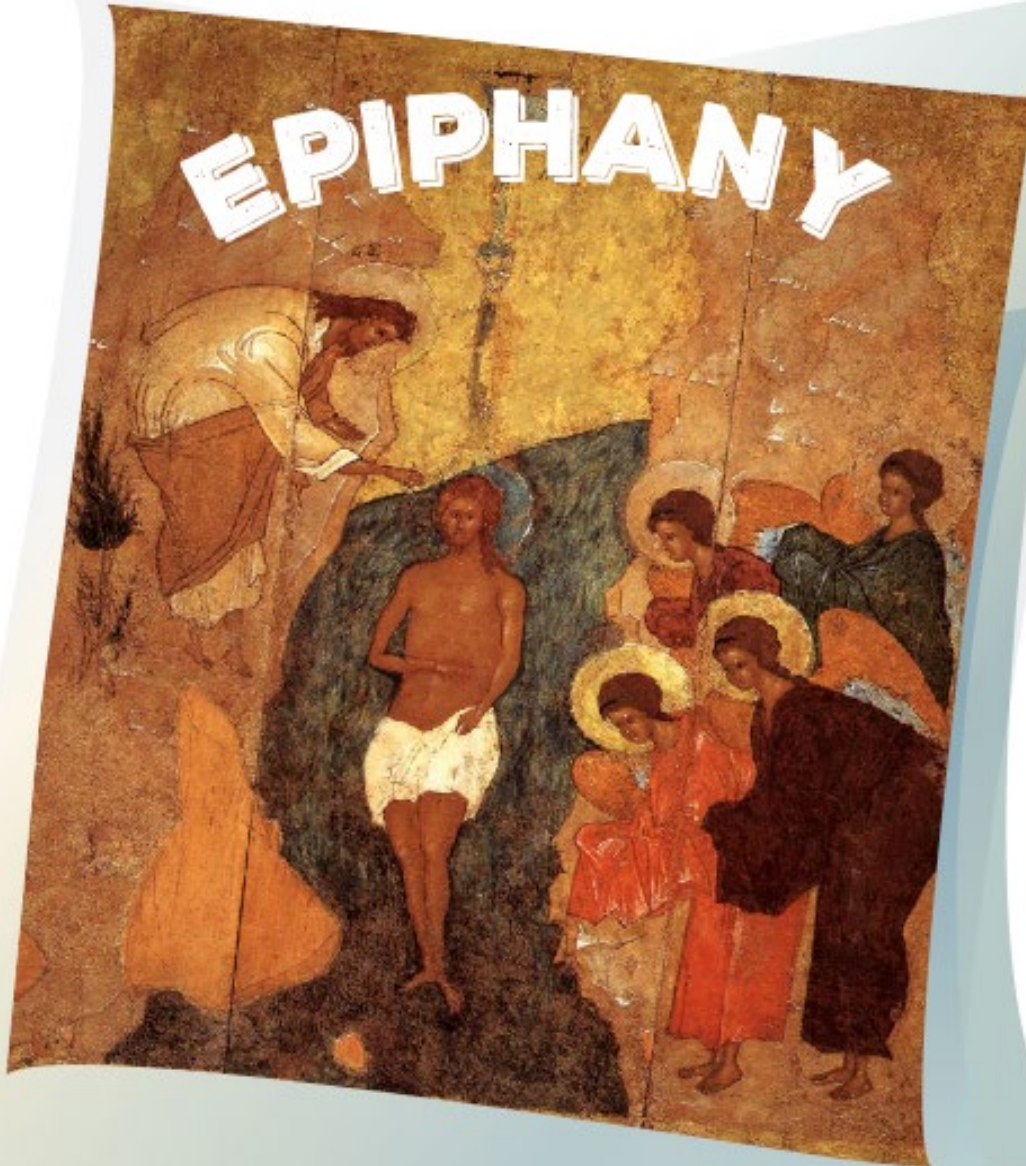




Leigh Memorial
Uniting Church



The Baptism of Jesus

January 9, 2022

<https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/5199089657>

Meeting ID: 519 908 9657

Dial by your location 02 8015 6011 Australia

WELCOME

A warm welcome as we gather together and enter the season of Epiphany.

LIGHTING OF THE EPIPHANY CANDLE

As we light this candle, let us pause and become enlightened and empowered in this period of Epiphany:

The message of Epiphany
is that you are God's beloved child
and that God is moving in and through your life
to bless the world.

... the season of Epiphany is no "ordinary time,"
but the time of surprising inspiration
and lively revelation and the reminder
that the ordinary is extraordinary
for those persons who pause
and awaken to God's presence in their world.

The candle is lit

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

As we pause to acknowledge the Burramattagal people of the Darug Nation of the Parramatta City Region as the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to their ancient culture, their elders past and present and their emerging leaders. We acknowledge the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now reside within this area. We honour them for their custodianship of the land, on which we gather today.

GATHERING

Come as you are,
cloaked in hobbled humanity
with all its deep feelings and thoughts,
variously formed
by family and society, failure and success,

attached to the selective picture shaping you.

Come...listen... receive a new name in your baptism;
come as those held,

safe from the waters of drowning

protected from the fires of the burning;

held as no other could hold you.

Come, precious in God's sight,

loved of God,

people called to the wonder of life in Christ.

Come and give thanks to our Creator, our Redeemer,
and the healing and comforting Spirit of God.

A PRAYER TO REMEMBER OUR NEW NAMES

O God, you name us in our baptism,
covering us with love as your children.

But sometimes we forget our new names,
seeing ourselves as ordinary, as unwanted,
sinking in the sands of our own shame,
or drowning in our own despair when life is hard.

Lay your hands on our heads

and call our new names in love again, O God.

Sometimes, loving God,
we look around us as though
we are not your newly named people,
as though others are those named and called
while we stay comfortably distant from the challenges,
waiting for leaders to arise or some messiah to come.

Lay your hands on our heads

and call our names in love again, O God.

It is hard, dear God,
to hold onto the promise of our baptism,
to believe that we could join the Christ

in the gift of your life
and the passion of your commitment
to the reign of justice and love.

*Lay your hands on our heads
and call our names in love again, O God.*

(Source: Dorothy McRae McMahan)

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Be assured, people of God.
We are never left alone, bereft of name or of love.
In Jesus Christ, we know a God who notices
when even a sparrow falls.
When we come in regret for our human failures:
we are forgiven!

Thanks be to God.

(Source: Dorothy McRae McMahan)

HYMN

God is love (TiS 153)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-tZq0zR8IE>

1 God is love, let heav'n adore him;
God is love, let earth rejoice;
let creation sing before him,
and exalt him with one voice.
God, who laid the earth's foundation,
he who spread the heavens above,
and who breathes through all creation
God is love, eternal Love.

2 God is love, and gently enfolding
all the world in one embrace,
with unfailing grasp is holding
every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking
under sorrow's iron rod,
then they find that selfsame aching

deep within the heart of God.

3 God is love, and, though with blindness
sin afflicts our human hearts,
God's eternal lovingkindness
holding, guiding, grace imparts.
Sin and death and hell shall never
o'er us final triumph gain;
God is love, so love for ever
o'er the universe must reign.

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22 (Inclusive Text)

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people,
who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ,
so John declared before them all,

'I baptise you with water,
but someone is coming,
someone who is more powerful than I am,
the strap of whose sandals I am not fit to undo;
this one will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire'.

Now when all the people had been baptised
and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer,
heaven opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus
in bodily shape, like a dove.

And a voice came from heaven,
'You are my Child, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.'

RESPONSE *O God our nurturer,*

may your word live in us.

And colour our living. Amen!

REFLECTION

HYMN "Birth of a Boy-child..." (Tune: 'Away in a Manger')

The birth of a boy-child, the growth of a man:

his mother's enigma; a part of God's plan?
Uncertain, now standing a part of the crowd;
the still of the water foreshadows a shroud.

The death of an old life, the birth of a new,
as values are challenged, past choices askew.
Fierce currents of feeling, encounters of love,
a man by a river, a voice and a dove.

That voice stills the crowd at the slow river's rim:
'My son, my beloved, now listen to him.'
The birth of a boy-child, the growth of a man:
his mother's enigma; a part of God's plan? (*Andrew Pratt*)

OFFERING

Let us remember the gifts which others brought to the Christchild!

O God, we bring you what we have to give this day.

Show us those who long for our help,
so that we may truly be their friends.

Guide us now, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

PRAYING TOGETHER FOR PLACES AND PEOPLE

Pray for victims of violence, be it physical, emotional or political

Pray for those who suffer hurt, harm or sadness,
that they might find healing.

Pray for those afflicted by situation, state or habit
that they might find freedom.

Pray for those oppressed by life, circumstance or others,
that they might find release.

Pray for those impoverished in terms of wealth, education or lack of
compassion, that they might find increase.

Pray for those who hate, harm and do ill, that they might repent.

Pray for perpetrators of violence, be it physical, emotional or political,
that they might stop.

Pray for those who hurt, harm or cause sadness, that might change.

Pray for those who afflict others by situation, state or habit,
that they might be transformed.

Pray for those who oppress others by life, circumstance or power,
that they might undo such things.

Pray for those who impoverish others in terms of wealth, education or lack
of compassion, that they might find compassion.

Pray for those who love, that they might inspire others.

Pray for those like us and unlike us that we might find understanding.

Pray for those who are similar to us or different from us
that we might build respect.

Pray for those who share our beliefs or believe different to us
that we might find a common ground.

May we pray for all,
For we all need prayer
And all need to pray.
So we pray. *Amen*

(Source: Jon Humphries)

SONG *"You Are Born In Us Again" (Tune: 'Dunstan')*

You are born in us again
Like the warmth of the summer wind you come,
to melt away the icicles of vanity and pride;
you come to blow the very doors of loving open wide.
Like the warmth of the summer wind you come,
like the warmth of the summer wind you come.

You are born in us again
Like the scent of the summer rain you come,
You come to quench the thirsty and to freshen up the land;
you come to clean away the dust that settled in our hand.
Like the scent of the summer rain you come,
like the scent of the summer rain you come.

You are born in us again
Like the light of the summer sun you come,

to give light to the places that have never seen the Son;
you come now to embrace us, you're the holy, holy one.
Like the light of the summer sun you come,
like the light of the summer sun you come.
(Marie Wilson)

BLESSING

Go into this week, held together by the love of God
clothed with the nature of Jesus our Companion
reinforced by the strength of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.