

Epiphany 1B (COCU 9B) service at Pilgrim Uniting Church, 11th January 2015  
(note: songs from the Pilgrim publications - Songs for People of God 4 (SPG4))

## **Gathering**

### **Opening Prayer**

We gather together in the silence of this place,  
which now we make holy by our every act of worship.

*Candles are lit. A silence is kept*

In the beginning - God.

In beginning - God.

God - Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer -  
you were there, with eternity in your hands.

Draw us into life.

Challenge us with truth.

Inspire us with love.

Enlighten us with wisdom.

Empower us with strength. Amen.

**Song: Creation's God SPG4 16**

## **Welcome**

### **Acknowledgement of land**

**Early word** (using ideas from John van de Lear)

At the start of a new year, the sense of possibility is a gift, but we still face an uncertain year with many difficulties that will seek response and resolution. The lingering echoes of Christmas remain with us, reminding us that Jesus stepped into human flesh, and in so doing, completely immersed himself in the human predicament. Our reading from the Christian Scriptures will recall Jesus' baptism. The One to whom John the Baptist has been pointing stands with all humanity and receives the same baptism as we do. Jesus is baptised along with crowds of people seeking forgiveness, and change. In so doing, Jesus makes a clear statement that God is not separate from humanity, but is in complete and committed solidarity with us. This is both good news - and a challenge for us to be similarly committed to one another. The celebration of Christ's baptism gives us an opportunity to renew our commitment to serve our world with hope, to call our leaders to justice and to increasing our efforts to serve and uplift the poor, the marginalised and the voiceless. The challenge is for us to be involved practically as well as financially or philosophically, in the work for justice, peace and equity. Perhaps this week is a good

time to make a new commitment to some organisation or movement which is bringing in positive change, and to commit to participate in advocacy work of some kind?

**Bible reading: Mark 1: 4-11**

So, John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness calling for baptism and a change of heart that lead to forgiveness of sins.

And everyone from the Judean countryside and all the residents of Jerusalem, streamed out to him and were baptised by him in the Jordan river, admitting their sins.

And John was dressed in camel hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and lived on locusts and raw honey.

And he began his proclamation by saying:

‘Someone more powerful than I will succeed me, whose sandal straps I am not fit to bend down and untie.

‘I have been baptising you with water (*water poured*) but he will baptise you with the holy spirit.’

During that same period Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John.

And just as he got up out of the water, he saw the skies torn open and the spirit coming down toward him like a dove.

There was also a voice from the skies:

‘You are my favoured son. I fully approve of you.’

‘You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased’.

**Song: Let it be Living Water *SPG4 #50***

*(pouring water during each chorus)*

1. Wind over wave in the darkness,  
at the cradle of the earth;  
as you have founded it upon the floods,  
give a new creation birth.

Chorus: Let it be living water, Lord;  
water, and the Spirit. (Repeat)

2. Down in the river of life,  
as its waves break over you,  
deep calls to deep at the resounding Word,  
and a child is born anew.

Chorus: Let it be living water, Lord;

water, and the Spirit. (Repeat)

3. Over the sea is the promise,  
through the wind and rain and squall;  
walk to the waters to the other side,  
to a journey and a call.

Chorus: Let it be living water, Lord;  
water, and the Spirit. (Repeat)

**A Baptism of Belonging Bruce Sanguin (first reading)**

Baptise us all, O Holy One,  
into a new way of being,  
a new humanity,  
fit for the glory and dignity  
of this one Earth community.

Blend with these baptismal waters  
our tears for all that we have done,  
and left undone,  
all those we have left behind  
and left unloved.

Drown us in the deep awareness  
of the kin-dom of God,  
of our radical belonging -  
in you, with each other,  
and with all creation.

Raise us up,  
a new creation gasping for life,  
that we might grasp the full extent  
of the mystery of being -  
Alive! Creative! Compassionate!

Now we die with Christ,  
that we might also be raised up with Christ,  
to throw our arms around this wondrous planet  
in a holy and healing embrace. Amen.

**Water is poured into the baptismal font (*slow and 'measured' reading and pouring*)**

1. There is much to lament in our world. Many tears are being shed. We weep with those who suffer from hunger and deprivation  
(*'tears' poured here, a silence is held*)

2. We weep with those who fight for political freedoms and are cruelly repressed (*'tears' poured here, a silence is held*)
3. We weep with those whose mental illness robs them of happiness (*'tears' poured here, a silence is held*)
4. We weep with the earth, exploited in unsustainable ways to satisfy human greed. (*'tears' poured here, a silence is held*)
5. We weep with those who weep (*'tears' poured here, a silence is held*)

**A Baptism of Belonging Bruce Sanguin**  
*(second reading, some responsive)*

Baptise us all, O Holy One,  
into a new way of being,  
a new humanity,  
fit for the glory and dignity  
of this one Earth community.

**Blend with these baptismal waters  
our tears for all that we have done,  
and left undone,  
all those we have left behind  
and left unloved.**

Drown us in the deep awareness  
of the kin-dom of God,  
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in a holy and healing embrace. Amen.

**Song: In this Sacrament with Water (George  
Stuart)**

*(tune: All through the night TiS 168)*

In this sacrament with water

God can be seen;  
In each human son and daughter  
God can be seen;  
When love streams from fathers, mothers,  
Gen'rously from sisters, brothers,  
When compassion flows from others  
God can be seen.

God in love's refreshing water  
Brings us to life;  
God in love's creative water  
Brings us to life;  
Water, vital for our growing,  
Health and energy bestowing,  
Like God's love, is overflowing  
Brings us to life.

Joining in this solemn moment  
Our spirits rise;  
As we pledge our shared commitment  
Our spirits rise;  
Through this joyous celebration  
We receive God's affirmation;  
So it is with all creation  
Our spirits rise.

### **Introduction to symbols**

*(rosemary - healing; sign of cross etc).  
Invitation to come forward is to everyone who seeks to  
align their life to the life of Jesus.*

*People are invited to come forward to the waters of  
baptism, and return to their seats...*

### **Second Word:**

Jesus was baptised along with the crowds of people seeking forgiveness, and change. But would we have noticed him?

In Mark's Gospel, it seems only Jesus sees the dove and hears the voice. For all the others, God's glory is revealed in a simple and very human moment. Jesus, one of us, who shares our humanity.

How would we recognise Jesus in our midst?

The story is told about a group of computer salesmen who went from Newcastle to Sydney to take part in their annual State one-day sales meeting. They assured their families they would be home in plenty of time for

dinner. But, with one thing or another, the meeting ran over time so they had to run to Central Station, tickets in hand. As they rushed through the ticket terminal area, one man inadvertently crashed into a table supporting a display of fruit. Without stopping they all reached Platform No. 10 and the train - just, and boarded it with a sigh of relief. All but one. He paused, got in touch with his feelings, and experienced a twinge of compunction for the youth whose fruit stand they had caused to almost collapse. He stepped off the train, waved goodbye to his companions and returned to the ticket area where he helped pick up the scattered fruit. He was glad he did. The youth was blind. As he picked up the fruit he noticed several of the peaches and pears were bruised. He reached into his coat pocket, took out his wallet, pulled out some money and said to the youth: "Here, please take this \$20 for the damage we did. I hope it didn't spoil your day too much". As he started to walk back towards the platform to wait for another train, the bewildered youth called out to him: "Are you Jesus, or something?" (pause) Are you Jesus, or something?

**A Baptism of Belonging Bruce Sanguin  
(third reading - all read together)  
Baptise us all, O Holy One,  
into a new way of being,  
a new humanity,  
fit for the glory and dignity  
of this one Earth community.**

**Blend with these baptismal waters  
our tears for all that we have done,  
and left undone,  
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**Drown us in the deep awareness  
of the kin-dom of God,  
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**Raise us up,  
a new creation gasping for life,**

**that we might grasp the full extent  
of the mystery of being -  
Alive! Creative! Compassionate!**

**Now we die with Christ,  
that we might also be raised up with Christ,  
to throw our arms around this wondrous planet  
in a holy and healing embrace. Amen.**

**Song: For Sake of life SPG4 #23**

**Video : Shells DVD**

**Prayers for others**

*Prayers for others will be offered in silence, and by a simple action. You are invited to simply scoop from the waters of the baptismal font, and place in one of the 4 small glass bowls adjacent to font.*

*Invite people to offer silent prayers as they wait to scoop the waters and as they wait for others to complete the scooping.*

*Summarise at the end - our efforts may be small, even seem unworthy or inconsequential, but together, we follow the way of Jesus as we work for justice, peace, reconciliation and equity. So be it.*

**Song: Where the Spirit is, there's freedom (SPG4 # 94)**

*Offering is collected during the singing of this song.*

**Offering prayer**

Bathed in the waters of baptism, we are graced people. Graced people, we recognize the gifts which have been poured out upon us. Recognizing these gifts, we take them and give them back to you, God of the waters, so that others might be bathed in hope, graced with joy, gifted with your peace and love. Amen.

(Thom Shuman)

**Words of mission/benediction/final greeting:**

As we prepare to leave this sacred place of celebration, may we live lives of hope, be nurturers of a vision of wholeness, and serve as healers in a wounded world.

Grant us wisdom.

Grant us courage.

Grant us peace. (Adapt.PLeiland-Mayer)

May God's wisdom guide you wherever you walk in this world.

May God's wisdom encourage you in your daily work.

May God's wisdom work in you like yeast, and rise in you like hope!

May you taste and see God's goodness

and may God's wisdom be your delight

now, this day, and for evermore. (JSPickard/bb)

**Water is carried from the church**

*Water in bowls is carried out of the church by 4 of the 5 readers (in beginning of the service who poured the water) with everyone following behind. Water is tipped onto the garden, nurturing new life and growth.*

**Final greeting:**

We began our service with worship. Now we continue our worship with service in the world.

God's peace be with you. **And also with you.**

*The sign of the peace is exchanged*