



## Fourth Sunday in Easter Sunday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018

### Freedom: Living with Questions and Imagination



Contemporary imaginative architecture plays with the medium of light:  
Ordos Protestant Church, Mongolia

During the Easter Season – a period of fifty days from Easter Sunday until Pentecost – the Christian Church focuses upon the theme of freedom. These last weeks the Gospel readings in particular have led us to think about freedom: first the *freedom to question* (as represented in the scepticism of the disciple Thomas the doubter, as he queried the truth of Jesus' resurrection) and second, the *freedom to imagine* beyond the obvious, to look further ahead to the horizon (as the resurrected Jesus' invited the people on the road to Emmaus, to do, paralysed as they were in despair at his execution).

Easter then, is all about freedom and creativity, where Christian faith may serve as a key to unlock energy to question and imagine: *to question, to interrogate* the old orthodoxies, religious and secular which we uncritically accept as truth bearing, and *to imagine* how we might think and live differently as individuals and societies.

Baptism is at its most basic, is *the sacrament of freedom*, where we identify with Jesus Christ, and his questioning and imaginative spirit. It is a gift but also a discipline, that we are asked to put into practice. Today, Lisa and Greg Swinney bring their third child, River, to us for baptism. Welcome to you, and to the godparents, Stacey, Melanie, Alana and Byron and the family.

## GATHERING

### Announcements

#### Greeting

Christ is risen!

Sing a new song!

Sing praise to our still-laughing Easter God;

***who has rolled away the limitations of yesterday.***

Immerse your anxiety and despair in the fountain of resurrection;  
for God takes ordinary things;

***and makes them extraordinary.***

#### We turn our eyes to the Paschal Candle

We light the candle knowing that our faith in Jesus

and what he represents

is sometimes strong,

***sometimes elusive,***

Easter is the season when we thoughtfully celebrate

***Christ breaking the bounds of death***

**Hymn: Let us sing (TiS 52, Sing Hosanna, Richard Thomas Bewes)**

#### **A Prayer Confessing Our “Hubris” – Self Sufficiency**

Imagination and the spirit of questioning, is fundamental to modern life, but not without its costs. One of the real challenges is what the Greeks referred to as *hubris* – what we today call arrogance or pride. How can we imagine and question, without developing an unrealistic, exaggerated view of ourselves, a loss of contact with reality, and perhaps even a sense of loneliness in the universe? Our prayer today arises from the image in the Gospel about sheep. The image, which we moderns see as unflattering, nevertheless, opens the door to a reality check about human vulnerability, and the need for a realistic sense of humility – despite our modern self-sufficiency. This prayer is an attempt to point to those many situations, where we as human beings still plead for God’s presence and compassion, when we are out of our depth. It takes the format of the Lord’s Prayer

O Lord our Shepherd,  
may your flock not want

in the refugee camps  
of Yarmouk, of Darfur, of Dadaab.

May life-giving pastures of nourishment be theirs  
in Sudan, in Niger, in Chad.

***May waters of peacefulness and healing flow  
in Somalia, in Syria, in the Ukraine.***

And may souls be restored in our own cities and towns  
where violence and hunger still live.

O Lord our Shepherd,  
death shadows the valleys  
and the houses and hills of the earth's many nations and states.

May the strength of your grace and  
the assurance of your love  
ever with us and ever embracing,  
bring comfort to the many grieving and alone.

***May there be a table of reconciliation prepared  
where enemies may sit down in peace***

and may the cup of joy overflow for those  
whose suffering has been their drink.

Let your goodness and mercy pursue us,  
O Shepherd, our Lord,  
and may all your people dwell  
in the unity of your love  
as long as life endures.

***Amen***

**The Peace**

Christ is risen!

***He is risen indeed!***

## **A Song based on Psalm 23: The Lord is my shepherd (TiS 659, My Shepherd, Brian Boniwell)**

### **The Kids leave for Sunday Morning Group (SMG)**

#### **BREAKING OPEN THE WORD**

#### **John 10:11-18 (Good News Translation)**

Seng Eng Low

The shepherd was a common image used for rulers, in the ancient world. It reflected both versatile strength and nurture. It was an image of engaged leadership. That the ideal king, David, was once a shepherd, is not coincidental. And yet David was the exception to the rule. The ancient and indeed modern East was and continue to be marked by the Assads of this world. Yet curiously, the stubborn assumption in the middle East was and remains, that government has a caring role. It is this sort of leadership which Jesus reflects as the “good shepherd” and which Christians in leadership are required to imitate.

<sup>11</sup> “I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> When the hired man, who is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away; so the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. <sup>13</sup> The hired man runs away because he is only a hired man and does not care about the sheep. <sup>14</sup> <sup>15</sup> I am the good shepherd. As the Father knows me and I know the Father, in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them. <sup>16</sup> There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them, too; they will listen to my voice, and they will become<sup>[a]</sup> one flock with one shepherd.

<sup>17</sup> “The Father loves me because I am willing to give up my life, in order that I may receive it back again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father has commanded me to do.

The Gospel of the Lord

***Praise to you Lord Christ***

**A Story about Baptism: “A Bush Christening” (Banjo Paterson)** *or how people get confused about Christianity (“religious stuff”).*

This story written by the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century Australian poet Banjo Paterson, is all about a country kid called Mike who was terrified of being baptized because he thought it meant he would be branded, as a sheep is branded by the owner. It is a fun read!

**Some thoughts about Baptism, the Sacrament of Freedom**

Rituals, anthropologists will tell us, are about transformation. The rituals we use for marriage, baptism or inaugurating a president are as elaborate as they are because we associate the ritual with a major life passage, the crossing of a critical threshold, or in other words, with transformation.

**Abraham Verghese, Stanford University Medical School**

A national political campaign is far better than the best religious circus with mass baptisms and a couple of hangings thrown in.

**H. L. Mencken, Journalist and Satirist for the Baltimore Sun (1880-1956)**

The public renunciation of evil and adhesion to Christ at baptism, was an act of cosmic rebellion, against fatalism, cruelty, violence and despair. The new thing that the Gospel in general and baptism in particular imparted to the world, was a deep joy in the goodness of creation and its Author.

**Timothy Radcliffe OP**

**Some brief thoughts...baptism and freedom**

**The Sacrament of Baptism of River Graham Swinney**

Today we baptize River, the third child and son of Lisa and Greg. River was born on October 10th, 2017 and has been a joy and blessing to his parents, sisters and the broader family and friends. So, let us celebrate this event together, as he is baptized into this community. I welcome Lisa, Greg, Summer and Heidi and also Catherine’s God parents, Stacey and Melanie – Lisa’s sisters – and Alana and Byron.

*The Elder, leads us in the initial part of the liturgy.*

Lisa and Greg, what do you ask of God's Church for your child?

**We ask that he be baptised  
into the faith and family of Jesus Christ.**

River has been brought for baptism  
that he may be grafted into Christ  
as a member of his body the Church,  
to grow up into the faith of Jesus Christ  
and become his faithful witness and servant.

River, may the Lord open your ears to hear his word  
and your mouth to proclaim his praise.

### **Scripture**

Hear the words of the Lord Jesus Christ:

All authority on heaven and earth  
has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,  
baptising them in the name of the Father  
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
and teaching them to obey everything  
that I have commanded you.

*Matthew 28:18-20*

And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

The apostle Paul said:

Do you not know that all of us  
who have been baptised into Christ Jesus  
were baptised into his death?

*Romans 6:3-4*

Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death,  
so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead  
by the glory of the Father,  
so we too might walk in newness of life.

### **Meaning of Baptism**

Baptism is Christ's gift.

It is the sign by which the Spirit of God  
joins people to Jesus Christ  
and incorporates them into his body, the Church.

In his own baptism in the Jordan by John,  
 Jesus identified himself with humanity  
 in its brokenness and sin;  
 that baptism was completed in his death and resurrection.  
 By God's grace,  
 baptism plunges us into the faith of Jesus Christ,  
 so that whatever is his, may be called ours.  
 By water and the Spirit, we are claimed as God's own  
 and set free from the power of sin and death.

Claimed by God  
 we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit  
 that we may live as witnesses to Jesus Christ,  
 share his ministry in the world and grow to maturity,  
 awaiting with hope the day of our Lord Jesus.

### **Confession of Faith**

*The minister asks Greg and Lisa*

Do you turn to Christ  
***I turn to Christ***

Do you repent of your sins?  
***I repent of my sins***

Do you reject selfish living and injustice?  
***I reject them all***

Do you renounce all evil?  
 I renounce all that is evil  
***I commit myself to God.***

In unity with the whole Church,  
 let us stand and affirm the faith  
 into which we were baptised.

*The people stand and the minister asks them, the parents and Godparents questions  
 which they respond to through the Apostles' Creed of the Christian Church*

Do you believe in God?

***I believe in God, the Father Almighty  
creator of heaven and earth.***

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

***I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.***

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

***I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.***

## **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

*Water is poured into the font.  
The minister says:*

*This prayer is parallel to the  
Great Prayer of Thanksgiving  
in Holy Communion.  
In it we thank God for the  
gift of water in the story of  
salvation as told in the  
Scriptures.*

Holy God, faithful One,  
we thank you for your gifts of water and the Holy Spirit.

In the beginning, your Spirit moved over the waters  
and brought life out of the chaos of nothingness.  
In the days of Noah you rescued those  
on the ark from the great flood.  
You saved the infant Moses

from the waters of the Nile,  
 so that he could lead your people  
 through the sea to a promised land.  
 Your Son Jesus was baptised by John in the Jordan  
 and anointed by the Spirit.  
 By the baptism of his death  
 Christ sets us free from our captivity to sin  
 and enables us to share in his resurrection life.

By the power of your Holy Spirit, bless this water,  
 that those who are baptised into the death of Christ,  
 having been buried with him,  
 may rise with him to walk in newness of life;  
 and, set free from enslavement to sin,  
 may live to God in Christ Jesus  
 to whom with you and the Holy Spirit  
 be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

***Amen.***

## **The Baptism**

River,  
 for you Jesus Christ has come,  
 has lived, has suffered;

*The original form of this  
 prayer is from the  
 French Reformed Church;  
 it emphasizes God's initiative  
 in the call to baptism.*

for you he endured the agony of Gethsemane  
 and the darkness of Calvary;  
 for you he uttered the cry, 'It is accomplished!'  
 For you he triumphed over death;  
 for you he prays at God's right hand;  
 for you,  
 even before you were born.  
 In baptism, the word of the apostle is confirmed:  
 'We love, because God first loved us'.

*1 John 4:19*

River Graham, I baptise you  
 in the name of the Father,  
 and of the Son,  
 and of the Holy Spirit.

*The people respond:*

**Amen.**

River, from this day on, the sign of the cross is upon you.

River is now received into  
the one holy catholic and apostolic Church  
according to Christ's command.

*The community sings the Aaronic Blessing (TiS 776)*

***The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,  
and be gracious unto you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,  
and give you peace.***

### **Responses**

Lisa and Greg, I ask you now to respond to God's graciousness to River by making these solemn promises:

Will you encourage River's growth within the Christian community, guiding him through participation in the worship, nurture and fellowship of the Church to a mature Christian faith?

***With God's help, we will.***

Will you, by word and example, teach him the way of Christ until the Spirit draws him to make his own response in faith and love?

***With God's help, we will.***

*The minister asks the God-parents, Stacey, Melanie, Alana and Byron*

Will you, Stacey Melanie, Alana and Byron, stand alongside Greg and Lisa to encourage River to grow within the community of the church, so that he may come to faith in Christ?

***With God's help we will***

*The minister addresses the congregation.*

Friends in Christ,  
will you promise to maintain a life of worship and teaching,  
witness and service  
so that he may grow to maturity in Christ?

**With God's help,  
we will live out our baptism  
as a loving community in Christ:  
nurturing one another in faith,  
upholding one another in prayer,  
and encouraging one another in service,  
until Christ comes.**

Sisters and brothers:  
Always remember you are baptised,  
and be thankful.

### **Final Prayers**

God of love  
guide and guard River all his days.  
May your love hold him,  
your truth guide him,  
your joy delight him.

Bless his parents and sisters  
that he may grow up  
in a secure and happy home.  
Give to his family  
wisdom and courage,  
laughter and peace,  
and the love that endures all things,  
through Jesus Christ.

### **Offering**

## **Doxology**

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,  
praise him, all creatures here below,  
praise him above, ye heavenly host,  
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

## **Prayer of Dedication**

### **Prayers of the People**

Lawrence Peak

The one who prays after a series of petitions says, "Raise us Lord" and the people respond, "Make us a risen people".

*We end with the Lord's Prayer*

### **Our Father**

***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.***

하늘에 계신 우리 아버지여  
이름이 거룩히 여김을 받으시오며  
나라이 임하옵시며  
뜻이 하늘에서 이룬 것 같이  
땅에서도 이루어지이다.  
오늘날 우리에게 일용할 양식을 주옵시고

우리가 우리에게  
 죄 지은 자를 사하여 준 것 같이  
 우리 죄를 사하여 주옵시고  
 우리를 시험에 들게 하지 마옵시고  
 다만 악에서 구하옵소서  
 대개 나라와 권세와 영광이  
 아버지께 영원히 있사옵나이다. 아멘

### **Final Hymn: Fairest Lord Jesus (TiS 203, St Elizabeth, Anon)**

#### **Blessing**

Christ is risen!  
 We see reality through resurrection  
 We seek to live lovingly, truthfully, inclusively  
 Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

Our service has ended.  
 Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

*In the name of Christ*  
*Amen*

### **Sung Blessing: Father bless us as we go (TiS 781, Kookaburra, Robin Mann)**

*Father bless us as we go*  
*Jesus walk beside us*  
*Holy Spirit guide us (twice)*

**Musical Postlude**

**Organist:**

Jeanette Steer

