



Wesley Methodist Church

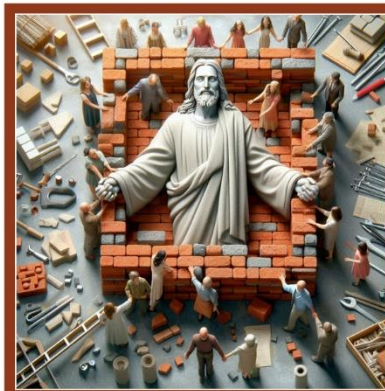
75 Taranaki Street
Wellington

www.wesleychurch.org.nz

Sunday 21 July 2024

Pentecost 9

*Haere mai ki tēnei Whare Karakia
Welcome to this House of Prayer*



*“Making a
Home for God”*

Living God’s Love – Acting for the Common Good

We are a multi-racial Christian community:
Methodist in affiliation – Ecumenical in intention
Diverse in theology – Inclusive in outreach.

**Kia ora koutou katoa — Talofa Lava
Malo e lelei — Bula Vinaka — Greetings to you all!**

**Order of Service
10am Congregation**

Sunday 21 July 2024

Pentecost 9

**Leader: Philip Garside Organ: Colin Scarf
Guitar: Heather Garside**

Welcome & Introduction

Re-iterate Alan's welcome

This is the 9th Sunday in the church season of Pentecost, which is also known as Ordinary Time.

Our theme is **Making a Home for God**. We continue from last week's story in 2 Samuel about King David bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. And we explore the reading from Ephesians about Jesus being the cornerstone of the Church.

As we did two week's ago in Nicola's service, we will sing again the waiata *E te Ariki* and the hymn *Loving God of Aotearoa* that we will be singing at Conference.

Let's worship God...

Call to Worship (John Howell – adapted)

We come to find a place set apart,
We come to feel the pulse of your heart,

We come to wonder, to pause, to thank,
We come to fill an empty tank.

We come to laugh at what is imposed,
We come to open the door that is closed,

We come to find an olive branch,
We come to ask the world to dance.

Find from the compassionate shepherd
bread for our deep hunger.

Opening Prayer

Loving creator God, we have come to this place,
**a place where your presence has been sensed in the past
and we expect to experience you close again.**

As we rest in your love this day,
remind us that it is not in our striving,
**or our building, or our creating
that you are made known.**

Your presence is in all places, and at all times,
**waiting for us to be awake
to your wonder and love surrounding us.**

Open our senses to your presence this day.
Amen.

Lighting the Candle

In times of struggle,
Jesus Christ is the Light of the World.

In times of wonder,
Jesus Christ is the Light of the World.

In times of anxious anticipation,
Jesus Christ is the Light of the World.

In this time and place, here and now, and in all the days of our lives,
Jesus Christ is the Light of the World. Amen.

Hymn: The Church's one foundation H&P 515.

Tune: AURELIA. Words: Samuel John Stone (1839-1900)

1. The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is his new creation
By water and the Word:
From heav'n he came and sought her
To be his holy bride;
With his own blood He bought her
And for her life He died.

2. Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued.
3. 'Mid toil and tribulation
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace forevermore;
Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest.
4. Yet she on earth hath union
With God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won;
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with Thee.

Prayer of Approach

Let us gather before God and
open our hearts and minds to the presence of grace,
which frees us from the burden of sin:

**Gracious God,
you share with us the gift of the law, a path of faith,
so we will follow you in the wilderness of this world.**

Yet we turn away, crying out that it is too difficult to follow.
We want a law that we can shape to our own desires.

**We build temples,
where we believe we can control you through offerings,
treating faith like a commodity,
something to be bought and sold in the market.**

We try to ignore your voice that cries out,
“Be free from the wisdom of the world and
proclaim the Good News, the Kingdom of God is near!”

**God, forgive us.
Renew us, so once more,
we will return to the path of faith.**

Words of Assurance

God is full of compassion, longing to dwell in harmony with us.
If we open our hearts to the goodness shown in Christ,
longing to live enveloped in his grace and power,
then we can be assured that we are always forgiven.
So, I declare to you, our sin is forgiven. Amen.

Introducing the theme / Story time

Props: Wooden box with handles and a lid (Heather’s old Girl Guides camping box) • heavy old Bible to put in it • 3 poles • rope • a colourful sheet • a large fancy scarf.

Ask for helpers. Need two to carry box, two to carry poles and sheet/scarf. Split poles, scarf and sheet between them if more children come forward.

Start with props at the back of the church. Walk up central passage and gather helpers at the back.

Explain we are enacting the Ark of the Covenant being brought into Jerusalem by King David. Say that the Ark of the Covenant contained the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written, which God gave to Moses during the 40 year Exodus in the desert.

Walk back down central passage with the props to front of the top level of the sanctuary. Wave and smile at the congregation as we go.

Tie the poles together to make a triangular support for the sheet. Put sheet over poles to make two sides of the tent.

Ask helpers to open the box / Ark and see what is inside, and tell the congregation. Close the box and ceremonially place it in the tent. Drape the scarf over the entrance to the tent to hid the Ark within.

Say that the Israelites believed that God was present in the Ark. And that David wanted to build a temple to hold the Ark as a tent wasn't special enough for God. But God said no, not yet, and the Ark stayed in the tent for the rest of the time that David was King.

Thank people for their help.

Waiata – E te Ariki

E te Ariki whakarongo mai ra kia ma tou

E te Ariki titiro mai ra kia ma tou

Tenei matou o tamariki

E whakaponono ana matou ki a koe

Aue!

Aue!

Aue!

Aue!

Te Matua te Tamaiti Wairua tapu e

Te Matua te Tamaiti Wairua tapu e

(Sing three times)

Oh Lord, listen to us
Oh Lord, look at us
This is us, your children,
we believe, in you
The Father, the Son
and the Holy Spirit

Bible Readings

2 Samuel 7:1-14 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)

God's Covenant with David

Now when the king was settled in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind, for the Lord is with you."

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, "Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord:

Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'

Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel, and I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place and be disturbed no more, and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel, and I will give you rest from all your enemies.

Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings.

Ephesians 2:11-22 (The Message)

But don't take any of this for granted. It was only yesterday that you outsiders to God's ways had no idea of any of this, didn't know the first thing about the way God works, hadn't the faintest idea of Christ. You knew nothing of that rich history of God's covenants and promises in Israel, hadn't a clue about what God was doing in the world at large. Now because of Christ—dying that death, shedding that blood—you who were once out of it altogether, are in on everything.

The Messiah has made things up between us so that we're now together on this, both non-Jewish outsiders and Jewish insiders. He tore down the wall we used to keep each other at a distance. He repealed the law code that had become so clogged with fine print and footnotes, that it hindered more than it helped. Then he started over. Instead of continuing with two groups of people separated by centuries of animosity and suspicion, he created a new kind of human being, a fresh start for everybody.

Christ brought us together through his death on the cross. The Cross got us to embrace, and that was the end of the hostility. Christ came and preached peace to you outsiders and peace to us insiders. He treated us as equals, and so made us equals. Through him we both share the same Spirit and have equal access to the Father.

That's plain enough, isn't it? You're no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home.

Sermon: Making a Home for God

Now when the king was settled in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, “See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.” Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that you have in mind, for the Lord is with you.”

You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He’s using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he’s using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together.

Let’s pray

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts and minds, be acceptable to you O God, our rock and our redeemer.

I have titled this sermon **Making a Home for God, Making a Home for God.**

Our reading from 2 Samuel chapter 7 continues on from last week’s passage, where David brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem and danced for joy in the presence of God. What do we know about the Ark of the Covenant?

We need to go back to the story of the people of Israel on the 40 years’ Exodus out of Egypt through the desert, eventually arriving in Canaan – the Promised Land. At one point on the journey Moses climbed the mountain to talk with God and returned with two stone tablets on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments – broad rules from God about how to regard and worship God, and how to live well and peacefully as a community. The Ark was originally a stone box in which these tablets were stored.

(Recall that Moses was so disgusted and angered by what he found the people doing when he came back down the mountain, that he smashed the first pair of tablets, and had to go back up the mountain to get a replacement set from God. So it is these replacement tablets that were kept in the Ark.)

The Ark was kept in the tabernacle – a large, ceremonial tent – which the Israelites carried with them on the journey and set up in each place they stopped and made camp.

Later, the Ark came to be seen as a symbol of God's presence. God could be worshipped wherever the Ark of the Covenant was located.

God was found in one place, but that place was mobile.

In Exodus, God is also present as the pillar of cloud going before or after the Israelites, during their 40 year journey in the desert.

In the reading from 2 Samuel, David has the Ark brought to Jerusalem where he is making his home. The Ark is still in a tent. David wants to build God (as symbolised by the Ark) a better home, like his own solid and impressive wooden one.

We now come to the crux of the reading. Nathan is a prophet in David's court. The role of a prophet in the Hebrew Scriptures is **not** to predict the future – generations in advance – **but** to help the king and his people, to understand God's will for their particular time and situation. Often the prophets need to speak truth to power, to bravely tell their king, that what he is doing is not right. The prophets, like Nathan, have a kind of hot line to God. They can discern God's message. They are trusted advisors to their kings.

David tells Nathan that he is worried about the symbol of God's presence, the Ark, living in a humble tent. We can guess that David feels uncomfortable about this situation, that he thinks the placement of the Ark is disrespectful. Surely, the Ark should be better housed. Surely, we should build a temple befitting God. And at first it appears that Nathan goes along with this idea.

But that night God has a surprising message for Nathan. Chill, the tent is fine for now. Tell David that **I'll** actually build a home for **him**, and that in due course, I will have **his son** build me a permanent temple. We know that after David's time, Solomon did build the first temple in Jerusalem. And the Ark was placed in the Holy of Holies, in the core of the Temple.

The question is why didn't God want David to build a temple? **HarperCollins Bible Dictionary** suggests that, as David had only recently defeated his enemies and set up his administration and rule over Israel, the proper time to build a temple would be when the proof of the permanence of this new regime and order was established – that is, when David successfully passed on his rule to the next generation. God is saying, wait, let's see what happens.

Another commentator suggested that David would be too proud of building a temple, and that God felt David needed to just humbly go about the business of learning to run his kingdom for a while.

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As we move on to our reading from Ephesians, Jesus, as another aspect of God, comes into the picture.

I have been re-reading Bart Ehrman's 2016 book *Jesus Before The Gospels: How the Earliest Christians Remembered, Changed, and Invented Their Stories of the Savior*. In it he makes a fascinating observation about how the perception of Jesus changed, as the first century progressed, after Jesus' death in the year 30. The gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke written 40 to 60 years after Jesus, portray him as a human being, who is later exalted, as a potent symbol of God in action in the world. Jesus is resurrected and will return in their lifetimes for, what John Dominic Crossan calls, "the great divine clean-up of the world," to defeat the powers of evil and establish a just and fair permanent Kingdom of God, here on earth. The apostle Paul, writing his seven genuine letters in the late 40s to early 60s of the first century, also expected Jesus to return in his lifetime.

The problem is that Jesus **didn't** return. By the time John's gospel is being written in the mid-90s the theology and ideas about Jesus have evolved. Jesus is now identified as divine, as being almost the same as God. Jesus was with God from the beginning of time. The powerful "I AM" statements are put on Jesus lips. The goal of faith shifts from a holy kingdom down here on earth, to eternal life with God in up in heaven, after we die.

The logical modern extension of this idea, is that faith is all about Jesus being our personal saviour, and that good works, following Jesus' earthly example, are not important. John's gospel also prompts us to consider whether we should worship Jesus or whether we should worship God. My approach is to **worship God** and **follow Jesus'** example.

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Most Bible scholars agree that the letter to the Ephesians was not written by Paul, but a generation or two after him, by a writer in a Christian community that followed his teachings. Marcus Borg, in his book *Evolution of the Word:*

The New Testament in the Order the Books Were Written, suggests that it was written around the year 90, at roughly the same time as Luke's gospel.

The reasons for thinking that the letter is **later** than Paul are interesting. Paul's genuine letters, such as Corinthians and Thessalonians, were specifically addressed to Christian communities that he had established, and they deal with specific named issues that have arisen in those communities. Ephesians contains more generic advice. It is full of references to the broader Church of many places – "the church universal."

The second reason is highlighted by today's reading. The text treats the controversy, about the status of Gentile Christians, as being in the past, settled, and resolved. It does not **argue** for unity, but **celebrates** a unity **already** achieved – that is, the unity of Jews who were Christian and Gentile Christians.

Back in Paul's time, there was still tension between Peter and James and the rest of the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem, and Paul, about whether to be Christian you had to also follow Jewish laws, for example, circumcision for males and eating only kosher, clean food. That has now all been settled.

And we note that Ephesians also refers to "the apostles" [Peter and the rest of the 12 disciples] as if they were figures of the past.

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What messages does the reading from Ephesians have for us today?

Even though we are different people, from different cultures, being a community of faith, a congregation, unites us and binds us together. God, through Jesus, tore down the barriers between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians **then**, and can dissolve any barriers that divide us **today**.

The old rules (the complex interpretations of the Ten Commandments) were no longer helpful, so they have been discarded. Jesus has simplified them: Love God, love your neighbour and love yourself.

Instead of continuing with two groups of people, separated by centuries of animosity and suspicion, God created a new kind of human being, and gave everyone a fresh start. For me, this is an important part of celebrating Matariki. We are forgiven and freed to make a fresh start for the coming year.

The image of Jesus being the cornerstone of our lives, and of the church, is still vivid and powerful today.

God is making a new home, using us, fitting us in brick-by-brick, stone-by-stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone, that holds all the parts together.

[Show image on slide]



I created the image that appears on the front cover of your Order of Service using Microsoft's online Artificial Intelligence Copilot designer software. You enter some keywords, ask for a photorealistic image, and it generates four images at a time, for you to choose from. It's quite magical.

What I like about **this** image is that it shows people working and worshipping together, with lots of tools and building materials, with Jesus in the centre. I wonder what they are constructing. I wonder what marvellous things we can make with Jesus as our central guide.

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In King David's time, God dwelt in one place – wherever the Ark of Covenant rested.

This God was static, passive almost.

Later in Mark's gospel – the curtain across the holy of holies in the temple is torn in two, when Jesus dies on the cross. God is set free. All people can see and interact with God, not just one priest, selected by random ballot, on only one day each year.

What if we come to see that God is active in the world – through us.

What if we see that, like the internet, God is in many places. The love of God is like a distributed network. If one part fails, the rest keeps operating and the message still gets through.

But perhaps, if we think of God as being **everywhere**, there is a risk that, for us, God is effectively **nowhere**.

In the hymn we are going to sing next, I affirm that God is here in this country, Aotearoa.

And God is here in this church this morning.

In the last service I took in April we discussed the text from John about Jesus being the true vine and his invitation to “abide in me.”

Let’s turn this around, and invite God to abide **in us**.

Let’s invite God to make a home in **our hearts**.

Let’s offer God a home within us to enjoy and play and work in.

Let’s be confident of the power of God’s love within us.

Let’s “Be not afraid” of anything the world challenges us with.

Let’s live God’s love, act for the common good and go out to serve the people in our community, in Jesus’ name.

Amen.

Hymn: Loving God of Aotearoa

Words: Philip Garside. Music: Gustav Holst. Tune: THAXTED

1. Loving God of Aotearoa,
hear now our call to you,
We have gathered in your presence,
to celebrate anew!
We have come from many places,
speaking, thinking differently,
But in you we are united,
One whole, strong family.

Refrain:

Let us heed your call to service
and follow lovingly,
May we be compassionate people,
Alive in you and free.

2. Scripture tells of faithful people,
who spread your light and love.
Now inspire, lead, direct us,
so we can be like them.
May the Way that Christ has taught us,
and the power of your Word,
set a fire burning in us,
for justice and for love.
3. Rimu tall, with tui singing,
proclaim your majesty,
You who care for all creation,
will always care for me.
Matariki's spirit guide us,
rise within us all the year.
Help us live and speak forgiveness,
your people want to hear.

Community Time

Sharing the Peace

Let's greet each other saying: **"God's peace be with you."**

Notices

Sharing Joys, Things we are Grateful for, Sorrows & Concerns

Prayers of Intercession

To the bidding *"...in your mercy,"* would you please respond, **"hear our prayer."**

Lord's Prayer

**E tō mātou Matua i te rangi
Kia tapu tou Ingoa
Kia tae mai tou rangatira-tanga.
Kia meatia tau e pai
ai ki runga i te whenua,
kia rite ano ki to te rangi.
Homai ki a mātou aianeī
he taro mā mātou mo tēnei ra.
Murua o mātou hara
Me mātou hoki e muru nei
i o te hunga e hara ana ki a mātou.
Aua hoki mātou e kawea kia whaka-waia;
Engari whaka-orangia mātou, i te kino:
Nou hoki te rangatira-tanga,
te kaha,
me te kororia,
Ake, ake, ake. Āmine.**

Our Father in heaven
holy be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us this day
our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Do not put us to the test,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now
and for ever. Amen.

Offering

(We also acknowledge offerings made by automatic payment and online banking)

As God reaches out to us,
so we would reach out to others in his name.
The offering we make is a sign of our discipleship and commitment.
The work of our hands is a sharing in the mission of Christ.

Blessing of Offering (said together)

**Loving God,
in gratitude for the knowledge that we can rest in your love,
we bring these gifts and ourselves before you.
As those who know the love, joy and peace
of dwelling in your presence,
may these gifts and our lives
bring your love and rest to others. Amen.**

Hymn: Jesu, Jesu, Fill us with your Love H&P 145

Tune: CHEREPONI from Ghana. Words: T.S. Colvin (1925-2000)

Refrain:

Jesu, Jesu,
Fill us with your love,
Show us how to serve
The neighbours we have from you.

1. Kneels at the feet of his friends,
silently washes their feet,
Master who acts as a slave to them.
2. Neighbours are rich folk and poor,
Neighbours are black folk and white
Neighbours are nearby and far away.
3. These are the ones we should serve,
These are the ones we should love.
All these are neighbours to us and you.
4. Kneel at the feet of our friends,
Silently washing their feet
This is the way we should live with you.

Sending forth / Benediction

Let us go with the compassion of Christ,
sharing the providential grace of God
to serve and to heal,
witnessing to the endless love of God.
May all we do honour God's holy name.
And may the truth of Christ be on our lips,
the love of God be in our hearts and hands,
and the peace of the Holy Spirit fill our souls
with compassion, this day and forevermore. **Amen.**

The Grace

**Kia tau ki a tātou katoa,
te atawhai o to tātou Ariki o Ihu Karaiti,
me te aroha o te Atua,
me te whiwhinga tahitanga
ki te Wairua Tapu. Amine**

The Grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the
Holy Spirit, be with us all.
Amen

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Liturgy for this service was sourced from:
Words for Worship 21 July 2024 – Mediacom, Aust.
L3 - Liturgy, Learning, and (purposeful) Life 21 July 2024 – Mediacom, Aust.
Gathering – Lent Easter 2024 – Uniting Church of Canada
Let Us Pray, Janet Nelson, HarperCollins 1999.

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To keep up-to-date with services and news, visit the parish website:
<https://wesleychurch.org.nz/>

And the 10am Congregation's Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/wesleywellington.methodistchurch.10am>