Wesley Wellington

75 Taranaki Street
www.wesleychurch.org.nz

Sunday 29 January 2023
Epiphany 4

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



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

Wesley Methodist Church 75 Taranaki Street
10am Congregation
29 January 2023 Epiphany 4

Leader: Philip Garside. Organist: Vivien Chiu.

Welcome, Introduction & Safety Briefing

- Welcome [Mention flooding in Auckland]
- Morning tea
- This is the 4th Sunday in the church season of Epiphany that falls between Christmas and the start of Lent. During Epiphany we focus on the story of the three wise ones visiting baby Jesus in Bethlehem, and also in Jesus' baptism by John the Baptists as an adult at the start of his ministry.
- I have chosen two different translations of The Beatitudes as our Bible readings for today.
- Heather and I watched Peter Jackson's three-part *Get Back* documentary about The Beatles in the Christmas / New Year break. I found the documentary very moving and was surprised to find myself crying the end. Later in the service I will share with you why I think I did this and explore metaphors relating to our faith that are suggested by the documentary.

Call to Worship

Spirit of new creation
Renew us with your holy love
Be in our deeds
That our hands may surprise us
with their skills and gentleness
Be in our minds
That our thoughts may startle us
with new wisdom and humility
Be in our feelings
That our hearts may uplift us
with compassion and courage
Be in our praying
That your love may flood us
with wonder, peace and joy
Spirit of new creation
let your glory flame out
from our ordinary lives, Amen.

Lighting the candles

As we light these candles:

Kindle a flame within our hearts, O God
and let your *light* shine through

Kindle a flame within our hearts, O God
and let your *justice* shine through

Kindle a flame within our hearts, O God
and let your *hope* shine through

Kindle a flame within our hearts, O God
and let your *peace* shine through

Kindle a flame within our hearts, O God
and let your *love* shine through. Amen.

Hymn: Master Speak Thy Servant Heareth (H&P 535 (i))

1. Master speak! Thy servant heareth,
   Waiting for Thy gracious word,
   Longing for Thy voice that cheereth;
   Master, let it now be heard.
   I am listening, Lord, for Thee;
   What hast Thou to say to me?

2. Speak to me by name, O Master
   Let me know it is to me;
   Speak, that I may follow faster,
   With a step more firm and free,
   Where the shepherd leads the flock
   In the shadow of the rock.

3. Master speak! Though least and lowest,
   Let me not unheard depart;
   Master, speak! for O thou knowest,
   All the yearning of my heart.
   Knowest all its truest need;
   Speak, and make me blest indeed.

4. Master, speak; and make me ready,
   When thy voice is truly heard,
   With obedience glad and steady,
   Still to follow every word.
   I am listening, Lord, for Thee;
   Master, speak! O speak to me!

Prayer of Approach:

We come before you today, O God, thinking about healing.

We all have some part of us in need of healing:

- **in our bodies,**
- **in our minds,**
- **in our souls,**
- **from our past and in our present,**
- **in our hearts and in our thoughts.**

Some hurts we carry on our sleeve, some can be coaxed from us, others we show only to our nearest and dearest, and some we will need you to unearth for us.

Help us to understand, trust, and be open to your many ways of healing as we open our hearts to your love:

(a time of *Silence*)

Words of Assurance

God's love is forever and extends to the heavens.
We are forgiven and beloved children of God.
Let this love and the Spirit continue to move and guide us.
May we be shining lights in this world. Amen.

Time with children / Introducing the Theme [read from notes]

Action: Take albums out of the box in this order and display along the top step for the sanctuary.

1. Please Please Me (1963)
2. With The Beatles (1963)
3. A Hard Day's Night (1964)
4. Beatles For Sale (1964)
5. Help! (1965)
6. Rubber Soul (1965)
7. Revolver (1966)
8. Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (1967)
9. The Beatles (White Album) (1968)
10. Yellow Submarine (1969)
11. Abbey Road (1969)

12. Let It Be (1970)
13. Hey Jude (1970)

1 to 12 are the core of the official Beatles albums list and were released between 1963 and 1970.

Hey Jude was released later in 1970 after the band split up. Let me tell you a secret. Hey Jude was the first Beatles LP I bought because it had the song Hey Jude on it. And it is my favourite album.

I collected these LP in my late teens in the late 1970s, ordering them one at a time through the local music shop in Porirua.

If we line the LPs up in the order they were released they tell a story about the band.

The first album Please Please Me in 1963 was recorded in one day. They recorded some of their own songs and some by other composers.

Starting with the Rubber Soul LP in 1965 all the songs they recorded from then on were written by the band. They stopped doing public concerts about then.

In a moment I'm going to play a short video trailer that shows the band working on the songs on the Let It Be album in 1969. Look at their hair and clothes in the video and compare that with their matching suits and fairly tidy short hair on the covers of the first albums.

The Bible has the same sort of timeline.

Genesis at the start of the Bible tells the creation stories. It moves on through to Moses time and the Exodus from Egypt, to King David about 1000BCE, the Exile in a Babylon in the 500s BCE. Then on to stories about Jesus in the Gospels. Then on to the development of the early Christian church and Paul's ministry in Acts and his letters. The story is laid out for us in the Old Testament and continues into the New Testament.

The Beatles albums are a bit like the Books of the Bible. The songs are like chapters in the Bible books. The verses, choruses and bridges of the songs are like sub-sections and verses in the Bible chapters.

And just like me starting my Beatles collection with Hey Jude, then moving on to enjoy the rest of their proper LPs, it doesn't matter which Bible book or story we

start with. There is plenty of time to explore, enjoy and be inspired and encouraged by all the books in the Bible.

I'm going to ask Heather to turn off the lights in the sanctuary so we can see the video better. It's quite loud.

The documentary footage was filmed in January 1969 while the band worked on and recorded the songs for the Let It Be album. The idea was that the footage would be made into a television special about the making of the album, but that never happened. Peter Jackson and his team here in Wellington got hold of the film and sound recordings and have created from them an 8 hour documentary.

In the trailer the band starts in a big film sound stage, like a bare warehouse, and doesn't make much progress with the music. George Harrison gets fed up and resigns from the band at one point. Eventually the band get back together in a smaller studio in central London and compose and record the 13 songs on the album. At the end they decide to setup on the roof of the studio building and play some of the songs for the surrounding neighbourhood.

[Play video. Say it will take a moment to start.]

Hymn: Here I am Lord. (Words and Music: Dan Schutte)

1. I the Lord of sea and sky
   I have heard my people cry
   All who dwell in dark and sin
   My hand will save.
   I who made the stars of night
   I will make their darkness bright
   Who will bear my light to them?
   Whom shall I send?

   Refrain:

   Here I am Lord, is it I Lord?
   I have heard you calling in the night
   I will go Lord, if you lead me,
   I will hold your people in my heart.

2. I, the Lord of snow and rain
   I have borne my people's pain
   I have wept for love of them
   They turn away.
   I will break their hearts of stone
   Give them hearts for love alone
   I will speak my words to them
   Whom shall I send?

3. I, the Lord of wind and flame
   I will tend the poor and lame
   I will set a feast for them
   My hand will save.
   Finest bread I will provide
   'Til their hearts be satisfied
   I will give my life to them
   Whom shall I send?

Readings – Matthew 5:1-12

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

The Beatitudes

5 When Jesus[a] saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 And he began to speak and taught them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely[b] on my account. 12. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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The Message

5: 1-2 When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

3 “You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

4 “You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

5 “You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are—no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can’t be bought.

6 “You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God. He’s food and drink in the best meal you’ll ever eat.

7 “You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourselves cared for.

8 “You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

9 “You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.

10 “You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom.

11-12 “Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens – give a cheer, even! – for though they don’t like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

Sermon: Let It Be

> "You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-**full**,' you find yourselves cared **for**."
>
> "You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world."
>
> "You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family."

Let's pray: May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of all our hearts and minds be acceptable to you, O God, our strength and our freedom giver.

I've call this sermon **Let It Be**, **Let It Be**.

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I was surprised to find myself crying at the end of the 3rd part of the Get Back documentary. They were tears of joy and relief. What was going on?

As you can tell by now, I'm a big fan of the Beatles. I love their music. I can sing the melodies to most of their songs, even the tricky ones. They made a big impression on me in my late teens when I discovered them. I carry their music in my head.

I knew quite a bit about the band's history. But I carried with me the impression they the band broke up acrimoniously. I read somewhere that George Martin – their sound engineer and recording producer – found the sessions recording the double White Album in 1968 very hard. The band members were pulling in different directions. Their work didn't have the cohesion of earlier albums like Rubber Soul or Sgt Peppers. He didn't enjoy these sessions and was worried that the band were going to split up.

The Beatles are musical heroes of mine. I admire the creative genius they showed in composing and performing songs. I was sad to think that their last 2 or 3 years as a band weren't happy. So why the tears?

The documentary showed me for the first time that the band did still enjoy working together. There are lovely clips of the band in the recording mixing room hearing a track they have just recorded and grinning as they realise

that yes, “that’s good”, “that’s a keeper.” The film of the band performing on the roof of their recording studio is wonderful. They sang 5 or 6 songs. This was the first time they had played in public since 1966 and ended up being the last time they ever played in public.

I didn’t realise that I had deep within me a grief about the band that I had been carrying for 40 years. The documentary told me another story, a story of the joy the band still found in working together. And I could let go of my grief because I heard and saw that new story.

Napier Anglican priest Alister Hendery in his book *The Grief Walk* calls this disenfranchised grief. “For whatever reason, we are denied the right to grieve and our loss isn’t recognised. … We experience loss, but we come to believe we do not have the right to grieve that loss.” Disenfranchisement occurs when our loss and grief isn’t validated.” Alister is talking about more serious losses like the grief of being forced to leave the family home to live in a rest home, of a loved one developing dementia or of having a mental illness and grieving for your own lost life opportunities that result from it.

We need to find a way to work through and deal with such grief. Our faith can be a part of the answer. Jesus said: “You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.”

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I’d like to share with you some reflections that arise for me out of the documentary, that may be good for us to keep in mind as we worship and work together as a faith community.

Alexander and Charlie gave us the gift of a one month subscription to Disney + online streaming, specifically so that we could watch the documentary. Heather and I enjoyed watching the documentary during the Christmas / New Year break. A good way to unwind after a very full 2022.

The gift was kind and chosen thoughtfully.

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There are two ways of recording pop songs. You can record a drum and percussion track first, then add the bass, then guitars, then keyboard, then lead vocals and backing vocals. The producer then mixes everything together at the end.

The other way is to have all the musicians and singers perform together live in the studio. We have done this with Festival Singers' CD recordings. You run the risk of needing start again if someone makes a big mistake. But the energy that comes from singing and playing together results in a much better recording.

The Beatles were jammed into a studio with mics and wires everywhere, a real jumble. But they could eyeball and listen to each other and the recordings are great. Three of the takes of the tracks that made it onto the final album were from the performance on the roof of the studio – which added the extra element of performing for an audience.

All working together at the same time can be messy but it's worthwhile.

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The band was struggling to finish writing and arranging the song Get Back. Billy Preston an American keyboard player and friend of George Harrison was in town, and George invited him along to the studio. The band then asked Billy to improvise and play along on electric piano while they performed Get Back one more time. Billy's playing gave the song a big lift. It was the missing piece they needed.

Its good to invite someone with new ideas and new energy to join in.

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One of The Beatles would write the words for a song and come to the studio with an idea for the tune and accompaniment. The band would then workshop the song, add to and edit the words, add musical ideas, a guitar riff and create an arrangement. But they never wrote down the musical score – the sheet music for the songs – because they didn't need to. They left that task to a music publisher to do after the album was finished.

While it is likely that Jesus could read Hebrew scripture scrolls in the synagogue, there is no record of him writing down his parables and other teachings. He didn't need to. He was too busy healing and teaching to bother

writing them down. Others would remember what he said, pass it on by word of mouth to the next generation and in time the gospel writers wrote it down for us.

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The version of a song that makes it to an LP or a CD or Spotify is just a snapshot of the state of the song at the time. The best songs evolve and have another life. For example our son Christopher's jazz band takes a composition, plays the opening verse and refrain fairly straight, improvises in the middle, taking turns with solos, then goes back to the theme to play out the song. Every performance of a song is different.

Our understanding of scripture also evolves over time. Scripture doesn't change, we change. Our insights into its meaning develop as we mature and gain more life experience.

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John Lennon says to George Harrison at one point in the documentary, if you haven't worked out all the words to a song just sing some nonsense words in their place, until the right words come to you. That was a revealing insight into John's and Paul's creative process. If you've got most of the words together just, "fake it till you make it." In another recent interview with Paul McCartney he said that he and John probably wrote 300 songs together. Right from the start of their song writing collaboration, either John or Paul would bring an idea for a song and they would work on it until the song was finished. Paul said that they always finished the song that session.

If you've got a good idea, work on it and be confident that you'll get the end result you want.

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Peter Jackson and his team here in Wellington did technically brilliant work with the film footage and recordings that were made in 1969. They took 16mm film and somehow created high resolution wide screen video from it. They created a pioneering new way of editing the audio recordings so that we can clearly hear each person speaking and singing. They can isolate Paul's voice or John's from all the background noise. They then moulded 60 hours

of footage into a coherent 8 hour story narrative for the three-part documentary. A story which I found so moving. Stories are important.

Bible scholars, archaeologists, ancient document restorers and theologians are continually making new discoveries about scripture. These give us new insights into the Bible and our faith, if we are open to exploring and responding to them.

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I learned the Beatitudes as a child, in the form they appear in the NRSV we heard earlier. I checked Eugene Peterson's The Message translation and like his new version, but wanted to be able to match up the traditional words with his words. So you have in your orders of service two translations. Hold on to your order of service and look at both versions this week.

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The word "Amen," is an affirmation. It means "make this be so" or "Let It Be."

I want to end by returning to The Message translation of the beatitudes. After each verse I read out, will you please join me saying, **And we say Amen, Let It Be.** [Repeat]

"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule." **And we say Amen, Let It Be.**

"You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you." **And we say Amen, Let It Be.**

"You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought." **And we say Amen, Let It Be.**

"You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat." **And we say Amen, Let It Be.**

"You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-**full**,' you find yourselves cared **for**." **And we say Amen, Let It Be.**

“You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.” **And we say Amen, Let It Be.**

“You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.” **And we say Amen, Let It Be.**

“You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom.” **And we say Amen, Let It Be.**

I finish with words of hope and reassurance from 15th century English mystic, Julian of Norwich: “All will be well. All manner of things will be well.”

And we say Amen, Let It Be.

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Introduce song. Paul McCartney's mother Mary died of cancer when he was 14. The line in the song, "Mother Mary comes to me, speaking words of wisdom, let it be" relates to a dream Paul had years later of his mother being present and reassuring Paul that "all would be well."

The Roman Catholic church venerates Mary the mother of Jesus and gives her divine status. We could honour that idea by thinking of the Mary in the song as being a female aspect of God, alongside Spirit/Sophia/Wisdom. It's a positive, uplifting song.

Song: Let It Be (Lennon/McCartney)
Sung for you by Philip and Heather

1. When I find myself in times of trouble
   Mother Mary comes to me
   Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.
   And in my hour of darkness
   She is standing right in front of me
   Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.

   Let it be, Let it be, Let it be, Let it be
   Whisper words of wisdom, Let it be.

2. And when the broken hearted people
   living in the world agree
   There will be an answer, let it be.
   For though they may be parted
   there is still a chance that they will see
   There will be an answer, let it be.

   Let it be, Let it be, Let it be, Let it be
   Whisper words of wisdom, Let it be.

3. And when the night is cloudy
   there is still a light that shines on me
   Shine until tomorrow, let it be.
   I wake up to the sound of music
   Mother Mary comes to me
   Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.

   Let it be, Let it be, Let it be, Let it be
   There will be an answer, let it be.
   Let it be, Let it be, Let it be, Let it be
   Whisper words of wisdom, Let it be.

Community Time

Sharing the Peace

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

Notices

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

Prayers of Intercession
To the bidding: "Challenge our values again, Jesus, and in your mercy," would you please respond with: **"hear our prayer."**

Lord's Prayer [Sung]

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)

Blessing of Offering (said together)

We bring our gifts in gratitude for the generosity of God.
We bring our gifts in expectation
that they will be used for the work of God.
We bring our gifts in love for the people of God.
We bring our gifts asking for God's blessing upon them.
Amen.

Hymn: Will you come and follow me.

(John Bell & Graham Maule. Tune: Kelvingrove)

1. Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
   Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
   Will you let my love be shown? Will you let my name be known,
   will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

2. Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
   Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
   Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
   Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

3. Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
   Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
   Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,
   and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

4. Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?
   Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?
   Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around,
   through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

5. Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
   Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
   In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show.
   Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

Benediction

You are God's servants, gifted with dreams and visions.
Upon you rests the grace of God like flames of fire.
Love and serve the Lord in the strength of the Spirit.

May the deep peace of Christ be with you,
the strong arms of God sustain you,
and the power of the Holy Spirit
strengthen you in every way. **Amen.**

The Grace (Said together)

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 and readings for this service were sourced from: *Gathering* – The United Church of Canada; *Let Us Pray*, Janet Nelson 1999; Diane Karay Tripp, quoted in *Art of Curating Worship,* Mark Pierson 2010; Philip Garside.

The Beatles: Get Back | Official Trailer | Disney+. © Walt Disney Studios 14 Oct 2021
https://youtu.be/Auta2lagtw4

Let It Be lyrics by John Lennon and Paul McCartney.
© 1970 Northern Songs Ltd / Blackwood Music Inc

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

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