

# ORDER OF SERVICE

7 February 2021

0930      **Welcome**

Good morning and welcome to our service today. What a week it has been. Each of us will have been impacted over the past week, if not by the terrible fires, the lockdown has been unexpected and disruptive. Then at the end of the week, the Victorian parliament passed its Change or Suppression Practices legislation. It is only human to be shaken, upset, and distracted by these events. In all our anxiety, we are grateful to have in Christ a confidant, a surety of His love and hope given through His life and resurrection.

We are joined today by Dr Lachlan Dunjey. Lachlan has a lifetime of advocating for Christian values and morality both in family life and in medical circles. He will share a message from the Lord with us shortly, and we thank him for putting together his usual thoughtful, though provoking and prayerful message.

0932      **Opening Prayer**

Prayer for each of us, that we will find comfort and understanding through the Holy Spirit. Pray for those in our community impacted by the fires. Pray for our hearts and minds as we spend time together this morning, that we will hear, learn, and be strengthened.

0934      **Singing**

*There is a hope*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o\\_yv5yGZnBc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_yv5yGZnBc)

*How deep the Father's love*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzQj7XvKFmA>

*He will hold me fast*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=936BapRFHaQ>

0946      **Prayer Time**

Rhodesie

Pray for our leaders – Father, we bring before you the leaders of our Nation, acknowledging their difficult choices and priorities. We ask that you speak to their hearts, that you will raise people of faith to be around them, to advise them and to be your salt in our parliaments and leadership. We pray against the agendas of the evil one and those who seek to spread his lies and division in our society.



**Darlington 7 Feb 2021.** (Suggested reading or readings Psalm 84 and Psalm 126.)

Good morning Darlington Church. I wish for you a good day and protection from the fires. I pray for strength for many of you as you reach out to help and strengthen others who have been impacted by fire.

Paul, in his letter to the church at Ephesus, wrote *Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.* (Eph 5:15,16)

### **How then shall we live?**

Bushfires. Homes lost. Days of uncertainty; days of confusion! A new and more virulent virus on our shores courtesy of the United Kingdom. Will the vaccine really work and which ones? What do we do? How then should we live? I am aware I have used this sermon title before – the first time I think was just a few days after 9/11 twenty years ago. The title is of course borrowed from Francis Schaeffer's book of a similar title

And so, you may remember we have a mixture of emotions and attitudes for our early morning prayer meetings and many would be experiencing this strange mix at this time

Mourning for our world  
Grief for our nation  
Excitement for tomorrow  
Joy for today

And I want to explore these more fully and what is required of us.

You might wonder why I have separated mourning and grief. Mourning I am using conveniently for what is happening to us and our world through no particular fault of our own, for which we are not directly responsible e.g. disaster. Grief is to express for that which we are responsible – in particular the ethical and moral decline of our nation.

### **So, mourning for our world.**

So much to comprehend. International conflict, persecution, global disasters with viruses, famine, floods, and earthquake to name a few. Yes, we pray for and support individual missionaries and organisations that work there to strengthen the church and provide relief.

Persecution of God's people has reached new heights with oppressive regimes as in North Korea and China in particular, Hindu persecution of Christians in India particularly Uttar Pradesh, and Islamic attacks in Africa. We read – from Open Doors – that there were 74 countries last year where 340 million Christians were facing high to extreme levels of persecution and an average of 13 Christians killed every day.

Let those figures sink in.

This is not a war between nations, it is a war against Christians,

In Nigeria and other African countries specific targeting of Christian villages and mass killings.

And we mourn and we pray for our world. The prophet Daniel, after being confronted with a vision of what was to happen wrote *"I, Daniel, was worn out. I lay exhausted for several days. Then I got up and went about the King's business."* (Dan 8:27). We must mourn in fellowship with our suffering brothers and sisters elsewhere but when we can do nil else then we get up and get on with the King's business – our job here.

On a lesser scale remember our friend Dr Ken Elliott in captivity probably somewhere in Mali, 5 years as from 15 January. We have reason to believe he is still alive. Aged 86.

And then, in the midst of conflicting news reports – who can you trust anyway? – is the situation in the USA. We mourn and we pray that God will still have mercy on the USofA.

So, mourning for our world and the suffering church.

And mourning in the same sense for what is happening In our own communities with the fires.

**PRAYER. The persecuted church. Dr Elliott. Fires.**

### **Grief for what is happening in and to our nation.**

Social and moral decay. We've virtually lost the euthanasia and abortion battles. You may have read my blog after we lost the euthanasia battle in WA. We did everything right with palliative care declaring there was no need for patients to die in pain and in every other way we did it right but all the logical and compelling medical arguments were brushed aside with the Premier declaring "it's the right thing to do".

We're losing the free speech battle and we are losing the belief battle. Witness the attack on 2 would-be Liberal candidates this week for what they believe.

And with the legislations banning counselling and prayer for teens wanting to change their sex and criminalising parents, counsellors and doctors with threats of 10 yrs in prison or fines in 100s of 1000s of dollars, this warfare against God and His Creation has reached a new level in Australia.

But we add to that the indoctrination of sexual and gender permissiveness through state schools through to the ridiculous such as children must not ask what sex the newborn baby is because "it hasn't decided yet".

We are becoming more and more of a society of doing – as in the time of Judges – what is right "in our own eyes", the promotion of autonomy and the promotion of pleasure *today*, with no fear or even regard of future consequences.

Think of the Tower of Babel "WE will do it OUR way". And in the time of the Judges "I did it MY way".

We are on the brink of losing freedom of speech and belief and already people are being persecuted, being passed over for employment, being excluded from universities, meeting places being closed down. Margaret Court being bullied for what she believes with venomous hate being directed at her. Margaret Court clothes herself in honour with all that she does. Her accusers and detractors clothes themselves in dishonour and hate. Pray for her. Pray also for her enemies.

Doctors are being targeted. Also pray for Dr Jereth Kok, now suspended from his GP practice for 1 yr and 5 months because of what he has written, not because of him being in any way negligent as a doctor.

**PRAYER. We are conscious of a new level of attack against You and Your Creation and of the reality of war in the heavenlies... Dr Jereth Kok**

There is an increasing climate of fear in doctors. Prof of Paediatrics, Dr John Whitehall has written extensively recently re transgenders. He noted that 28 other paediatricians agreed with what he had written but were not prepared to put their names to it.

You may also have noticed that in the passing of the Conversion therapy law through the lower house in Victoria that not one of the Liberal MPs voted against the bill. Why? Fear.

We should be encouraging minors to seek a second, third or fourth opinion from doctors, priests, pastors and other professionals before embarking on a path that could alter their bodies irreversibly with a limited chance of improving their mental health. Yet the Victorian law will make it illegal to do anything other than pat them on the head. The issue here is not the maturity of minors, but the intellectual immaturity of adults who exploit teenage anxiety for ideological ends. Prohibited actions include "carrying out a religious practice, including but not limited to, a prayer-based practice". The prohibition applies whether or not the subject consented to the prayer-based activity. The penalty is up to 10 years' imprisonment or an enormous fine. Binary.

We have an election in 8 weeks. How do we protect our children? We have had two female candidates for Liberal being severely questioned because of their beliefs, both keen Christians, both committed to social and moral change in our country. Andrea Tokaji a brilliant lawyer, founder of the Fighting for Justice Foundation and Amanda-Sue Markham, wife of an outspoken pastor and writer.

Please put Australian Christians as [1] and then your other choices, *not* the other way around. Your vote transfers at full value to your next choice if your first choice does not get in.

And so, in humility before God, we must grieve.

Ezekiel 9:3-6a

<sup>3</sup>Now the glory of the God of Israel went up from above the cherubim, where it had been, and moved to the threshold of the temple. Then the LORD called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side and said to him, "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it." As I listened, he said to the others, "Follow him through the city and kill, without showing pity or compassion. Slaughter the old men, the young men and women, the mothers and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary."

And so we mourn and we pray Dan 10:2,3.

At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. <sup>3</sup>I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.

Do we suffer calamity because of what we have done? Or what we have allowed? For the people of Israel in captivity in Babylon the answer was yes. For Job, the answer was no. The rain falls on the just and the unjust. But it is true that as a nation we are turning away from God and so we pray, as did Daniel

Daniel's prayer 9:4-19

I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed:

"Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, <sup>5</sup> we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. <sup>6</sup> We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.

"Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—

"Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. <sup>19</sup> Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name." Daniel 9:4-19

I wrote three years ago

This framework of our feelings – this attitude (of grief) – should underlie all that we do and speak. It should make us passionate in our telling others of the Good News that Jesus Christ forgives, heals and restores.

It should inform and set the context of our meeting together, in our services – even the songs we sing – to be desperate in learning and memorising the Bible, teaching and encouraging each other and the next generation, telling the story, telling the great story to our children and grandchildren – telling the story of how He rescued us.

It should govern our time and how we spend it. There may be activities and pleasures that we will no longer want to waste time on. There may be an extended holiday that just seems less important when we realise that which is really important.

And so we move, somewhat strangely to our third attitude

### **Excitement for tomorrow.**

I am reminded of the old hymn

God holds the key to all unknown  
and I am glad  
If other hands should hold the key  
or if He trusted it to me  
I might be sad.

We have certain responsibilities as his children. We must prepare for persecution. We must be a Voice for righteousness as have many others in history and as much as possible ensure a safe place for our children and when that is no longer possible to have prepared our children and our society for that time.

This is serious. This is the most serious task that I can lay upon you.

How do we prepare personally? We place our relationship with our Lord and Master above everything else. As above it should govern our time and how we spend it. We place a high priority on prayer and including intercessory prayer. We read and learn the scriptures. We recite them as we walk along the road and when we are driving. We sing and remember the words. We build a STOREHOUSE of scripture and songs in our mind.

We replace tapes in our mind that are unwelcome or unwholesome with good tapes. There are some replaying thoughts and tracks that are difficult or even impossible to fight against as part of ruminating thought processes particularly when depressed and the better mental strategy is to change the tape. Take it out and put in a praise tape utilising the music that is in our brain, so, SING A SONG even if its just Jesus loves me.

I was explaining this to one of my patients one day and he said REPLANT and I said yes, not being really sure of any difference. And he explained: "whatsoever things are...

**Right Excellent Pure Lovely Admirable Noble True ...think on these things"**

And it's all there in Philippians 4!! It can be applied to our thoughts or specifically of the attributes of God that are right, excellent etc so that we can praise Him effectively (even when we don't feel like it).

<http://www.chooselifeaustralia.org.au/life/replant/>

And so, excitement? Yes, because He does hold the future. Even in the sense of "I wonder how God in going to work this one out?" One day the words of Isaiah 65:25 will be fulfilled

*“The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain” says the LORD.*

God will hold us and keep us in all circumstances. One day, He will come again in victory and put all things right.

### **Joy for today.**

Yes.

Joy is sometimes “accidental” in that it just happens. Give glory to God. Sometimes it just must be deliberate – an attitude of mind that pervades our thinking as we go through the day. As Paul writes in Philippians 4:4 “Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again – rejoice!”

We learn to rejoice and to have joy in spite of circumstances.

There may be times when grief is overwhelming and joy seems far away, but joy *does* “come in the morning” as it says in Psalm 30:5, the context being that the psalmist acknowledges that God is God

“weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning”.

And Psalm 84:6

“when they walk through the valley of weeping it will become a place of springs where pools of blessing and refreshment collect after rains”

And Psalm 126:5,6

Those who sow with tears  
will reap with songs of joy.  
Those who go out weeping,  
carrying seed to sow,  
will return with songs of joy,  
carrying sheaves with them.

If there are continuing bad circumstances, current or continuing grief then joy becomes even more an attitude as expressed in Psalm 84:10 “I would rather be a doorkeeper in the temple of my God than live the good life in the homes of the wicked”. And my transliteration of that is

JOY  
I'd rather be here with You  
my Lord and my God  
in the valley  
than anywhere else without You

But also remember the connection between suffering and glory as Paul expressed so well

“For our light and momentary troubles are *achieving* for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all”. 2 Cor 4:17

Note the connection. The troubles *achieve* the glory. How does the glory come? Through the troubles. These truths are so deep but so true.

I pray for you that these feelings in times of deep trouble may co-exist with a sense of anticipation and excitement for the future and joy for today.

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## **Appendix: Margaret Court and Bullying, Hate and Discrimination**

Should an Australian be bullied for what they believe?

Margaret simply believes in the Creator God who created male and female and ordained their joining together in marriage.

And yes, she preaches that truth in a Christian context – and, when necessary, states that truth in public.

The accusations that such statements and preaching is “hate speech” is extraordinary and is in itself hateful.

The serious hateful speech and objections to being honoured for achievements in the sporting world on the grounds of her beliefs in the non-sporting world are discriminatory and out of line.

In her own relationships with and helping people of differing beliefs and backgrounds she shows extraordinary love in action and no discrimination. It is the opposite of what she is accused.

The vitriol expressed by leaders who should know better is extreme and dishonouring to those leaders.

Margaret Court clothes herself in honour and honours the Creator God of the universe.

The extreme critics clothe themselves in dishonour and hate.