

Darlington Christian Fellowship – 19 April, Speaker Peter Abetz

Welcome everyone to this week's virtual service at Darlington Christian Fellowship. What a different Easter we have had! I think I read somewhere that not being able to meet at Easter hadn't happened to the Church in England since the 1200's. What extraordinary times we are in.

I trust that your Easter still had as much meaning and that you were blessed as you shared in the messages on the website for both Good Friday and Sunday.

Our speaker today is Peter Abetz. Who is Peter? Peter served as a pastor in the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia for 25 years before being elected to the WA State Parliament, where he served for 8 years. He now serves as an elder at Gateway Community Church in Cockburn, is Deputy Mayor at the City of Gosnells, and serves as the WA State Director of the Australian Christian Lobby. He loves preaching the Word!

We have been privileged to share previously with him in our services, and we look forward to hearing what the Lord has to say to us through him today.

We will commence our service today with a word of prayer

Dear Lord – we are so thankful today that we can share in worship in our homes using modern technology, but with the knowledge that we are united together in prayer wherever we are. We are your church, your people, and we care about each other. We are missing seeing each other, but you are blessing us every day. We have phones and computers that enable us to share our trials and our joys, and our love for you. There are many others in our communities that are lost at this time, and don't have anyone to turn to. Help us to reach out to those in need, to be sensitive to those who are anxious and to be great encouragers. Thank you especially that you are our comfort and that we can cast all of our cares and worries on you. Amen

We are now going to worship the Lord through music, with two songs. The first is All my Days (Beautiful Saviour). This is chosen to help us keep our focus on Easter and the amazing sacrifice that Christ made for each of us. And just what a Beautiful Saviour he is. Hallelujah!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSm6fdZHI5Q>

All my days I will sing this song of gladness
Give my praise to the Fountain of delights
For in my helplessness You heard my cry
And waves of mercy poured down on my life.

I will trust in the cross of my Redeemer
I will sing of the blood that never fails
Of sins forgiven of conscience cleansed
Of death defeated and life without end

Beautiful Saviour, wonderful Counsellor
Clothed in majesty, Lord of history
You're the Way, the Truth, the Life
Star of the Morning, glorious in holiness
You're the Risen One, heaven's Champion
And You reign, You reign over all

I long to be where the praise is never ending
Yearn to dwell where the glory never fades
Where countless worshippers will share one song
And cries of worthy will honour the lamb

Beautiful Saviour, wonderful Counsellor
Clothed in majesty, Lord of history
You're the Way, the Truth, the Life
Star of the Morning, glorious in holiness
You're the Risen One, heaven's Champion
And You reign, You reign over all

Our second song, You're the Word of God the Father, also turns our focus on Jesus, the Word. I especially like the second verse "Yet you left the gaze of angels, came to seek and save the lost and exchanged the joy of heaven for the anguish of the cross....."

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

You're the Word of God the Father

From before the world began

Every star and every planet

Has been fashioned by Your hand

All creation holds together

By the power of Your voice

Let the skies declare Your glory

Let the land and sea rejoice

You're the Author of creation

You're the Lord of every man

And Your cry of love rings out

Across the land.

Yet You left the gaze of angels

Came to seek and save the lost

And exchanged the joy of heaven

For the anguish of a cross

With a prayer You fed the hungry

With a word You stilled the sea

Yet how silently You suffered

That the guilty may go free.

You're the Author of creation

You're the Lord of every man

And Your cry of love rings out
Across the land.

With a shout You rose victorious
Wresting victory from the grave
And ascended into heaven
Leading captives in Your wake
Now You stand before the Father
Interceding for your own
From each tribe and tongue and nation
You are leading sinners home

You're the Author of creation
You're the Lord of every man
And Your cry of love rings out
Across the land.

I am sure some of you have read many articles about the Covid 19 pandemic progress and the changes it is making. There are many Christian response messages available on the web, and there are many that provide encouragement to us in difficult times. I thought of including something from one at first, but scripture is without doubt the best place to go in these times. The Psalms are my first choice, and we will sing one of them shortly, but Isaiah 41:10 also gives great comfort:

Fear not, for I am with you;

Be not dismayed, for I am your God;

I will strengthen you, I will help you;

I will uphold you with my righteous right hand

Psalm 23 is probably the most precious psalm to many of us, and the one we best remember from Sunday School. The reason for that is that it is a great psalm of comfort and assurance. There are a few versions of it in

song, and this version may be new to you, but it is easy to sing and has that same powerful message we all know.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN4tPkX0MG0>

The Lord's my shepherd I'll not want
He makes me lie in pastures green
He leads me by the still, still waters
His goodness restores my soul.

And I will trust in You alone
And I will trust in You alone
Endless mercy follows me
Goodness will lead me home

He guides my ways in righteousness
And he anoints my head with oil
And my cup it overflows with joy
I feast on His pure delight
And I will trust in You alone
And I will trust in You alone
Endless mercy follows me
Goodness will lead me home

And though I walk the darkest path
I will not fear the evil one
For You are with me and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know

And I will trust in You alone

And I will trust in You alone
Endless mercy follows me
Goodness will lead me home

Announcements:

News from your Council is that giving to the church is remaining on budget, with most people now using direct debit for giving. One area however is falling away, and that is the children's offering which supports children at the Kantalomba School. Direct debit can be used for single donations in addition to your regular giving.

The Council has also been aware that the church grounds have been needing a working bee, but we are prevented from arranging one. We have therefore arranged for 3 workers from Shalom House to undertake up to 4 hours work at the church, thus enabling the grounds and the church (gutters) to be maintained in good order and also we are able to help support Shalom House.

In his report to Council Rob reminded us, and all of the church community to pray for the future of our church. Satan can use times such as this to break up churches. We also need to keep the fellowship going, and keep in contact with each other – not just sticking to the groups that Rob arranged.

There are celebrations afoot in our church! – 2 people that I know of have reached significant milestones. Rob has reached the grand old age of 70 (today?) and now has to be officially accompanied by his carer – the much younger of the duo, Sue – should he want to venture far. Congratulations Rob and may God's richest blessings continue to be poured out upon you.

The other celebration is Ray Christmas's 85th birthday. We thank God for you Ray and the wonderful work of God in your life and your service in our church. We hope you both have a wonderful day – better than you may have thought.

We will now continue to worship God in prayer.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your great mercy and grace to us, especially as we remember your great sacrifice for us all, on the cross of Calvary.

I pray that this time of isolation would be a time of reflection on You and your plans for each one of us. Thank you that they are "plans for good and not for evil, to give us a future and a hope" – the hope of glory. I pray that none of us will grow weary or lose hope, but that we would rise up on wings of eagles and be refreshed in Your Spirit today.

We bring before you our petitions – especially praying for the world leaders and their governments that they would know that you are sovereign Lord over all the earth and that they need to humbly seek your counsel in all of their decision making which affects their decision making. We especially pray and thank you for our Christian Governor General and our Prime Minister. Please continue to cover them, guide them and strengthen them in all the big decisions of the time which are so vital for our nation. I pray that the witness of Scott Morrison in his dependence on You would have a mighty impact on his peers and they would want Jesus as their guide also.

I thank you for this beautiful country that we are so privileged to inhabit, We pray for restoration of the forests and wildlife that have been so badly decimated by the bushfires and the people who are struggling to rebuild their homes and lives.

As we sit in peace and tranquility, our thoughts and prayers turn to our fellow Christians in place around the world there is hatred and wars. We bring before you God, the ,many who have been forced out of their homes and cities in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and west Africa. We pray also for the peace of Israel as we are instructed to do in your Word.

I pray for the abused and oppressed, especially the women of the world who are sold into slavery in ever increasing numbers and thank you for the brave people who risk their lives in working to save them. We pray that the traffickers would be stopped and slaves set free by the name of Jesus.

We pray for the scientists and doctors as they work towards finding a cure for the Covid 19 virus and that your mighty hand would protect all the allied health professionals working long, hard hours to bring healing to the desperately sick people.

God, we know that nothing is too hard for you and we can look back in gratitude for your loving kindness toward us all. Today I bring before you our elderly friends – Shirley, Ida, Joy, Mavis, Heather and Ray and thank you for their steadfast love and trust in you, and their faithful witness over many years. Bless them all this week I pray.

We pray for our missionaries, some in remote and lonely places away from home and loved ones – perhaps today particularly missing loved

ones. We remember Narelle Barnsley, Vicky & Juan, the Becks and our own Denise. May they know Your presence in a special way today.

We pray for the leaders of your church. I thank you the sacrifices they have made in order to be shepherds of your flock. I ask for strength, patience and obedience for Rob & Sue, and the Council members as they minister to us weekly. Give them courage to teach us your truths and lead us onward in our Christian journey. Help us to be a blessing to them and each other by praying, encouraging and loving to the best of our ability.

For all these things, I ask your blessing over and pray all this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Amen

We now have two more songs to sing before Pater brings us the message, Standing on the Promises and It is Well With my Soul

I have chosen this lovely old hymn, Standing, because in uncertain times God's promises are a rock that we can stand on.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVeHDun_oEQ

Standing on the promises of Christ my King
Through eternal ages let His praises ring
Glory in the highest I will shout and sing
Standing on the promises of God

Standing, standing,

Standing on the promises of God my Saviour

Standing, standing,

I'm standing on the promises of God

Standing on the promises that cannot fail
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail
By the living Word of God I shall prevail
Standing on the promises of God

Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord
Bound to Him eternally by love's strong cord
Overcoming daily with the Spirit's sword
Standing on the promises of God

Standing on the promises I cannot fail
List'ning every moment to the Spirit's call
Resting in my Saviour as my All in all
Standing on the promises of God

It is Well with my Soul is also another old favourite, full of wonderful assurance. This is a modern version which we have sung before.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJnbylpdS1U>

Now when peace like a river attendeth my soul,
And when sorrows like sea billows roll,
Then whatever my lot You have taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

It is well with my soul when the storms of winter blow,
And the cares of this world take their toll.
In the heat of the day there is grace enough to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

And when satan should tempt me and trials should come,
Let this blessed assurance control:
For He sees every weakness and knows every fear,
And has shed His own blood for my soul.

As Peter comes to share his message with us we will firstly commit this time to prayer.

Lord, we thank that Peter is able to share this message with us today. We pray your blessing on all that he has to say, that you will enable these

words to reach into our innermost thoughts as we listen. Guide and lead us into a deeper understanding of you through this message. Amen

Message – Peter Abetz

Our final song today is Peter's request for "In Christ Alone"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouGuG97I2RY>

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied –
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine –
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand:

Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

Prayer – thank you Lord for blessing us today as we have met in this unique way. Absent in body but united in prayer and fellowship through this service. Watch over and protect all those in this little flock we pray in Jesus name. Amen