

# The Service of the Lord's Day

Saint Margaret's Uniting Church, Mooroolbark  
Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2018 - Pentecost 26  
Worship Leader – Rev. Dr. Barry Brown

## We Gather to Worship God

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE WURUNDJERI PEOPLE

[Please stand as the Bible is carried in to commence Worship]

WE SING "*God is our strength and refuge* (Ps 46) TiS 28

1

God is our strength and refuge,  
our present help in trouble;  
and we therefore will not fear,  
though the earth should change,  
though mountains shake and tremble,  
though swirling waters are raging:  
God the Lord of Hosts is with us evermore.

2

There is a flowing river  
within God's holy city;  
God is in the midst of her,  
she shall not be moved.  
God's help is swiftly given,  
thrones vanish at his presence;  
God the Lord of Hosts is with us evermore.

3

Come, see the works of our maker,  
learn of his deeds all-powerful:  
wars will cease across the world  
when he shatters the spear.  
Be still and know your creator,  
uplift him in the nations;  
God the Lord of Hosts is with us evermore.

GREETING, WELCOME and CALL TO WORSHIP

PRAYERS OF ADORATION and CONFESSION

WORD'S DECLARING GOD'S FORGIVING GRACE

## We Listen to God's Word:

AN EARLY WORD AND PRAYER WITH THE CHILDREN

## The Baptism of Lincoln Jagger Sholakis

SCRIPTURE SENTENCES - THE GOSPEL READING:

Matthew 28: 16 – 20 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

## THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

APOSTLE'S CREED (The people stand as they are able)

Do you believe in God, who made you and loves you?

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

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, your Saviour and Lord?

***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,  
and the continuing work of our salvation?

***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.***

WE SING “Father welcomes all his children...” TIS 491

*Father welcomes all his children  
to his family through his Son;  
Father giving his salvation,  
life for ever has been won.*

1

Little children, come to me,  
for my kingdom is of these;  
life and love I have to give,  
mercy for your sin.

2

In the water, in the word  
in his promise, be assured:  
those who are baptized and believe  
shall be born again.

3

Let us daily die to sin,  
let us daily rise with him,  
walk in the love of Christ our Lord,  
live in the peace of God.

PRESENTATION OF THE FAMILY and GODPARENTS

THE PARENTS' REQUEST, RENUNCIATION and AFFIRMATION

PRAYER OVER THE WATER and THE BAPTISM

WE SING THE ANCIENT AARONIC BLESSING [Num 6:24 – 26]

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.

THE RESPONSES: The Parents, then the Congregation:

***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.***

WE WELCOME LINCOLN INTO THE CHURCH AS HE IS TAKEN AMONG THE CONGREGATION,  
SINGING:

*"Loving Spirit, loving Spirit ...."*

TiS 417

1

Loving Spirit, loving Spirit,  
you have chosen me to be -  
you have drawn me to your wonder,  
you have set your sign on me.

2

Like a mother you enfold me,  
hold my life within your own,  
feed me with your very body,  
form me of your flesh and bone.

3

Like a father you protect me,  
teach me the discerning eye,  
hoist me up upon your shoulder,  
let me see the world from high.

4

Friend and lover, in your closeness  
I am known and held and blessed:  
in your promise is my comfort,  
in your presence I may rest.

5

Loving Spirit, loving Spirit,  
you have chosen me to be --  
you have drawn me to your wonder,  
you have set your sign on me.

PRESENTATION: [Candle, Certificate, Children's Bible, Dove]

A PRAYER FOR SHOLAKIS FAMILY and for all the children who are part of our church community.

***Amen***

[The Children leave for their Activities]

## THE SERVICE OF THE WORD:

# Four Families – Four Intersecting Stories

The following is a longer manuscript version of the sermon preached by Rev Dr Barry Brown at Saint Margaret's Church, Mooroolbark, on 18 November 2018. The preached sermon was shorter, less formal and some parts were varied slightly.

### Introduction

This morning we have participated in the baptism of Lincoln Jagger Sholakis. This is a 'faith event' for Lincoln and his family. We encourage Lincoln's parents to tell him about this occasion from time to time – and perhaps give him a copy of the Order of Service (and this Proclamation) when he is older. You might also like to re-light the baptismal candle on the anniversary of this day – reminding him, not only that he WAS baptized, but that he IS baptized. This is also a 'faith event' for the Congregation of Saint Margaret's Uniting Church.

Andrew and Melissa have taken the initiative to request Baptism for Lincoln; something they also did for their daughter Georgia a few years ago through the Manningham Congregation. Baptism reminds us that our relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, is one of Grace – a Response to God's divine love for us before we make our response. This, by the way, is why the parents and the Congregation are asked to make promises after the baptism - not before, as a prerequisite.

The Baptism liturgy initiates the baptized person into the life of the Christian Church; and we have acted on behalf of the whole Church in receiving Lincoln into that universal body. Baptism also involves a Dedication – of the child to God, and of the parents to their task of being Christian parents. Their own child is then 'received back' to be raised within the Christian Faith – with the love and support of the Church.

Much of the Judeo – Christian Tradition and Proclamation is continually passed on by way of Story. Today I will connect Lincoln and his family's story with three other family stories – each separated by 1000 years (give or take a decade or two). The first is from the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament) and is about Samuel, an early Prophet who was born about a generation before 1000 BCE. We then turn to the Birth and Dedication of Jesus (about 5 BCE by our modern calendar). Finally, we shall hear something of the story of Saint Margaret of Scotland as a way of commemorating her Christian life and service. November 16th is her 'feast day' and the anniversary of her death in the year 1093 CE.

I will then make some concluding remarks. May these be to all of us words of inspiration, challenge and encouragement.

### Samuel, Hannah's son

In this story, found in the first chapters of the 1st Book of Samuel, we are taken back to a time just before the creation of Israel's first monarchy. King Saul is anointed as the first king in 1020 BCE and later replaced by the anointing of King David in 1000 BCE; each at the hands of Samuel. Samuel, the 'king-maker,' is a holy man and represents a transition from the leadership of holy Judges in a loose confederation of the 12 Hebrew tribes, to the creation of Prophets who seek to keep a check on the kings of the newly created monarchy of a united state, Israel.

Today's story is a prequel to these events. The story starts in a rural setting in the hill country of Ephraim. A farmer by the name of Elkanah had two wives. One, Peninnah, had several children. The other, Hannah, had not been able to conceive and was deeply humiliated and anguished about this; and it did not help that Peninnah found ways to draw attention to Hannah's plight. This went on for some years.

Once a year Elkanah would take his family to Shiloh, the ancient religious centre of the Hebrew people, to make a sacrifice and to feast. It was on these occasions that Hannah felt most acutely her lack of a children. Elkanah, because of his love for Hannah, tried to comfort and encourage her, but without success. While at Shiloh one year Hannah slipped away and went to pray at the entrance to the

temple. Here she prayed silently, her lips moving without sound as she cried out her grief to God. Hannah made a vow that if she could have a son he would be presented to God for life-long service. Eli, the priest in charge, noticed this and, because prayers were normally spoken out loud, he assumed Hannah was intoxicated. At Eli's initiative, Hannah gave a full account of her deep anguish and her fervent prayer. Eli the priest comforted her and blessed her: "Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him" (1 Samuel 1:17).

Hannah returned to her family's quarters much encouraged and joyfully joined in the feasting. Elkanah and his family returned home, and it was not long before Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son, Samuel. For the next few years Hannah and her son stayed at home when the rest of the family made their annual pilgrimage to Shiloh. But once Samuel was old enough, the two joined the annual pilgrimage. Following a special offering, including a three-year old bull, Hannah presented her son Samuel to Eli the priest, reminding him of their earlier encounter and telling of the blessing of a son. Her concluding words were: "For this child I prayed; and the Lord has granted me the petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives, he is given to the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:27).

Hannah left her son Samuel to be raised and trained for religious service by Eli the priest at Shiloh. The Book of Samuel then records Hannah's Prayer. It is also known as 'Hannah's Song.' It is highly likely this song has undergone some editing as it was passed on from oral to written tradition, from generation to generation, and from one language to another. The song has echoes of the animosity between two women in a three-way marriage – something foreign to us. It also has tones of revenge and ideas of the vengeance of God, which we as Christians measure alongside the more merciful and grace-full understanding of God revealed through Jesus. It is even tempting to leave some verses out of our reading – as is often the case with some difficult Old Testament passages. However, this temptation has been resisted.

(1 Samuel 2:1–10):

1 Hannah prayed and said,

“My heart exults in the LORD;  
my strength is exalted in my God.  
My mouth derides my enemies,  
because I rejoice in my victory.

2 “There is no Holy One like the LORD,  
no one besides you;  
there is no Rock like our God.

3 Talk no more so very proudly,  
let not arrogance come from your mouth;  
for the LORD is a God of knowledge,  
and by him actions are weighed.

4 The bows of the mighty are broken,  
but the feeble gird on strength.

5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,  
but those who were hungry are fat with spoil.  
The barren has borne seven,  
but she who has many children is forlorn.

6 The LORD kills and brings to life;  
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

7 The LORD makes poor and makes rich;  
he brings low, he also exalts.

8 He raises up the poor from the dust;  
he lifts the needy from the ash heap,  
to make them sit with princes  
and inherit a seat of honour.

For the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S,  
and on them he has set the world.

- 9 “He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,  
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness;  
for not by might does one prevail.
- 10 The LORD! His adversaries shall be shattered;  
the Most High will thunder in heaven.  
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;  
he will give strength to his king,  
and exalt the power of his anointed.”

We now sing a hymn, particularly noting the Refrain (Here I am, Lord) which echoes the response of Samuel to the call of God to prophetic service (1 Samuel 3). This chapter begins with Samuel as a boy learning from the aging priest, Eli. It concludes with Samuel as God’s prophet, replacing old Eli as Israel’s central religious authority.

WE SING “*I the Lord of sea and sky..*” (*Here I am, Lord*) *TiS 658*

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?  
*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 word 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  
till their hearts are satisfied.  
I will give my life to them.  
Whom shall I send?

### **Jesus, Mary’s son**

The reason the three-year Lectionary of the Church includes at this time the story of Hannah and her son, and especially Hannah’s prayer-song, is its clear link with the birth story of Jesus, and the Song of Mary (The Magnificat). This is about 1000 years on from the story of Hannah and Samuel. We are soon to enter the seasons of Advent, then Christmas, when this story will be retold and Mary’s Song will be sung in worship.

Mary’s story is in some contrast with that of Hannah. Mary is engaged, but not married. She finds herself pregnant to her great surprise and, initially, anguish. She has been informed that she will

give birth to a true descendent of King David (whom Samuel had anointed 1000 years before). However, following a visit to her cousin Elizabeth (who is also pregnant with the child, later to be known as John the Baptist), Mary acknowledged she had been blessed and accepted the great challenge. Like Hannah before her, Mary offers a prayer – song. We will later sing a paraphrase of this to conclude our worship – “Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord...”. You will notice the significant likeness of the two prayers – songs, and realize how Mary’s Song may well have been influenced by the written form of Hannah’s Prayer.

We don’t need here to be reminded of the whole Christmas narrative; and we shall soon hear it several times and through various forms in the coming weeks. However, it is worth recalling that when Jesus was eight days old his parents took him to the Temple in Jerusalem where he was circumcised and a modest thanksgiving offering was made. Jesus was ‘presented to the Lord’ because, Luke tells us, “every first-born male shall be designated as holy to the Lord” (Luke 2:23). And two elderly witnesses, Simeon and Anna, are themselves blessed by witnessing the dedication of Jesus and, in turn, they bless the child and his parents.

This part of Luke’s birth narrative concludes: “When they had finished everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favour of God was upon him” (Luke 2:39-40). The very next story in Luke takes place when Jesus is 12 years old. This tells how engrossed Jesus was in the Jerusalem’s Temple and the things of God, that his parents inadvertently left him behind when it was time to go home. His explanation to his parents are the very first words of Jesus to be recorded by Luke: “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49).

### **Margaret Queen of Scots**

We move on now another 1000 years, give or take a decade or so, to another family; that which includes Margaret, later Queen of the Scots. We do this because Saint Margaret is the person after whom this congregation is named, and because 16th November (last Friday) was her feast day and the date on which she is believed to have died. Saint Margaret’s life and Christian service we commemorate. It is also helpful that we also attend to the story of a female, and not just on boys. Margaret and her two siblings, Cristina and Edgar, were born in Hungary. Her birth was in either 1045 or 1046 CE. She was an English princess by direct descent from King Alfred of England and was sometimes known as Margaret of Wessex. Her parents were Princess Agatha of Hungary and Prince Edward of England, the latter being in exile following King Canute and his Danish army’s overrun of England.

We do not have any details about Margaret’s baptism; but we can safely assume it took place soon after her birth. We can also assume her early formation in the Christian Faith. From a young age Margaret was considered to be beautiful and intelligent, with a strong and active personal faith. She received her early education in Hungary. When Margaret was around ten years old her family moved back to England as her uncle, King Edward the Confessor, was close to the end of his reign. Margaret’s father, Prince Edward, had a claim on the English throne. However, he died soon after the family arrived in England, and Margaret’s brother, Edgar, was not considered for the role. However, Margaret and her family became part of the English royal court.

In 1066, when Margaret was about 20, William the Conqueror invaded England. Margaret’s family fled north to Northumbria. Tradition tells they then set off from there for the Continent to find safety. However their ship was blown off course by a severe storm and they ended up in Scotland where they were shipwrecked on the shores of Fife in 1068.

Malcolm, King of Scotland, gave protection to the English royals and he soon fell in love with Margaret. Malcolm proposed marriage to her, but Margaret declared she could better serve God if she remained celibate. However, Malcolm persisted and Margaret eventually agreed to the marriage. They were married at Dunfermline Castle in 1070. Margaret was then around 25 years. Malcolm and Margaret had eight children.

Margaret, as Queen of the Scots, had a deep and practical religious faith and this had a significant influence upon her husband, their marriage, and the religious and cultural life of Scotland. She founded churches, monasteries, Dunfermline Abbey and several hostels for Christian pilgrims. She also organized the establishment of a ferry across the River Forth that enabled pilgrims to have a quicker route to the Shrine of Saint Andrew. The present towns of South Queensferry and North Queensferry, on either side of the River Forth, are a permanent reminder of the Queensferry Crossing that continued to operate until 1964.

Queen Margaret is probably remembered most for her deep personal devotion and her constant commitment to the poor. She arranged regular provisions for the feeding of the poor, especially the children. It was remembered she often went without food herself until she knew that the poor children had been fed, and that she herself was actively involved in this and other practical Christian ministries.

However, Queen Margaret's austere religious life, together with her self-sacrificing care of the poor, led to her becoming increasingly frail and fatigued. Queen Margaret was in bed seriously ill when, in 1093, she was informed of the death in battle of her husband and oldest son. She died shortly after receiving this news, on 16 November 1093, aged forty seven. Queen Margaret of Scotland, together with King Malcolm, was buried in Dunfermline Abbey.

Queen Margaret of the Scots was made a Saint (Saunt Magret) by Pope Innocent IV in 1250. She has also been remembered affectionately as 'The Pearl of Scotland.'

### **Closing Reflection:**

I now conclude by making some reflections on these intersecting stories. However, I stress that I am not taking from these stories a list of things we need to emulate. If I were to do this one could include polygamy, and leaving a child to be raised by a priest – based on the story from the Book of Samuel, which reflects cultural and religious practices long-since abandoned.

The first thing to highlight is that it is God who initiates our relationship with God's divine love and purposes for us. Ours is a Response. We have re-enacted this in the baptism liturgy. And it is God who holds us in this relationship, even when we falter and fail. It is therefore helpful to be reminded not that we were baptized, but that we ARE baptized into such a God-given covenant relationship. Our stories each remind us of the primary importance of families in life; a unit that may well be supported by other relationships, but founded in the family home with parents. The maintenance of the loving and secure family life is essential for a child, and for a healthy society, culture – and for nurture within religious faith.

The dedication to parenthood, and the dedication of children to God (whether in baptism or some other form) has played a dominant role in the lives of countless Christians down through the ages. And it would be possible to list many of the great Christian leaders whose lives have been set in train within the love, care and prayer of a dedicated family.

Part of this family life, and this dedication, is grounded in prayer. When parents and grandparents pray for their children, and with their children, there is a growth in awareness of God's presence. This is an important way of fostering them into the living relationship that is distinctive within a religious life.

However, we are also reminded that prayer is not about instant or prescribed answers. God does answer prayer, but not always when we want, or how we want. Prayer is also about listening, waiting, being open to new ways of understanding, of being, of acting.

It is so often through the prayers, the loving, the nurturing, that a sense of Call to particular roles of leadership and service are discerned. As we have seen in our two Biblical stories, and the story of Margaret, Christian service is the natural outcome of a life lived in relationship with God.

Finally, and this too is important. Life in God, lived faithfully, prayerfully, servingly, is not always a way of ease and happiness. But it is a life of Joy, in which even the most difficult moments and events can be celebrated as being fraught with blessings beyond our imagining.

Remember: **You are baptized.**

## **We Respond to God's Word:**

THE OFFERING, PRAYER and our 'JOURNEY SONG'

Prayer:

Loving God - we continually seek your strength and comfort. You often free us from our unfounded fears, and provide us with wonderful examples of your love. In response, we offer these gifts, along with ourselves. We pray that each will help provide something, that touches people with your extraordinary love. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen

SING – TIS 342 (verse 4)

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
that were a present far too small:  
love so amazing, so divine  
demands my soul, my life, my all.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE and THE LORD'S PRAYER English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC)

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.

THE CHILDREN 'SHOW & TELL'

## **The Sending Forth of The People Of God**

WORDS OF MISSION, BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

WE SING "*Tell out my soul...*" (Mary's Song - Magnificat) TIS 161

1

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!  
Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice;  
tender to me the promise of his word;  
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

2

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name!  
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;  
his mercy sure, from age to age the same;  
his holy name - the Lord, the Mighty One.

3

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!  
Powers and dominions lay their glory by.  
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,  
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

4

Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!

Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.  
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord  
to children's children and for evermore!

Words and music used in this Service are used in accordance with one or more of several licences St Margaret's Uniting Church holds for use in public Worship,  
INCLUDING LicenSing # 604624 -  
Copyright cleared music for churches CAL Copyright Licence # 3257 (Copyright Agency Limited)  
CCLI - Church Copyright Licence #158456  
CCLI Photocopy Licence - #158463 (Christian Copyright Licencing Asia – Pacific)  
APRA (Australian Performing Rights Association) [No Number]  
Public performance and/or communication of copyright music.  
New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.