

**Sunday October 2, 2022**

## Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

### Welcome & Prayer

As we begin our service of worship this morning lets remind ourselves of the great God we are coming before. So I am going to start off with a reading from Psalm 46. *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”* (NIV)

**Prayer** God our Refuge, when human resources fail, you alone remain our sure hope and defence. In the knowledge of your love, grant us courage. We place ourselves in your hands, confident that nothing can separate us from your love. We praise you for Jesus, the Living One, the First and the Last, who was dead, but now is forever alive. Help us, who have not seen, to believe; send us, as you have sent Jesus, to greet the world with the Easter word of peace and to share with all the Spirit’s new life of forgiveness. We ask through the Lord Jesus, our Passover and our Peace, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

### Song –Blessed be your name [\(18\) MATT REDMAN - Blessed Be Your Name \(Lyric Video\) - YouTube](#)

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|---|---|
| <p>1. Blessed Be Your Name<br/>In the land that is plentiful<br/>Where Your streams of abundance flow<br/>Blessed be Your name<br/>Blessed Be Your name<br/>When I'm found in the desert place<br/>Though I walk through the wilderness<br/>Blessed Be Your name</p> <p>Chorus:<br/>Every blessing You pour out, I'll<br/>Turn back to praise<br/>When the darkness closes in, Lord<br/>Still I will say<br/>Blessed be the name of the Lord<br/>Blessed be Your name<br/>Blessed be the name of the Lord<br/>Blessed be Your glorious name</p> | <p>2. Blessed be Your name<br/>When the sun's shining down on me<br/>When the world's 'all as it should be'<br/>Blessed be Your name<br/>Blessed be Your name<br/>On the road marked with suffering<br/>Though there's pain in the offering<br/>Blessed be Your name</p> <p>Chorus</p> <p>Bridge x2<br/>You give and take away<br/>You give and take away<br/>My heart will choose to say<br/>Lord blessed be Your name</p> <p>Chorus</p> |
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### Bible Reading – Acts 22:1-21 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> “Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defence.” <sup>2</sup> When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. Then Paul said: <sup>3</sup> “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for

God as any of you are today. <sup>4</sup> I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, <sup>5</sup> as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished. <sup>6</sup> "About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. <sup>7</sup> I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?' <sup>8</sup> "Who are you, Lord?' I asked. " 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. <sup>9</sup> My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. <sup>10</sup> "What shall I do, Lord?' I asked. " 'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.' <sup>11</sup> My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me. <sup>12</sup> "A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. <sup>13</sup> He stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very moment I was able to see him. <sup>14</sup> "Then he said: 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. <sup>15</sup> You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup> And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.' <sup>17</sup> "When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance <sup>18</sup> and saw the Lord speaking to me. 'Quick!' he said. 'Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.' <sup>19</sup> "Lord,' I replied, 'these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. <sup>20</sup> And when the blood of your martyr<sup>[a]</sup> Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' <sup>21</sup> "Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.' "

## Announcements

**Focus for October – Training.** All Christians have been given spiritual gifts by God's Holy Spirit. But that doesn't mean we don't have to develop those gifts through teaching and practice. In the month of October we want to help you to develop your spiritual gifts through offer a number of training sessions. But the first questions we all have to ask is what are my spiritual gifts? And what are the opportunities around me to serve others? So can we all ask ourselves these questions today? And then can we commit to doing some training this month that might develop these gifts?

**Ministry Training.** During the first two weeks of term 4 all our home groups are closing down with the aim that everyone in our Church might have a chance to do some training.

- On this Tuesday we will have a BYO dinner from 6:45pm at the Charlestown Church & then followed by various workshops 7:30-8:30pm – Church sound system (Aaron C), Praying aloud and in public (Dave W), How to share your faith (Suzie C), Preparing a Bible Talk (Stephen T), New City Catechism for families (Jon B) and Involvement in Creation care (Stuart B)
- On this Wednesday we will have a BYO lunch from 12:15pm at the Charlestown Church followed by various workshops 1-2pm – Visiting on behalf of the Church (Joanna B), New City Catechism for families (Jon B), Supporting a missionary (Kathryn O) & Meeting one on one (Stephen T)

There is no compulsion to book but if you want to go to <https://forms.gle/Cz3tbseahx7J5Du7A>

You could book a place in one of these workshops which would give us an idea of what seminars are the more popular and would help with printing off of materials and allocating the right sized rooms for each group.

### Kids Spot:

### Upcoming Events

- Sun 30/10 Parson Visit (and will be involved in various activities this week)
- Sat 5/11 Gala Concert
- Sun 12/11 Complementarian Seminar (2:30-4:30)
- Sat 19/11 Men's Breakfast (7-9am)
- Sat 19/11 NSW State Moderator Visits Swans Church for morning tea

- Sat 26/11 Gingerbread House Night
- Sat 10/12 Gather Round Christmas Celebration

**Christmas boxes (Operation Christmas Child. Samaritans Purse).** Don't forget to pick up your Christmas box and to bring it back to the Church by the end of October.

**Term 4 NSW School Term.** The regular activities of the Church will stay in recess for another week until the NSW school term starts again next week.

**Mission Team.** There will be a mission team meeting via zoom, on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> October from 3:30-:415pm. All welcome

**JOY.** Our next JOY will be on this Friday from 10-11am at the Belmont 16 footers. All welcome.

#### Finances for August

Budget offerings for August	\$27,000
Actual offerings for August	\$39,497
Surplus for August	\$12,497
Surplus for Jan-Aug	\$10,167

## Prayer Points for 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2022

**Pray for Germany:** Pray for a second reformation to make the Church culturally relevant and Biblically sound. Pray for a spiritual awakening among the predominantly lost youth. Pray for wisdom, compassion, and provision as the nation receives and assimilates historic numbers of migrants.

**Pray for growth in love:** "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1). Pray we would increase more and more in our love for one another.

**Pray for Wee Waa Presbyterian:** Pray for Wee Waa congregation, township and surrounding district as they are concerned about flooding causing town isolation. Pray for surrounding farmers as they face concern relating to soaked paddocks and approaching crop harvest. Pray for Pastor Steve Bignall and family in a time of mourning following the death of Steve's Dad. Pray for God's blessing and comfort in their time of sadness. Thank God for improvements in Steve's health, particularly in regard to his diabetes and eyesight.

## Song – Jerusalem <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g252SXZvdn4>

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|---|---|
| 1. See Him in Jerusalem<br>Walking where the crowds are<br>Once these streets had sung to Him<br>Now they cry for murder<br>Such a frail and lonely man<br>Holding up the heavy cross<br>See Him walking in Jerusalem<br>On the road to save us                 | 4. See the empty tomb today<br>Death could not contain him<br>Once the servant of the world<br>Now in victory reigning<br>Lift your voices to the one<br>Who is seated on the throne<br>See him in the new Jerusalem<br>Praise the one who saved us |
| 2. See him there upon the hill<br>Hear the scorn and laughter<br>Silent as a lamb he waits<br>Praying to the father<br>See the king who made the sun<br>And the moon and shining stars<br>Let the soldiers hold and nail him down<br>So that he could save them | Lift your voices to the one<br>Who is seated on the throne<br>See him in the new Jerusalem<br>Praise the one who saved us<br>Praise the one who saved us  |

3. See him there upon the cross  
 Now no longer breathing  
 Dust that formed the watching crowds  
 Takes the blood of Jesus  
 Feel the earth is shaking now  
 See the veil is split in two  
 And he stood before the wrath of God  
 Shielding sinners with his blood

## Bible Reading – Romans 11:33-36 (NIV)

*“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! <sup>34</sup> “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” <sup>35</sup> “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?” <sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”*

## Sermon – Doxology (Dave Wigney)

My first job after finishing Uni was in Bowen North Qld. I was there for a year and every Saturday afternoon because there wasn't a lot else to do in Bowen I went to the Summergarden movie theatre where there was always a double feature for \$6. If ever I have to select a special topic for a quiz show it would probably be movies of 1992 because I'm fairly sure I saw all of them – the good the mediocre and sometimes the unbelievably atrocious. However, since I had children, I've found it was much harder to get out and watch movies. Especially when the kids were young, I took the attitude that if I was only going to see 2 movies at the cinemas a year then I would want them to be really really really good. Therefore before seeing a movie at the cinema I always read the movie reviews. Over the years I have learnt that there is a certain code to movie reviews. For example, if the word spectacular is used to describe a movie then it probably means but there is more special effects than plot. Gritty drama is code for depressing and will make you want to slit your wrists at the end of the film. Low key humour often means is not funny at all. And you should never ever ever go to see a movie that is described as zany as that is code for moronic.

### Slide 2

But every now and then you will come across a review that is so enthusiastic, so full of praise and so compelling that it almost demands that you investigate this further. At the end of Romans chapter 11 we have a passage that is often referred to as the doxology. Doxology is a word that means a hymn of praise to God. Up until this point Paul has been explaining the gospel message to the church in Rome in what has at times been some pretty dense and complicated argument. But as he comes to the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter he does something surprising. He bursts into an exuberant hymn of praise to God.

### Slide 3

O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgements and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counsellor? Who has given to God that God should repay them? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen

So even though Romans chapters 1 to 11 can be a bit heavy going there is clearly something so wonderful about it that Paul feels the only appropriate response is to pause and marvel at the Gospel message and what it tells us about God and about ourselves.

### Slide 4

So what is so wonderful about the gospel message? What can we learn about the gospel that is captured in this short but powerful hymn of praise to God? I would like to point out three things that we can learn. Firstly the gospel is unexpected, secondly the gospel causes us to reevaluate how we relate to God and finally the gospel demands a fusion of belief and worship.

Why would I say the gospel is unexpected? O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgements and his paths beyond tracing out!

### **Slide 5**

I quite enjoy the show QI which is at once fascinating and depressing when you find out that the things you thought you knew are actually not true. For example and this may be a dangerous thing to say in a Presbyterian church the one common thing about kilts bagpipes haggis porridge whiskey and tartan is that none of them were invented in Scotland. The gospel too is unexpected. The gospel as outlined in Romans tells us that the idea that good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell is completely wrong. The gospel tells us that there is no one who is righteous not even one and that the only way we can be brought into a right relationship with God is not by being good but by putting our trust in Jesus. The gospel tells us that we are in fact so bad that nothing other than the death of the son of God could save us from our sins but also that we are so loved by God that he was willing to send his only son Jesus to die for us.

### **Slide 6**

As Christian writer Tim Keller puts it so neatly the gospel tells us that we are worse than we dared to imagine but also more loved than we ever dared to hope. The gospel tells us that we obey God's law not to be saved but because we have been saved and the gospel also tells us that we did not choose God, he chose us. And finally, the gospel tells us that it is all part of a plan to liberate all of creation from its bondage to decay and that one day there will be a world where there is no suffering, no death and where God rules over everything with perfect justice. In short what God thinks and decides i.e. his judgements and what God does – his paths we could have never guessed in a million years. How unsearchable are his judgements and his paths beyond tracing out!

### **Slide 7**

Isaiah chapter 55 puts it this way. For my thoughts are not your thoughts either are my ways your ways declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

### **Slide 8**

My second point that the gospel makes us re-evaluate our relationship with God is found in verses 34 to 36. Who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counsellor? Who has given to God that God should repay them? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever. It's important isn't it to correctly evaluate our relationships. Many of our relationships are what you might describe as transactional. My relationship with my local supermarket is transactional. I will give them my money if they provide me with food and groceries at a reasonable price. If I stop giving them money or if they jack up their prices by 300% then the relationship is over.

### **Slide 9**

But it's a problem when people view all their relationships as transactional. If I am your friend only because of what you can do for me and if you stop doing something for me then the friendship's over then I'm not really your friend. If as a parent I only give my children love and care so long as they remain obedient or cute or they amuse me then I am not much of a father. Even the most hardened cynic has to see that that not all of our relationships can be transactional in nature.

### **Slide 10**

But why is it that so many of us effectively have what boils down to a transactional relationship with God? I'll become a Christian God but you have to bless me. I'll make Jesus my Lord but God you need to answer my prayers for health, security, a good job, a wife, a husband, a family. I'll do something for you God but you need to do something for me. One of the root causes of sin is the feeling that somehow God owes us something or that we deserve something. They didn't give me a pay rise at work so I'll exaggerate my work expenses claim. I'm owed that money. I won't give up my time to help that person in need because I have been working hard all week. I deserve that time off. I won't make an effort to rebuild that damaged relationship because they mistreated me, and I deserve more respect. Why do you think that you so often hear from people who are going through hard times "what have I done to deserve this?" With the

implication being God I've been a good person so I deserve better from you. And even if we don't directly make claims that God owes us in some way I think we can still act as though we can advise God about how he should do his job. Think back on the times you have prayed for something. Think how often we make very specific prayers about the way we would like things to turn out and how seldom we are ready to pray not my will but your will. Remember how Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. Here was a man who really did deserve to have God do for him anything he asked and certainly did deserve not to suffer but what did he pray? Yet not my will but yours.

### **Slide 11**

As I said earlier our passage in Romans causes us to radically re-evaluate our relationship with God. Who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counsellor? Who has given to God that God should repay them? The gospel tells us that we cannot ever have a transactional relationship with God. How could we? God knows everything, God has everything. For from him and through him and for him are all things. John Stott in his commentary puts it this way. If we ask where all things come from in the beginning and still come from today the answer must be from God. If we ask how all things came into being and remain in being our answer is through God. If we ask why everything came into being and where everything is going our answer must be for God. These three prepositions from through and for indicate that God is our creator, sustainer and heir of everything, its source, means and goal. He is the Alpha and Omega and every letter of the alphabet in between. Paul concludes this passage with to **him** be the glory forever.

### **Slide 12**

There are some times when I just have to accept that it is not all about me. When I was best man at my friend's wedding it would have been completely uncool for me to make demands about how I wanted things to be arranged, what I should wear that would make me look good, who should make the speeches and where the wedding reception should be held. Part of radically re evaluating my relationship with God is accepting that it is not all about me, it's all about him. In the book of Revelation heaven is described as a wedding feast with Jesus being the bridegroom. In heaven we will be so happy that we were invited we won't give a moments thought that the chief recipient of all the honour and glory will be Jesus and not us. To him be the glory forever Amen.

### **Slide 13**

At the beginning of my talk, I compared the doxology to a movie review but a movie review where the response of the reviewer is so effusive that it demands you check it out yourself. But just because someone is really enthusiastic about something doesn't automatically mean that we should look into it ourselves. For myself if I read a review that this movie is the greatest vampire movie since Twilight! See it immediately! Well I wouldn't. So whether or not you will not you will investigate a review further depends very much on whether you trust the reviewer.

### **Slide 14**

This brings me to our first passage where Paul defended himself before a crowd in Jerusalem. The interesting thing about Paul is how his life was completely turned around by an encounter with the risen Jesus. Before he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus he was the last person in the world you would have thought would become a Christian missionary. An ultra nationalist Jew who actively persecuted the new Christian movement who become the apostle to the gentiles that is the non-Jews. Promoting and building up a belief system he once despised to non-Jewish people who he also would have despised. If ever you want to consider the truth claims of the gospel you need to look carefully at how the message that Jesus Christ of Nazareth died on the cross and was raised to life on the third day utterly transformed his followers to become fearless advocates of the gospel and who were willing to risk hardship suffering and even death to tell people the good news about Jesus. There are people who will say prove to me that Jesus really did rise from the dead and then I'll become a Christian. Now obviously none of us were able to witness the resurrection for ourselves. But *something* happened to the followers of Jesus that turned their lives around so profoundly, so completely that whatever that something was it must have been spectacularly compelling.

**Slide 15**

Some of you may have heard of reaction videos. Reaction videos are videos showing the emotional reactions of people viewing things like television series episodes, film trailers or music videos. Apparently Youtube is awash with them. I saw something like this when they released the trailer for a new Star Wars movie. Grown men with weird pop culture T shirts, ample beards and who looked as though they had never spent a day outdoors in their lives were practically weeping with joy when they saw Han Solo and Chewbacca emerge from the Millennium Falcon.

What would it look like if someone recorded a reaction video of us reading the bible? I don't know about you but I suspect my reaction video of reading the bible would look pretty similar to my reaction video of reading my grocery list. Actually given the price of groceries lately and my children's alarming tendencies to want the most expensive items in the supermarket the grocery list reaction video would possibly be far more interesting than the reading the bible reaction video.

Paul's reaction video to what he has written in Romans 1 to 11 is the doxology.

O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgements and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counsellor? Who has given to God that God should repay them? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen

**Slide 16**

Notice how the doxology or our worship of God is in response to doctrine or theology, that is our beliefs about God. John Stott writes "All true worship is a response to the self-revelation of God in Christ and Scripture and arises from our reflection on who he is and what he has done." When was the last time you, when was the last time I, read God's word and simply paused to say to ourselves let alone others wow. God you are amazing. When was the last time we really reacted or to use a more positive term when was the last time we really responded to God's word? The bible is not just a book that can be studied with remote academic detachment. The bible is God's word to us and as such it demands a response. There'd be something seriously wrong with me if I received and read a letter from Bill Gates that told me I had been made the heir to his entire fortune and my response was to focus more on analyzing the grammatical structures, the number of prepositions used, the font of the text and the chemical composition of the paper the letter was written on. This isn't to say that careful academic analysis of the bible is a waste of time but it should always be a means to an end and not an end in itself. That end being coming to a deeper knowledge of who Jesus is and what he has done for us so that in response to this deeper knowledge we can have an even deeper experience of worship and praise.

**Slide 17**

God's word demands a response but the response it demands is only meaningful if what the bible says is true. Paul had an encounter with the risen Jesus. A Jesus who spoke to him and who quite clearly was no longer dead. Think about it for a moment. When Paul came to Jerusalem and told the religious authorities who used to be his friends and colleagues that Jesus of Nazareth had spoken to him *after* his crucifixion then it would have been the easiest thing in the world for them to take him to the tomb of Jesus and show him the body of Jesus. But there was no body. The tomb was empty. And while there were some who said that the disciples had stolen the body, this is difficult to reconcile with the response of Paul. When Paul was on his way to Damascus to persecute the followers of Jesus he would have believed the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus and therefore he was doing the world a favour by stamping out a cult of deluded lunatics. Surely Paul was the last person in the world to think he was being spoken to by a resurrected Jesus of Nazareth?

So Paul's response to a gospel message that is both unexpected and causes us to reevaluate our relationship with God is one of wondrous praise and worship. What is your response? If you are not a follower of Jesus then I hope I have intrigued you enough to check out the gospel for yourself and to see if it rings true. You could start with gospel of Mark which has as a central theme who is this person Jesus. If then you want a deeper understanding of the gospel then have a look at Romans 1 to 11. Then go on to

read Romans 12 to the end that spells out the implications for our lives if the gospel message is in fact true. And if you are a follower of Jesus then has your life been turned around just as it was for Paul? Does the gospel message energize you? Motivate you? Engage your entire being and dare I say this in a Presbyterian church where our Scottish forbears had a reputation of being just a wee bit dour, does the gospel message cause you at times to be just a bit emotional?

O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgements and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counsellor? Who has given to God that God should repay them? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen

Let's finish our service this morning by singing with gusto that great old hymn Tell out my soul!

## Song – Tell out my soul <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6ji4y9Q-K0>

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|---|--|
| <p>1. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!<br/>Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;<br/>tender to me the promise of his word –<br/>in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.</p>               | <p>3. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!<br/>Powers and dominions lay their glory by;<br/>proud hearts &amp; stubborn wills are put to flight,<br/>the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.</p> |
| <p>2. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name!<br/>Make known his might,<br/>the deeds his arm has done;<br/>his mercy sure, from age to age the same –<br/>his holy name: the Lord, the Mighty One.</p> | <p>4. Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!<br/>Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure:<br/>tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord<br/>to children's children and for evermore!</p>           |

## Benediction

*“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! <sup>34</sup> “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” <sup>35</sup> “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?” <sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”*