



Bathurst Uniting Church

Sharing God's love by connecting people to God;
people to people; and people to community.

Newsletter

June, 2024

Reflection

Keeping the Sabbath as resistance against anxiety, coercion, exclusivism and multitasking

Prayer and Sabbath have much in common. They both challenge the culture of now. They both require a depth of trust in God. Daily prayer takes time. More time in the morning and night. Too much for a culture of now. Slow down. Stop. Likewise, Sabbath rest - whether Saturday or Sunday, or for that matter another day of the week – takes time. Too much time for a culture of now. We have to slow down. Stop.

People like Hans Urs von Balthasar made a connection between the Christian inner peace influenced by prayer, and anxiety. The two are connected by contrast. Anxiety is fuelled by the culture of now. The culture of getting and consuming. The consuming could be objects, money, people, status and so on. Prayer, real prayer, as opposed to consuming prayer, requires slowing down, even stopping, learning to listen to God.

Walter Brueggemann wrote a book that includes a study guide: Sabbath as resistance: saying No to the CULTURE OF NOW. Taking a Sabbath is countercultural. Even taking half a Sabbath is countercultural. Who can afford to stop? The level of anxiety, coercion, violence and multitasking in our societies might suggest who cannot afford to stop. No one.

One reading of the book of Exodus is that it sets up a contest between Yahweh and Pharaoh. Pharaoh has the Israelites working for hard labour making bricks. The bricks are to build Pharaoh's cities. Then Pharaoh says the people have to get their own straw to make the bricks, in the same time frame. No time off. The cry of 'let my people go,' is not only about physical bondage, it is also about release from economic bondage. Pharaoh loses his brick-making slaves. It sounds a familiar story and could speak into today. After the great escape, planned and executed by Yahweh, the people are given ten commandments. The first three focus on God. The last six focus on neighbourliness. In between is the hinge commandment four, that has as much detail as the first and the last: remember the Sabbath.

Worship Services

9.30am in the church.

You can join worship on Zoom by going to

<http://www.bathurstunitingchurch.com.au/> and pressing the purple button.

2 June Rev Keith Hamilton Holy Communion

9 June Anthony

16 June Rev David Wrightson

23 June Rev David Wrightson

30 June Brian

7 July Rev Keith Hamilton Holy Communion

'Sunday @ 5'

At 5pm – contemporary, informal, all ages worship in the Activities Hall.

On the first Sunday of each month there will be Holy Communion and a shared meal.

Exodus 20:8-15

8 “Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labour and do all your work. 10 But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it. (NRSVUE)

The command to remember the Sabbath points both to the commandment to love God, and the commandment to love neighbour. Generations later, Jesus Christ, God’s Son, would stand at the hinge point of the vertical between God’s love of the people, and God’s love of neighbour. Jesus takes on our sin of broken relationships with God and all God created; our sin of consumption, and gives us new life, a fresh start. Jesus is the new Sabbath, hence Sunday worship on resurrection day. Those who are in Christ can rest in his loving embrace, an embrace that becomes apparent in daily prayer and Sabbath rest. Daily prayer and resting in God – remembering the Sabbath, connects and reconnects us with the founding event, Easter.

The commandment of the Sabbath addresses the over-valuing of things in relation to God and the often violent pursuit of things at the expense of one’s neighbour. The increase in house prices has little effect on those who own a house, except bragging rights and if they downsize they get a cash bonus, but for people without a house it becomes impossible.

Matthew James Hamilton and Wayne Ballard, in reviewing Brueggeman’s book, said, “Celebrating Sabbath resists the life of production and consumption that drives our society, while also acting as an alternative to the advertising and consumerism that take up every moment of our lives.” Brueggemann drawing on prophetic voices from Hosea, Isaiah, and Amos, warns that when “Sabbath” is not a part of faithful living, “Everything becomes a commodity; and there are no more neighbours” only competitors (p. 67).

The last commandment in Exodus 20:17 is: “Do not covet.” It also has great detail.

17 “You shall not covet your neighbour’s house; you shall not covet your neighbour’s spouse, male or female slave, ox, donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

Brueggemann said, coveting includes both “an attitude of craving and forceful action to secure what is craved” (p. 70). Brueggemann notes Sabbath rest as protecting “the space and property of the neighbour from the restlessness that disrupts and skews social relationships” (p. 71).

Brueggemann said “Sabbath is not simply a pause that refreshes. It is the pause that transforms” (p.45). “Sabbath is resistance,” for to neglect this commandment results in “the practices of exploitative acquisitive economy” (p. 79).

Brueggemann said that the Sabbath is a “school for our desires, an exposé and critique of the false desires that . . . have immense power for us” (p.88). In reviewing Brueggeman’s book, Erik Carter said “In this way, the practice of Sabbath serves as a test of our faithfulness to the God of rest.”

Near the end of his book, Brueggemann said, ““No-Sabbath” existence imagines getting through on our own, surrounded by commodities to accumulate and before which to bow down. But a commodity can’t take one’s hand (to lead to safety). . . We may come to know, but likely not without Sabbath, a rest rooted in God’s own restfulness and extended to our neighbours who must also rest. We, with our hurts, fears and exhaustion, are left restless until then” (89).

Christians live in a consumerist society – it is the air we breathe - and we can easily be swallowed up, not recognising that we have become Christian in name only and consumerist in reality. The Sabbath rest and daily prayers become an alternative to the market ideology that depends upon the generation of needs and desires that will leave us, as Brueggeman says, “endlessly rest-less,” inadequate, unfulfilled, and in pursuit of that which may satiate desire. Without Sabbath rest and daily prayers we end up existing in a society of 24/7 multitasking. The market ideological demand for both production and consumption require us to want more and more, have more, own more, use more, eat more, and drink more. Anxiety, coercion, exclusivism, and multitasking is the result. In striving for happiness in getting more we end up with emptiness, division, relational breakdowns. Violence.

Anything worth doing takes disciplined effort. Daily prayers and weekly Sabbath require self-control to resist consumerist pressures. But the outcome is hope instead of anxiety, faith instead of fearfulness, love instead of coercion, delight in each moment instead of multitasking. Brueggemann wrote, “Wherever Yahweh governs there is an alternative to Pharaoh, there the effective restfulness of Yahweh effectively counters the restless anxiety of Pharaoh” (p. xiii).

Blessings

Keith Hamilton

News

Keith and Julie Hamilton will be away 5 June -4 July 2024.

While on leave, any pastoral concerns should be directed to the Pastoral Partners.

As part of the celebrations of the 150th Anniversary of the installation of the William Davidson Organ in the Uniting Church, William Street, Bathurst, a series of lunchtime free Recitals are being held.

Bring your lunch, a cuppa will be provided, and enjoy hearing our historic Organ.



Recitals coming up: (put them in your diary!)

12 June Denise - Music Teacher, Scots All Saints College

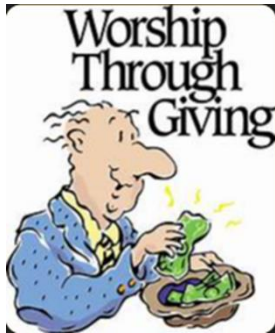
14 August Peter - accomplished and well known local Organist

11 September Denise - Music Teacher, Scots All Saints College

BUSS NEWS

- The number of people coming to the café for lunch each Saturday and Sunday remains high and we now have a roster for cooking the meals. If you are interested in helping please contact Lynne.

- Planting has begun in the community garden beds at the back of the church. It is limited at the moment due to the season but it is a great start!
- A BUSS choir has started up on Saturday afternoons at 2.30pm in the church foyer. If you enjoy singing in a choir you would be most welcome. Everyone is welcome.



Many Ways to Give:

There is now a Tap and Go facility in the church foyer where you can give to various options with your card.

To pay invoices issued, to donate to the work of the Church, donations to the Organ Fund, etc:

For electronic remittances only @ UFS:

BSB: 634634 **Account No:** 100019125

Account Name: Bathurst City - Working Account

Narration: Please indicate why the funds are for.

For cash or cheque deposits @ Reliance Bank

BSB: 882000 **Account No:** 300003447

Account Name: Bathurst Uniting Church

Narration: Please indicate what the funds are for by asking the teller to enter it into the Bank system.

For Giving Direct and Offertories:

Please see Deb if you wish to set up a regular Direct Debit or Periodical Payment.

BSB: 634634 **Account No:** 100027964

Account Name: Bathurst City - Giving Direct

Narration: None is required as these deposits are completely anonymous

Bathurst Uniting Support Services (BUSS)

For the work of BUSS as a General Donation or for a Specific Program being run by BUSS

BSB: 634634 **Account No:** 100049962

Account Name: Bathurst City – BUSS

Narration: Please indicate what the funds are for, or if you wish to make an anonymous donation a narration is not required.

Mowing Roster

June Brian

July Alan

PLEASE NOTE

The newsletter email address is bathurstucanews@gmail.com Please send items by 9pm on the last Wednesday of the month

Please send news or information for the website to allanwray@hotmail.com

Staying Connected

For pastoral support, please contact your Pastoral Partner, or one of the Elders, or email BUConnect@gmail.com and we'll put you in touch with someone.

You can also contact our minister, Rev Keith Hamilton on 0417487446 or email keith.hamilton.bathurstuc@gmail.com

PLEASE NOTE KEITH WILL BE ON LEAVE FROM 5 JUNE UNTIL 4 JULY.