



*Leigh Memorial Congregation*

*Parramatta Mission*

*Uniting Church in Australia*

*Easter 7*

*Ascension Sunday*

**Couples & Friends : 68<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service**

**24 May 2020**

(To stop the spread of Corona virus, in response to Government's ban and Uniting Church of Australia NSW & ACT Synod's strong recommendation, the Church Council of Parramatta Mission have decided to suspend all meetings and gatherings including Sunday worship. As a result, this is the ninth consecutive Sunday that the doors of the Leigh Memorial Church are not open for worship services. We are sorry and it will remain so until further notice.)

(Here is a full worship service prepared by Robert Key and Leigh Memorial Congregation minister, Rev Dr Manas Ghosh for this Sunday, to worship from the safety of people's home. Before the service begins, you may prepare a worship space for yourself by placing a cross, a lighted candle and if possible, some flowers on a table. Thank you.)



### **God calls: We gather**

#### **Greetings & Welcome: Robert Key**

The amazing grace of the Master, Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God, the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit, be with you today as we worship as the Family of God via Zoom.

We gather today on the fourth Sunday in May when under normal circumstances we would have been celebrating the Anniversary of the Couples & Friends which was formed way back in 1952 under the stewardship of the Rev Dr Gloster Udy.

As we prepare to worship in various locations across the western suburbs of Sydney, we acknowledge that the Ancient of Days breathed life into this land and her peoples.

From time beyond our reckoning the people of the Dharug nation have blessed the areas of Western Sydney through their care and concern.

So today on this celebration Sunday, we pay our respects to their elders and leaders, past and present.

May we walk gently and respectfully on this land.

### **Call to Worship:**

Today is the final Sunday of the Easter season which we observe as Ascension Sunday.

Jesus said: "Do not cling on to me. Go and tell my friends that I am ascending to my God and your God."

***Our lord has gone up with a shout,  
like the sound of the trumpet!***

While he blessed them, Jesus parted from them, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

***Clap your hands, all peoples!  
Applaud God with songs of happiness!***

The man wearing the crown of thorns is now king of all the earth!

***Sing praises to God, sing praises!  
Sing praises to our king, sing praises!***

Christ Jesus lives on among his people!  
***Christ Jesus lives on indeed!***

### **Hymn: *Together in Song* No. 224**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgQ9ER-fdWQ&list=RDkgQ9ER-fdWQ&start\\_radio=1&t=201](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgQ9ER-fdWQ&list=RDkgQ9ER-fdWQ&start_radio=1&t=201)

All hail the power of Jesus' name;  
let angels prostrate fall;  
bring forth the royal diadem  
to crown him Lord of all.

As heirs of Israel's chosen race  
and ransomed from the fall,  
hail him who saves you by grace,  
and crown him Lord of all.

Sinners, whose love cannot forget  
the wormwood and the gall,  
go spread your treasures at his feet  
and crown him Lord of all.

Let every tribe and every tongue  
responsive to his call,  
now shout in universal song  
and crown him Lord of all.

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving: Robert Key**

Glory be to you, great reconciling God, in you our Lord Jesus found his guide  
and goal.

Encouraged by his Spirit, we come to you with thanksgiving and praise.

Draw us closer to you that we may be closer to each other, and closer to each  
other, that we may be closer to you.

As we seek your blessing on this gathering, we also pray for your blessing on all  
other congregations who will gather on this Lord's Day.

Help us to find a unity in praise and in outreach.

We long for the day when the world will say of us: "See how well these  
Christians love one another.'

Then shall Christ Jesus be truly glorified on earth, and our earthly songs shall  
echo the music of heaven.

***Amen!***

**Prayer of Confession:**

*(time for silent confession)*

Patient God, its not easy for us to be disciples or witnesses to your love. We get caught in traps of anger, impatience and fear. Our words and spirits become cynical and jaded. Yet, at all times, you are with us, guiding and guarding us. On this last Sunday in the season of Easter when we celebrate the ascension of Jesus into heaven, we are reminded that we are not being left without guidance. The promise of the Spirit is given and in that promise we have hope and courage to become true disciples. Forgive us when we forget that! Forgive us when we act as though you didn't care about us or about this world. We are called to be those who live the faith of hope and reconciliation, of courage and understanding. Lift us up when we fall, guide our hearts when we speak, for it is in the name of our risen Lord Jesus Christ that we ask these things. Amen.

**Words of Assurance and Declaration of forgiveness:**

Jesus said to his disciples before he ascended to God,  
"Repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed  
in my name to all nations."

As we repent we are confident in hearing Christ's word of grace to us:

"Your sins are forgiven."

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

**The Lord's Prayer:** *(In the spirit of the Lord's Prayer please feel free to pray in our own mother tongue)*

**Our Father in heaven,**

**hallowed be your name.**

**Your kingdom come,**

**your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins**

**as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the times of trial**

**and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory**

**are yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Story Time with Amelia:**

**Passing of the Peace:** (*You may pass on the peace to your family members present with you, or, you may hold your two hands gently for some moments and think of those people you would like to pass on the 'Peace of the Lord'.*)

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

### God speaks: We listen

#### **Acts 1:1-11**

1 In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning 2 until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. 4 While staying[a] with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with[b] the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." 9 When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. 11 They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God!**

## **John 17:1-11**

1 After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all people,[a] to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. 5 So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

6 “I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8 for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

This is the Gospel of our Lord.

**Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ!**

**Reflection:**

**Offering and Dedication: (This is an excerpt from an important email from Ian Gray in regard to our offering which I endorse:**

**The stark reality of this time is that since we have not been able to meet in person to worship God, congregational giving has dropped by 70%.**

**Unfortunately, all the costs associated with our congregation are continuing. So please consider setting up a direct electronic transfer of financial giving to support the continued ministry of our congregation. The process is simple and straightforward. You need to ask your bank to send funds to the nominated account below. You can amend or stop these arrangements at any time.**

**The bank account details for Giving Direct (Offerings) is:-**

**Bank account name: Parramatta Mission Giving Direct**

**BSB: 634634**

**Account number: 100025901**

**So, would you please give this request a serious consideration. Thank you.)**

### **Prayer of Dedication:**

With joy and confidence in your abiding love and presence with us, we present these gifts, tokens of our lives, as an offering for service in and to this world which you have entrusted to us. Bless these gifts and bless all those who place their trust in you. Amen.

### **Dedication of the Blankets: Robert Key**





As reflected in the photos included in the Order of Service, Couples & Friends have continued a tradition of dedicating and handing over 60 rugs and for the women of the Thelma Brown and Kelly's cottages programmes.

This year we also provided six of the rugs to Wesley Apartments as that programme also celebrates an anniversary. This month it is 10 years since the programme commenced

Why is that important?

You see back in early 2008 a six unit apartment block, diagonally opposite the Children's hospital, came on the market and the Church Council believed that the property was of such a strategically important location that it should do all in its power to acquire the property albeit that there were no specific plans for its missional use.

Move forward twelve months and the Couples & Friends members were embarking on their annual senior's coach trip to Leeton.

One of the excursions was to a farm property that provided lunches for visiting groups to raise money for various local charities.

That day, we discovered, they were trying to raise \$ 2,500.00 for a special bed to assist in the recovery for a young boy who had been in a horrific car accident. Matt, the young boy was then in Westmead Children's Hospital.

On being touched by Matt's story we did that very churchy thing by passing the plate around for an extra donation, and even more importantly on our return to Sydney, one of our families contacted the mother offering care and support while Matt was in hospital

As the Couples & Friends grew to understand the accommodation conditions that family members had to put up with while their children were in the hospital, there came a vision for how the block of units good be put to worthy missional use.

And so, the Wesley Apartments programme came into being in May 2010

While Matt's family never had an opportunity to use Wesley Apartments accommodation, Mum Leisa became a strong advocate for the provision of long-term accommodation for families with children in the hospital

Initially Matt wasn't expected to walk but over the next 5 months we received regular updates at Take 10 on his recovery process.

The good news story was that when he left hospital Matt was walking unaided. We have since learnt that he;

- Has successfully completed his HSC
- Visits schools and uses his experience to mentor young people regarding the risks and responsibilities of driving
- In 2017 was awarded the local Australia Day award for the Young Citizen of the Year

So you see, the members of the Couples and Friends have a close affinity to the Wesley Apartments Programme.

The other bi- product from those coach trips was the challenge of knitting squares which were turned into blankets and as part of our annual anniversary service, been dedicated and passed on to the Thelma Brown and Kelly's cottage programmes.

This year a small dedication service was held in the Church by Rev Manas Ghosh when 60 blankets and 5 baby rugs were handed over to Angela Daynes, Manager for Women's Services.

To God be the glory

### **Prayers of the people: Robert Key**

In these times of continuing uncertainty, it is important to pause and reflect on the words of the Psalmist:

*"Where does my help come from?*

*<sup>2</sup> My help comes from the LORD  
who made heaven and earth"*

Most loving God,

In the business of our lives, help us to draw aside from all the earthly thoughts and concerns that may distract us and draw us into your presence.

- Touch our ears that that we may hear you
- Touch our eyes so that we may remember you
- Touch our minds that we may know you and
- our hearts that we may love you

There are times when our prayers seem a weak and an ineffective exercise in the face of all that is happening around us.

We are living in uncertain times;

Daily we are bombarded with the negativity that emanates from Covid 19 and its impact on the elderly, the unemployed the lonely.

We come to this time of prayer when world tensions are created by self-serving elitism and selfishness.

Within our country and our state, we are struggling with the health impact of Covid 19. Isolation, unemployment, personal liberties restricted.

## So we pray

- for leaders that may:
  - govern with integrity & honesty
  - stand and fight against injustices in our society, and
  - mediate for peaceful outcomes
- for our community:
  - those who work with the elderly
  - the doctors and nurses in hospitals, particularly those in the infectious wards of our hospitals
  - the ambulance and paramedics who respond to emergency calls
  - for the researchers as they seek to find cures for Covid 19
- for our Church
  - For our Moderator Simon Hansford
  - The members of the Pastoral Team, Amelia, Clive, Keith, and Sarah and particularly for Manas and Christine and their families. May they know the presence of the risen Christ as they wait on God's leading for the next steps in their ministry journey.
- for our members
  - named in our News sheet
  - For those who have the responsibility for telling our vision for the Mission to be a partner in this community
  - For our staff of Parramatta Mission, serving those who need the Mission's services even more in these Covid 19 times.

Most loving God,

In these uncertain times, help us to provide the hopefulness of existence by turning negative situations into positive opportunities.

Help us to use sickness for increasing sensitivity towards all who suffer or grieve and to make us treasure our neighbours even more

Help us to use reproach for honest self-assessment

For when we are weak, then we are strong

Through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen!

## God sends : We go

Hymn: *Together in Song* No: 647

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8DXPAYWr-c>

*Refrain*

*Comfort, comfort all my people  
with the comfort of my Word.  
Speak it tender to my people:  
all your sins are taken away.*

Though your tears be rivers running,  
though your tears be an ocean full,  
though you cry with the hurt of living:  
comfort, comfort.

Every valley shall be lifted,  
every mountain shall be low,  
every rough place will be smoother:  
comfort, comfort.

*Refrain*

Though your eyes see only darkness,  
though your eyes can see no light,  
though your eyes see pain and sorrow:  
comfort, comfort.

Every night will have its morning,  
every pain will have an end,  
every burden will be lightened:  
comfort, comfort.

*Refrain.*

### **Commissioning and Benediction:**

Go forth in hope. Go forth with the knowledge of God's presence with you. Go to serve God by taking care of each other and God's world. Go in peace! Amen.