

**Leigh Memorial Congregation
Parramatta Mission, Uniting Church in Australia
Easter 4, Holy Communion
3 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 sixth 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 including a reflection prepared by 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. Today we will celebrate the Holy Communion as permission for this has been granted by the Uniting Church in Australia Assembly Standing Committee, for the period of COVID-19 isolation measures only. You are welcome to take part in it. But if you choose to abstain from taking the elements in this context, be assured that you too would be held in the love of Christ and of this community. So please keep a small size bread and some juice ready for the Communion service. At the end of the service if there is any leftover bread or juice, please use them up with reverence. Thank you.)

God calls: We gather

Greetings and Welcome:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

In this time of uncertainty, fear, despair and suffering we gather today to worship God who is our refuge and strength, a sure help in times of trouble.

We are also here to celebrate life's beauty in simple things – the singing of birds, clear blue sky, dew drops on the blades of grasses phone calls from a friend or a loved one, our kinship with each other and with the earth, and to be inspired to create a more compassionate world, beginning with ourselves.

Hymn: *Together in Song* No. 152

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXfYlpA-cmo>

1. Joyful, joyful, we adore you,
God of glory, God of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before you,
opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
drive the dark of doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.
2. All your works with joy surround you,
earth and heav'n reflect your rays,
stars and angels sing around you,
centre of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
singing bird and flowing fountain
call to praise you joyfully.
3. You are giving and forgiving,
ever blessing, ever blest,
well-spring of the joy of living,
ocean-depth of happy rest.
You our Father, Christ our brother,
all are yours who live in love;
teach us how to love each other,
lift us to your joy above.

Prayer of Praise:

God of life, present and promised,
we come before you
for you are the One who hears,
and you are the One who acts,
bringing us new life
with your grace and love and power.
Lead us in our worship,
that we may be prepared to follow your lead
in places where life is in danger,

where hope seems far away,
where dreams die during sleep.
Help us defog our memory –
that we may always remember your steadfast love for us
your never-failing promise of being with us always
that in this dark time we may see your light
and carry on with our life's journey.
With this sure knowledge
We open our mouths and proclaim your praise and worship you.
Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

We are in the 4th week of Easter and 8th week of social distancing. How is our post resurrection journey going during this COVID19? Are we feeling the presence of the Risen Jesus in us?
Shall we spend a few moments in silence reflecting on this journey and sharing with Jesus the challenges, fears and despair we are facing in this journey so he can restore us and rejuvenate us for our future journey.

(Time for silent confession)

Shepherding God,
We do not want to be sheep— dependent on a shepherd for everything.
We want to do it alone maintaining our independence.
But now we feel our need for you.
Be with us, for like sheep we are fearful and anxious.
You call us to lie down and be restored.
Forgive us for rejecting your shepherding care
and your love and guidance.
Forgive us for our need to do it by ourselves,
to be separate from the flock.
Forgive us for doubting your presence
in times of trouble.
Forgive us our despair
in the face of unrelenting fear and death.
Lead us back to the path of life, the life that is full, free and abundant. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon and Declaration of Forgiveness:

Jesus said, I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly.

In so confessing, we have returned to the shepherd, the guardian of our souls who welcomes us with open arms and a glad heart.

Know that the shepherd of our lives never abandons us, and unfailingly loves and forgives us.

Thanks be to God. 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

Bible Readings:

Psalm 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;

3 he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;

for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

John 10:1-10

1 “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” 6 Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

7 So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. This is the Gospel of our Lord.

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ!

Reflection:

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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:

May our gifts provide shelter to those who have no place to rest.

May our generosity quench the thirst of those who are parched for justice.

May our blessings provide a way to those who wander the streets alone and afraid. May we offer ourselves as companions to those who are in the valleys of suffering. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Prayers of the People: Below are some prayer points. You may add your own prayers.

- All those suffering from COVID19 in Australia and around the world.
- All medical professionals, emergency staffs, chaplains and carers of COVID19 patients
- WHO and Governments of all nations fighting against COVID19
- Doctors, scientists and researchers trying to find a vaccine and a cure.
- People who are under quarantine or self-isolation
- People who have lost their jobs, businesses that are closed
- People who are under lockdown and have no source of income
- Students, overseas students, children slowly returning to schools or at home
- Teachers and education staffs returning to work and learning new ways of teaching
- Parents who are looking after their children
- Victims of violence including domestic violence
- Disarmament of deadly weapons
- Organisations and individuals working for peace
- Churches all over the world
- Uniting Church in Australia
- Parramatta Mission, our three congregations and the Korean faith community
- PM staffs and volunteers, especially those working in the Mental health area, *Mealplus* and Emergency shelters
- Members of Leigh memorial Congregation, especially our senior friends and those who are unwell.

Amen.

Concluding Prayer: Shepherding God, as we place these prayers before you, we pray with thanks for your constant care and protection. Amen.

The Service of the Holy Communion

Song: *Come to the banquet there's a place for you* (© Fay White)
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNJSSNqH_5E)

Come to the banquet there's a place for you
Though you maybe have no money,
though you maybe feel unworthy
In your strength or in your weakness you are welcome, come

Come to the banquet there's a place for you
See, you are an honoured guest,
from constant serving you may rest
So sit you down, be fed & blessed for you are welcome, come

Come to the banquet there's a place for you
Woman, wise one, mother, maiden,
see your plate with food is laden
And your place is set and waiting, you are welcome, come

Come to the banquet there's a place for you
Worker, father, little boy,
old man or youth without employ
Come rest your worry, here is joy and you are welcome, come.

Come to the banquet there's a place for you
Whether you've been lost or faithful,
whether you've been wise or wasteful
Here's a place of rest and grace and you are welcome, come

Come to the banquet there's a place for you
Here is one who runs to meet you
loving arms stretched out to greet you
Do not let your fear defeat you, you are welcome, come

Come to the banquet there's a place for you
Willing hands have made this bread
with salt and yeast and labour shared
Let all the hungry ones be fed; it's time for feasting, come

Come to the banquet there's a place for you
Abundant wine, enough for all;
our generous loving host has called
The cup of blessing now is poured for sweet communion, come

Invitation:

Come to the banquet of God, who embraces all people, gathers all of humanity, delights in us all, and in whose arms we're safely enfolded.

Setting apart of the Elements:

Let us now follow our Lord's example in words and action.
As Jesus, on the night of his betrayal, took bread,
We take the elements of bread and wine that they may be set apart from
common use to this holy purpose and mystery.
And as Jesus gave thanks and blessed,
let us come to God with our prayer of thanksgiving.

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving and Prayer of Consecration:

May the Good Shepherd be with you.

And also with you.

Come to the Table the Good Shepherd has prepared for all God's children.

We bring our hungry hearts and thirsty souls to be filled with grace and mercy.

Join in singing praises to the One never abandons us.

With all our beings we give thanks to God.

Good Shepherd,
In your boundless love and amazing grace
you created this universe with streams of living water and lush pastures of life
for your flocks that is us.

But we strayed away as we found the path of sin more enticing.

You gave your rod and staff to prophets,
who challenged us to lead God-centered lives,
but we found comfort in seduction's all-too-false promises.

So you sent Jesus Christ, Emmanuel
that we would know you are with us.

Now with those assembled in this virtual gathering,
with those who have gone on before us following the Good Shepherd
we gather as your flock,
singing praises to your name:

Holy, holy, holy are you, Good Shepherd of all peoples.

**Still waters, green pastures, twinkling stars
join all creation in praising you.**

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who comforts us.

Hosanna in the highest!

You are holy, O God of our hearts,
and your good shepherd, Jesus, comes to save us.
When we would wander the deserts of sin,
he leads us to the green pastures of grace.
When we go down the path of foolishness,
he takes our hands to show us the right path.
When we are tossed about by life,
he brings us to the still waters of your gentleness.
Walking through the darkest valley,
he surrendered to the cold embrace of death,
until you brought him out of the grave,
anointing him with the oil of resurrection.

As we would find goodness and mercy in following
the Good Shepherd all the days of our lives,
we celebrate that mystery we call faith:

Christ died;

Christ was risen;

Christ will come again.

You have prepared this table for us,
anointing the bread and the cup,
as well as all your people, with the Holy Spirit.
May this bread which is broken
be our healing and strength,
so we may dare walk the darkest valleys of our world,
and lead our sisters and brothers
down the paths of healing and hope.

As we are anointed with the cup's grace,
may we bring friendship to the lonely,
hope to the despaired,
food to the hungry,
and shower them with goodness and mercy.

And when there are no more shadows around us,
when your rod of reconciliation
and your staff of salvation gather us around the Table prepared for us in
eternity,
we will join all from every time and place,
singing praises with glad voices to you
O God, the Good Shepherd of all. 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.**

Breaking of the Bread:

Lamb of God:

Lamb of God,
you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
you take away the sins of the world:
grant us your peace.

Receiving of the Bread and the Cup:

Prayer after Communion:

Shepherding God,
We thank you
That in and through your son Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd
you set this table before us
called each one of us by name
fed us with his body and blood
and strengthened us
on our journey of peace, hope and justice.
Thank you. Amen.

God sends: We go

Hymn: Together in Song No. 569

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3NmfmVGblw>

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou are mighty,
hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore!
feed me now and ever more!

Open now the living fountain
whence the living waters flow;
let the fiery, cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield!
be thou still my strength and shield!

When I tread the verge of Jordan
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side;
songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to thee!
I will ever give to thee

Words of Commissioning and Benediction:

We have been refreshed and restored by the Good Shepherd. Now he calls us to go forth into the world to love and serve him and his flock. And as you go may the blessings of God almighty – the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you, and may his goodness and mercy follow you all the days of your life. **Amen.**

