



**Leigh Memorial Congregation
Parramatta Mission
Uniting Church in Australia
Easter 5
Mother's Day
10 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. Thank you.)

God calls: We gather

Greetings, Welcome:

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

Good morning everyone and welcome to worship God. It's a beautiful late autumn day and we have gathered here to worship God. This day is special for it is Mother's day when we thank God for mothers. Without our mothers none of us would have been in this world. So on this day, we honour those who have mothered us and cared for us.

For some, this will be a birth mother. For others, it will be the women who raised us, who were our mothers in childhood – adopted mother, foster mother, stepmother, older sister, aunt, grandmother, or someone else. Today we thank God for all these women who held us and fed us, who loved us and cared for us and kissed away our pain.

I take this opportunity to wish all the mothers and motherly women of this congregation – a very happy Mother's Day.

Because it is Mother's Day today we will also remember our Mother Earth.

Hymn: *Together in Song* No. 147 (words: Frances Jane van Alstyne)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CeBoSQsBR0>

For today's service I have chosen some hymns/songs that are written by women. The first one was written by Frances Jane van Alstyne who was more commonly known as Fanny Crosby. She was born on March 24, 1820 in New York in a Puritan Christian family. Shortly after birth she became blind and she lost her father when she was only six months old. She was raised by her mother and maternal grandmother who brought her up with Christian faith, helped her memorize long passages from the Bible. She memorized five chapters of the Bible each week from age 10, and by age 15, she had memorized the four gospels, the first five books of the Old Testament, the Book of Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, and many of the Psalms.

After graduation from the New York Institution for the Blind in 1843, Crosby joined a group of lobbyists in Washington, D.C. arguing for support of education for the blind. She was the first woman to speak in the United States Senate when she read a poem there. She appeared before the joint houses of Congress and recited these lines:

O ye, who here from every state convene,
Illustrious band! may we not hope the scene
You now behold will prove to every mind
Instruction hath a ray to cheer the blind.¹⁴

She was one of the most prolific hymn writer in history, writing more than 8,000 hymns and gospel songs, with more than 100 million copies printed. She was called the "Queen of Gospel Song Writers" and the "Mother of modern congregational singing in America". She died on February 12, 1915 at the age of 95. We sing now one of her best-known songs "To God Be the Glory".

To God be the glory, great things he has done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life in atonement for sin
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Refrain

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;
and give him the glory! great things he has done!

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God!
the vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Refrain

Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see.

Refrain

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Most wonderful, most gracious and most glorious God,
who gathers us, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings,
we thank you for your gift of this planet which is our home.

We thank you

for the air we breathe and the ecosystem that generates it;
for the food we eat and the complex web of life that sustains it;
for the trees and their magnificence;
for flowers, not only for their beauty, but the staggering
subtle way that they promulgate the renewal of plant life;
for animals and the wonder that we and others are;
for microbes that live and undergird the cycle of life;
for the cosmos and the seemingly limitless mystery
that it presents.

for the oceans and their depths;

for the skies and the wonder of weather;

for the earth and its aged structure, the foundation of our world.

Wonderful Creator,

may we live in harmony with creation.

O God, this day that is set aside as Mother's Day to honour and remember our mothers, we lift up our hearts to you in gratitude for our mothers that you chose to give us life through them, and that they received the gift of life from your hands, and gave it to us. Thank you for the sacrifices they made in carrying us and giving us birth.

Thank you that in so many creative and imaginative ways they have made your love real to us, the love which is both gentle and fierce, strong and humble, kind and true which they have showered upon us in raising us, caring for us, correcting us and blessing us in ways we cannot have fully known as children. May our lives always reflect such love, compassion and kindness that they would be pleased to be called our mothers, and ultimately your name may be glorified.

We also thank you for those women who have been mothers to us along our journey – adopted mothers, step mothers, foster mothers, aunts, older sisters, grandmothers, teachers, Sunday School teachers or other motherly women. We thank you for all these women who held us and fed us, who cared for us and kissed away our pain.

But above all, O God, we thank you for sending your son Jesus Christ amongst us – for his life, death and resurrection by which he showed us the way of reconciliation with you, with one another and with the creation.

All praise, glory and honour be to you, and the Son and to the Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

As we come to this time to offer our prayers of confession, may we remember that God chooses to forget about our past, forgiving us so we may embrace the new life and new hope offered to us in grace. So let us spend a few moments in silence, remembering those times when we failed to follow Jesus.

(time for silent confession)

Compassionate God, forgive us when we falter on our life's journey, especially at this time when the road ahead seems too uncertain and we are afraid. We admit that following Jesus is not an easy task. Jesus requires us to be willing to make the ultimate commitment of our whole lives and we hesitate and hold back. Draw us back to you, Lord. Give us confidence and courage to face the future with hope. Let us place our trust in you that the message of peace and mercy you have given to us through Jesus Christ may be offered to others through our own witness to your healing mercy. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance and Declaration of forgiveness:

Even though the future might look clouded, have confidence that God is with you, guiding, healing, comforting and restoring you along the journey. Rejoice! In the name of Jesus Christ, for you are forgiven and healed.

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

Bible Readings:

1 Peter 2:2-10

2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

4 Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and 5 like living stones, let yourselves be built[a] into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in scripture:

"See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious;
and whoever believes in him[b] will not be put to shame."

7 To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,

"The stone that the builders rejected
has become the very head of the corner,"

8 and

"A stone that makes them stumble,
and a rock that makes them fall."

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people,[c] in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

10

Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

John 14:1-14

14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe[a] in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?[b] 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way to the place where I am going." [c] 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you know me, you will know[d] my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. 12 Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If in my name you ask me[e] for anything, I will do it.

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:

If we want to know you, Generous God, we must see you in those all around us. If we want to serve you, we must give up that which is most important to us, even our material resources, so that blessings of hope and life might be offered to the needy, the lonely, the hungry all around us. Receive our gifts, we pray, so that others might be transformed even as we are. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

A Mother's Day Litany:

God, Mother of all, we pray for:

- women who live alone: (silence)
- women who have never married: (silence)
- women whose families are grown up and away from home: (silence)
- women who have outlived other members of their families and many of their friends: (silence)
- women who long to have children but are unable: (silence)
- women in refugee camps and detention centres and who have been violated and their children they continue to nurture: (silence)
- women in war-torn countries, especially in the Middle East: (silence)
- those women in Nigeria who are still waiting for the return of their abducted daughters: (silence)
- women who work for peace and harmony: (silence)
- women who make decisions in positions of leadership, in workplace, family, church and the greater world: (silence)
- women who have lost their partner in marriage: (silence)
- women who have lost children: (silence)
- women who face the demands of single parenthood: (silence)
- women who are raising their children in poverty: (silence)

God of Life, we ask you to be with all women to assure them of your love and of their value to you every moment of their lives through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

God sends : We go

Hymn: Together in Song No. 588 Words: Anna Letitia Waring

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SFxG0h57kk>

(Anna Waring was born on 19 April 1823 in Wales, in a Quaker family, but later became an Anglican. She learned Hebrew in order to study the Old Testament in the original. She was a poet, a hymn-writer and a philanthropist.

In 1850, she published her first work, *Hymns and Meditations*. She was unmarried. She died on 10 May 1910. Now we sing one of her best-known hymns "In heavenly love abiding".)

In heavenly love abiding,
no change my heart shall fear;
and safe is such confiding,
for nothing changes here:
the storm may roar without me,
my heart may low be laid;
but God is round about me,
and can I be dismayed?

Wherever he may guide me
no want shall turn me back,
my shepherd is beside me
and nothing can I lack:
his wisdom ever waking,
his sight is never dim,
he knows the way he's taking
and I will walk with him.

Green pastures are before me,
which yet I have not seen;
bright skies will soon be o'er me
where dark the clouds have been:
my hope I cannot measure,
my path to life is free;
my Saviour has my treasure,
and he will walk with me.

Words of Commissioning and Benediction:

Go in peace;

And may the Spirit of God, be above you and below you;

May she be to the right of you and to the left;

to the front and to the rear;

May the Spirit inhabit your hearts and your mind,

and move through your hands and your feet.

May the Spirit fill your eyes and grace your lips – to the glory of God, the ever loving parent, and Jesus Christ, our risen Saviour both now and for evermore.

Amen.

