



**Leigh Memorial Congregation
Parramatta Mission
Uniting Church in Australia
Easter 6
17 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 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:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer:

Lord of us all, at your call we have gathered from many parts of the world in this cyber space to worship you. For us here in Australia it's our usual time of worship. For others it's very early in the morning. However breaking the barriers of time zone we are all in your presence to spend time in worship and fellowship.

Despite the COVID19 pandemic, for some people things are going reasonably well in their lives and they are reasonably happy and content. We thank you for all those who are experiencing those feelings and circumstances. But there are others who come to you with heads bowed in sorrow or grief or despair. Life has become difficult and uncertain, and they feel that they have none who understands, or no one to turn to. They hurt. They are sad. They doubt. They feel great loss. They seethe with anger.

To all of us, we implore you, come. Enter our lives. Rejoice with those who are healed and heal those who are afflicted. Remind us that your people in every age and every place had also experienced such roads in their lives. And yet they had tried to remain faithful witness to you. Fill our hearts and minds with your healing love and strength, as we open our mouth to proclaim your praise. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hymn: *Together in Song* No. 111

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JvCmvlm-Qg>)

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,
the King of Creation;
O my soul, praise him, for he is
your health and salvation.
Come all who hear,
brothers and sisters draw near,
praise him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who in all things
is wondrously reigning,
and, as on wings of an eagle, uplifting, sustaining:
have you not seen
all that is needed has been
sent by his gracious ordaining?

Praise to the Lord, who will prosper
our work and defend us;
surely his goodness and mercy
shall daily attend us:
ponder anew
what the Almighty can do
as with his love he befriends us.

Praise to the Lord, who when darkness
of sin is abounding,
who, when the godless do triumph,
our best hopes confounding,
sheds forth his light,
chases the horrors of night,
saints with his mercy surrounding.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that
is in me adore him!
all that has life and breath, come now
with praises before him!
Let the amen
sound from his people again:
gladly for ever we adore him.

Prayer of Confession:
(time for silent confession)

Most Merciful God,
forgive us when we are too preoccupied
to notice your presence in our lives:
when we walk through this world and fail to see the wonder of you upholding
our lives and all creation;
when we walk through our lives and fail to see your abiding presence with,
within, and around us;
when we walk through holy moments and fail to savour your presence,
instead feeling abandoned in the vast sweep of life as each day rushes at us
with its demands.
Open our eyes to your presence, O God of love,
that we may lean on you—
for you uphold all of creation
in tenderness and power. Amen.

Words of Assurance and Declaration of forgiveness:

When Jesus left the disciples, he gave a promise:
“I will not leave you orphaned!”
For we, his disciples, live in him and he in us—
the presence of God within and around all.
What a promise! Take courage! Take comfort!
Blessed be 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 17:22-31

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. 23 For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. 26 From one ancestor[a] he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, 27 so that they would search for God[b] and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us.

28 For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'

29 Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. 30 While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

John 14:15-21

15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. 17 This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

18 "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. 19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21 They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

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:

Giver of every good and perfect gift,
we are grateful for your every blessing
and for your presence through all of life—
in our joys and fears,
and in our hopes and dreads.

We pray for those who do not know
the consolation of your presence in their lives,
asking that you reveal yourself to them
through the gifts we have given
and through the lives we live.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Prayers of the people:

Being faithful to the command of Christ who calls us to love all people, let us be united in prayer with him: Let us pray.

We pray for healing of the world that is infected by COVID19. We pray for the victims and their families; doctors, nurses and all health professional and other frontline workers; for governments of all nations, policy makers, scientists and researchers committed to finding a cure. We pray for countries with limited resources to fight COVID19 that wealthy countries may share their resources.

We pray for the poorest and most vulnerable who are impacted most. May healing and peace come to their lives and communities.

We pray for peace in the world especially those countries where violence continues. We mourn the cost of war, the consequences of conflict, and the lack of peace and stability. May people work for a peace beyond the absence of war to the presence of reconciled relationships. We pray for those who are persecuted for following their faith, or consciences, or their political beliefs, who refuse to abide by the agenda of the powers, and those who stand up for integrity be strengthened by the power of the Spirit.

We pray for a new spirit in our personal interactions with others: may we learn to listen with care to others, to listen to their stories with reverence and gentleness and recognise that we brothers and sisters. We pray for the wisdom of caring for the earth by having a reverence for creation and the courage to preserve the precious gifts of water, land, and climate for the good of future generations.

We pray for our country that as a nation we may accept people who come here as refugees and receive them with open hearts. We also pray that your life giving spirit may move every citizen of this country so barriers which divide us may crumble. Suspensions disappear, hatred cease and all live in justice and peace.

We pray for a deepening awareness of the many ways in which God is with us: may we recognise God's creative hand in our world, in the daily events of our lives, in the beauty of nature, of music, the arts and most of all in the in the kindness of strangers and people we encounter.

We pray for those of our friends from Leigh Memorial Congregation who are unwell and suffering; those who recovering from their recent surgery or illness, those who are in nursing homes. May they receive your healing and peace. We pray for their care givers – doctors, nurses, therapists, ambulance, and paramedical staffs. May they receive your blessings that they may continue to serve the people under their care. We also pray for those who minister to the sick, the bereaved and the lonely that they may know your love and joy in their lives.

We pray for ourselves as Leigh Memorial Congregation and as Parramatta Mission for the changes that we are about to face and for the possibilities that are ahead of us. May the leaders of Parramatta Mission, and our three congregations, and us seek God's wisdom, guidance and direction for our future, and our willingness to accept what God places before us, so as God's people we may be a living example of a loving and hospitable community, welcoming new ideas, new mission initiatives, new people, and by being a voice for those who hunger for friendship, justice, equity and peace.

Concluding Prayer: Spirit-sending God, generously pour out your Holy Spirit on our world and our Church and lead us forward in hope. Amen.

God sends: We go

Hymn: Together in Song No: 648

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bqkTMO5fW8>

Help us accept each other
as Christ accepted us;
teach us as sister, brother,
each person to embrace.
Be present, Lord, among us
and bring us to believe
we are ourselves accepted
and meant to love and live.

Teach us, O Lord, your lessons,
as in our daily life
we struggle to be human
and search for hope and faith.
Teach us to care for people,
for all - not just for some,
to love them as we find them
or as they may become.

Let your acceptance change us,
so that we may be moved
in living situations
to do the truth in love;
to practise your acceptance
until we know by heart
the table of forgiveness
and laughter's healing art.

Lord, for today's encounters
with all who are in need,
who hunger for acceptance,
for righteousness and bread,
we need new eyes for seeing,
new hands for holding on:
renew us with your Spirit;
Lord, free us, make us one!

Commissioning and Benediction:

The celebration of this community gathered from around the world in this digital place, is ended. And now God sends us from here to our families and to the communities each of us belong to be witnesses of God's love. And as you go may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The love of God and the companionship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more. Amen.