

PRESBYTERY OF PORT PHILLIP WEST

16 April 2020



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OF **PORT
PHILLIP
WEST**

behind locked doors

Rev Bruce Watson

Good Friday and Easter Sunday have been experienced by Christians in an extraordinary way this year. Since Covid19 and the declaration of a state of emergency we have been implored to stay behind closed doors and only go out for necessities. Many of us are fearful and uncertain of the present and future and we worry about our families and loved ones, our church and our faith. Television, newspapers and social media are awash twenty-four hours a day with news about the virus and its impact. Panic is everywhere!

But there is a different path we can travel. In the Gospel reading for this coming Sunday from John 20:19 – 31 we read that Jesus come through locked doors to greet the fearful disciples. However, Thomas was not with the disciples on that occasion, and so Jesus returned a week later to see them together. "Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." (verse 26)

In the midst of this health and economic crisis, Jesus comes to be among us and breathes his peace in us. Whether we are literally behind closed doors or are imprisoned by fear, anxiety, isolation or loneliness, Jesus takes the initiative and comes to us in love and peace. He is with us personally and he is with us as we are connected together by unbreakable bonds of love in community. Let Jesus come through the locked doors of our resistance to breathe new life into us.



Christ shows himself to Thomas

<http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=54879>

10 Ways to support your Minister/ worship leader/ Lay Preachers and Presiders

1. Pray for your Minister/ Lay leader and their family.
2. Give positive feedback about sermons. Ministers/ Lay leaders on-line cannot see people's faces and their reactions so they may actually need you to text and email your support.
3. Church Councils and Elders help your minister/ Lay leader make decisions. Recognise and respect your minister/leader limitations.
4. Church Councils/Treasurers can provide the money for phone, IT and software upgrades in support on ministers' efforts.
5. Children if you have drawn a picture based on your ministers' words then please email your picture to them. Your minister wants to know that you are growing in faith.
6. Accept that your minister is not operating at 100% right now. They might need more rest and relaxation time. But they are doing the best they can!
7. Elders can help by making pastoral phone calls around the congregation too.
8. Small groups leaders can ring their members and share with the minister how they are all going.
9. IT experts in the congregation can ask the ministers if there is anything they would like to learn and gently coach them.
10. Pray for your minister. Amen.

ppw congregations offering on-line worship options

Worship around the Presbytery:

[Macedon Ranges Partnership of the Uniting Church](#) [40 min] using photos, responsive prayers, silence, storytelling poetry, music and prayerful reflection and a joint reflection from Ministers and Lay Leaders.

[St. John's Essendon and Ascot Vale Uniting Church](#) [30 min] Rev. Peter Gaydor-Whyte, traditional worship with early word, pictures, music, intercessory prayer.

[St. Albans Uniting Church](#), joined by Sydenham / Caroline Springs [40 min] tradition worship led by Rev Feke Kamitoni, responsive prayers, music.

[Darebin North West Uniting Church](#) Rev Leonie Percival's self-paced BlogSpot, approx. 30-40min, using music, YouTube clips, bible readings and links to reflections.

[St Thomas Craigieburn and Wallan Uniting Church](#) Join Rev. Peter Grayson-Weeks live or watch later on Facebook. Recorded music, Bible Reading prayers and reflection (25-30mins).

[St Andrew's Uniting Church Sunbury](#), worship live streamed to Facebook. Welcome, Prayers, Readings, reflections and music [40 min]

[Altona Meadows/Laverton Uniting Church](#) Facebook page the Ministry couple of Sani and Temukisa are offering worship from their home for both Altona Meadows/Laverton congregations and the **Bellarine Linked** congregations. Prayers are offered in English and Samoan; bible readings and conversation style reflections are accompanied by creative artwork and colorful worship symbolism. [30m approx.]

[Melton Uniting Church](#) is live streaming on Facebook each Sunday at 10am. The service is then available on [YouTube](#) Melton are also providing DVD's of services. The theme over the Easter season is the women of Easter.

[Hoppers Crossing Uniting Church](#) are live streaming services via a web page [located here](#).

[St Luke's – Highton](#) has a [YouTube Channel](#) which contains regular services (which are of the short reflective kind). St Luke's also has a [Facebook page](#).

9 minutes @ 9

Prayer points for this week:

- For rural congregations already feeling isolated.
- For people in palliative care and their families as they prepare for their final days.
- For families of people in nursing homes where lockdown rules are in place.
- For ministers and church councils struggling with the changes that are happening.
- We grieve with Rev Juliette Maua'i (Tautala'aso) after the death of her mother in New Zealand on the evening of Easter Sunday. We know that Covid-19 is making it impossible to get to the funeral on Saturday so we offer our prayerful support and the love of God to upon you.
- Pray that God will be with us all in this time of stress and uncertainty.

If you would like to share your prayer points with us to be included in this weekly newsletter please call Jeanne on 0432 284 279, or click [here](#) to email Jeanne.

Keeping you all in our Prayers.



Prayer is a communication between you and God.

Prayer is talking and listening to God.

Prayer is the gateway to God's presence.

Prayer opens your spiritual eyes.

Prayer makes you to be sensitive.

Prayer is to present your matter to God.



Why Do We Need to Pray?

To come to know God and build a relationship with God;

To ask for strength, healing, or to make requests or petitions;

To come to understand God's will for us; & Because we are encouraged to do so.

worship in the digital mediums

Mel Perkins Lay Leadership Development Coordinator

Many are lamenting that we cannot meet face-to-face for Easter services. Congregations could connect into the Assembly offerings, conduct their own, or connect in to the many being offered through Facebook by different UCA churches across Australia. [Assembly's links for worship](#)

If Congregations are going alone, below are some possibilities:

- Keep it simple – pare back services to what is essential – what are the key and essential parts of each service? What are their main messages?
- Worship boxes Congregations prepare shoeboxes with items that will be used for worship e.g. Candle, devotionals, (Alternatively email or phone it around to everyone before the Easter services – giving time for all to get the items) (e.g. communion – bread and juice – what is significant for your household?)
- Anzac Sunday – a simple prayer service might involve each member of the congregation or faith community agreeing to 'greet the dawn'.

Creative ways people are using to keep in touch:

- Art/craft classes – not just live streaming, etc, but really connecting to a particular group. The participants were told what to have ready before the session and there was interaction between all as the session progressed. E.g. Zoom Perhaps there are creative groups in your congregations and faith communities that could continue meeting using these platforms.
- On-line dinners/coffee; having engagement parties, parents getting together, reading groups, etc also using such platforms or Skype.
- Book Club Reading discussion groups using eBooks.
- [Bible Studies](#): Bill Loader has also come up with some new studies -

May you find ways to be creative, and may you find beauty and joy, comfort and peace.

the 20-second gift of washing your hands

Kara K. Root

Twenty seconds doesn't seem like a long time -- until you try to follow the guidance to wash your hands for that long to avoid the new coronavirus, writes a pastor.

Wash your hands for 20 seconds.

Never has 20 seconds felt so long in my entire life.

I'm trying to follow the CDC's advice for avoiding the new coronavirus. I count as I wash my hands: "One, two, three, four ..." My normal hand-washing time is apparently somewhere around eight seconds. After eight seconds, I feel finished. "... nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 ..." I resent each additional second. Each one feels long and annoying. Twenty seconds is an eternity! It's making me cranky.

The soap is gone because I've kept my hands under the water. I have to get more soap. I think about how much water I'm wasting. A tip I hear to avoid the counting: Wash your hands for two rounds of "Happy Birthday." I try this ONE time. I hate it SO much. I don't want "Happy birthday to you" in my head that many times a day. It's bad enough Kara K. Root: at actual birthdays.

That 20 seconds of hand washing, several times a day, is an excellent opportunity to stop and soak in resentment. It's a marvellous forced pause to wallow in grouchy irritability and anxiety. To keep myself from ending early, cutting it to 12 seconds, or 14, I take to ruminating on the spread of the virus. I wonder how many more people have gotten it so far.

My husband walked in the door and said, "Hey, did you know 20 seconds is the Lord's Prayer? It's one Our Father." Suddenly, the whole thing blew open.

Now I see that each time I wash my hands, I'm offered a chance to slow down and be present with God. I'm offered



Photo illustration by Jessamyn Rubio / iStock by Eucyln

a moment in which to stand still and breathe and come back into myself.

Head, heart, body, right here, with God. How many opportunities throughout my day do I now have to pause and be reoriented? Suddenly, this task, this frustrating requirement, becomes a gift.

I turn on the faucet. I listen to the sound of the water. I breathe. I wet my hands and squirt soap into my palm. I am aware of my hands and how they've changed, aged. They look just like my mother's when I was young. She was once just the age I am now.

I begin. "Our Father, who art in heaven ..." I feel the strength in my fingers, the flexibility, the sensitivity to touch and sensation. My hands do so much, and I take them for granted. Thank you, hands. Thank you, God, for my hands. "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Around this point, my hands begin to feel sudsy, velvety and a little tickly, as if wrapped in a soft blanket. It's a pleasant sensation.

I let myself enjoy it. How full life is of these small sensations! These little, unnoticed blessings of being embodied creatures! "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." My mind unclenches a little. It snaps to the phone call I've been replaying in my head for weeks. I feel the tension in my throat and the tender, wounded anger I've been nursing -- let's face it, cherishing. I think about the tone in her voice, the dismissive way she treated me. It rises up and balloons in my chest as it has in the car, in the bed, in the shower -- anytime I am still long enough for it to catch up and invade me again.

But this time, I face it squarely. "Forgive us ..." -- "Forgive me ... as I forgive ..." It breaks apart a little, dissipates. She doesn't know me. I don't need her to understand me. We are both doing our best with our days, with our lives. Beloved children of God, both of us. All of us.

Maybe I can let this go. Maybe I can wash my hands of it and let it go. "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever." The water is warm. I rinse off the soap. In just 20 seconds, my hands feel clean, and my mind and heart feel renewed.

"Amen."

Crosslight

spiritual practices to reduce anxiety & foster peace



Practice a news fast. Turn off social media and news. Try looking at news only one time per day.

Practice the [loving kindness](#) meditation.

Focus on what you can control and not what you can't.

Practice [mindfulness meditation](#).

Practice [centering prayer](#).

Go outside and listen to nature sounds. Think about God's creation.

Print and color [mandalas](#).

Encourage [Mini-Sabbaths](#) in addition to a regular practice of Sabbath.

Practice the [Daily Examen](#).

Practice [Lectio](#) or [Visio Divina](#).

Nurture a Spiritual practice of [imagination](#).

Make and use a [finger labyrinth](#).

Practice acts of [generosity](#).

Do [body prayer](#) or restorative yoga.

Start a gratitude journal or practice.

Make a prayer journal.

Pray the "[Lord it is Night](#)" prayer before bed.

When you don't have the words to say, light a candle instead (or turn on a battery operated one.)

Make and use [prayer beads](#).

Pick a centering word like "peace" or "hope." Write it down and let it be your intention for the day.