

Introduction to Worship

28th June 2020 – Pentecost 4



Photo of a droplet of water on a leaf, reflecting a window.

All around us is beauty in the smaller things of life. I invite you to pick up an autumn leaf and quietly contemplate the colours and structure of the leaf or look closely at a gumtree blossom, its structure and colours and whether a tiny creature has made its home in the midst of it. Find a magnifying glass and take a closer look with your children or grandchildren or greatgrandchildren. Nature is simply amazing. Notice the clouds, slowly moving across the sky and the light shining through them. Look out for droplets of water hanging from branches of a tree, just after a shower of rain and the light reflected or shining through the droplets. Covid-19 has forced us to slow down.

It is an opportunity to look more closely, at life around us and within us. It has become a time of reflection and giving thanks for the simple things in life and God's creation.

My own backyard has become a refuge for gang gang cockatoos, wattle birds, owls, possums, tiny little honeyeaters and many other birds I cannot name. I hear them calling out throughout the day. Many are escaping the bush affected by the fires, looking for food. The other night I went out to get the mop from off the clothesline and came face to face with a powerful owl. I had time to admire its features, its face and feathers. Both of us were surprised and eventually it flew off into a tree.

My neighbour said two tawny frogmouths were sitting on her letterbox. The wombats are back, digging holes in the earth beside the paths in the local park and the kangaroos are back too.

Sigh deeply and relax into this quietness and the slow pace of nature, which is our natural rhythm. Do not let your hearts be disturbed by the fears surrounding Covid-19. It's going to take time to come through this and we need to hold fast to our faith and be like the Psalmist's friend, encouraging one another. Some of us are struggling emotionally. Some of us have had tests for Covid-19 and it's a worrying time until the results come back, hopefully negative. It's a time to be responsible and cautious and to look out for one another. Phoning a friend or sending them a letter or card.

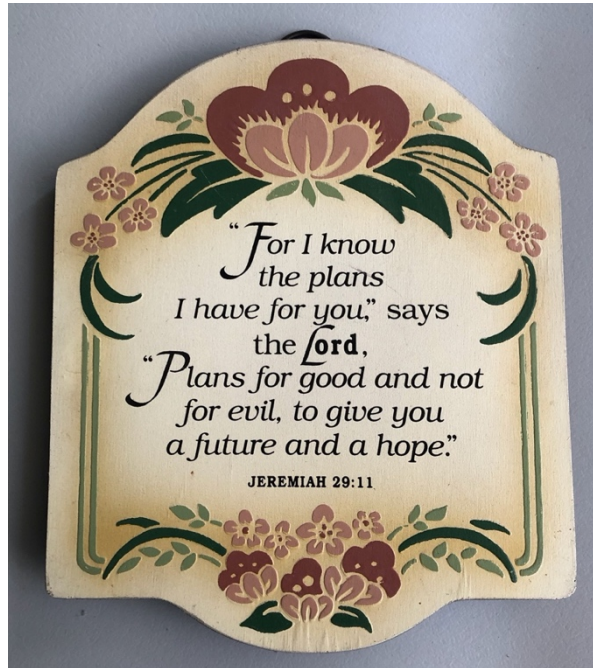
Most of all we need to keep on praying and stick together.

We need to keep on hoping and trusting in God's faithfulness and love for all of us.

Blessings
Rev Tina

Mountview Worship @ Home

Sunday 28th June 2020



Hymn: As The Deer Pants For The Water

As the deer pants for the water,
so my soul longs after you.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

You alone are my strength, my shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

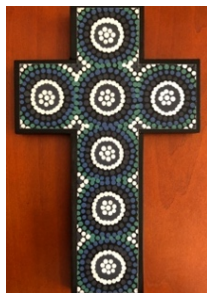
Martin Nystrom 1956 – ; based on Psalm 42: 1-2;

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Welcome to our Service

Today we will focus on God's faithfulness to us and on trusting in God in all circumstances. We will give thanks for friends in Christ, whose care and encouragement give us hope and on how we can offer hospitality.

We Acknowledge those who were here before us, the first inhabitants of this place
We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today.



Call to Worship

O give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his steadfast love endures forever

Prayers of Adoration, Invocation and Confession

Lord, when we are tested by fear, loneliness, isolation, boredom and being restricted, you come. You are faithful to us, providing a way through our troubles. You send others to comfort and encourage us and give us hope. We know you are good and great and trust you Lord. During these challenging times let us say:
Here I am Lord. For you will hear our prayers and work through us to bless your church.

We give you thanks and Praise

Jesus our Lord, you know about life, death and resurrection. You know about being tested and obedience to God's will. You know about putting your life on the line for others, for us. You help us live the way you taught us, with compassion, love and faithfulness. Let us say: Here I am Lord, when you move our hearts to reach out to one another. Let us offer hospitality every day, for even a glass of water is enough.

We give you thanks and Praise

Holy Spirit, always there, always dependable, guiding us through all times, joyful and challenging, friend to us, moving our hearts when we pray and read scripture and when we hear God's word or sing our faith.
Come to us today, make our hearts burn for God and his gospel of peace and love.
Fill us with hope and courage, lead us into the future.

We give you thanks and Praise

Lord, if there's anything we need forgiveness for or anyone we need to forgive, give us grace to forgive or receive forgiveness. Pour your Spirit into our hearts and transform us so we may live out our baptism, with love and fortitude. In this moment of silence, we come before you with all that's on our hearts

Silence

Hear then Christ's words of grace to us
"Your sins are forgiven."

Thanks be to God

You Raise Me Up – BYU Vocal Point (A Capella) [4:17]

<https://youtu.be/rcLI0A-IXIc>

*You Raise Me Up – BYU Vocal Point Josh Groban;
Lyrics: Brendan Graham; Music: Rolf Loveland, Arranged: McKay Crockett;
from album 'Vocal Point': <https://byurecords.lnk.to/vocalpointID>
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Scripture Readings

Genesis 22: 1-14

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22:1 After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."
22:2 He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you. 22:3 So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him.
22:4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. 22:5 Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you." 22:6 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So, the two of them walked on together. 22:7 Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 22:8 Abraham said, "God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son."
So, the two of them walked on together. 22:9 When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

22:10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. 22:11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 22:12 He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." 22:13 And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 22:14 So Abraham called that place "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

Psalm 121

121:1 I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come?
 121:2 My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.
 121:3 He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.
 121:4 He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
 121:5 The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand.
 121:6 The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
 121:7 The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.
 121:8 The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

Matthew 10: 40-42

10:40 "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.
 10:41 Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous;
 10:42 and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."

Hymns: You Are My Hiding Place and As The Deer Pants [8:31]

<https://youtu.be/FWYtujZjoUA>

You Are My Hiding Place – Artist: Maranatha! Music; Writer: Michael Ledner 1952–
 © M. Ledner / Maranatha Music; Licensed to YouTube

As The Deer – Artist: The Maranatha! Singers; Lyrics: Martin Nystrom 1956–; Album: Songs 4 Worship: Holy Ground
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For The Young At Heart



Matthew 10:42 "Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."

Ponder on how many cups of water you've given to people over your lifetime. You may have offered water in all kinds of circumstances and in many places, such as your home, other people's homes, in church, at work or while travelling, water that was clear clean Melbourne water, or perhaps even muddy water in a third world nation. I'm sure you've given out many cups and glasses of water. Giving someone a glass of water is such a simple gesture of hospitality. We cannot survive without water. It is needed for farmers crops and for our gardens. Water is essential and life giving. Perhaps that's why Jesus used water as an example of hospitality.

Sermon

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen



Image courtesy of Michael Leunig. © Michael Leunig 2018

It seems like one step forward and two backwards at the moment with Covid-19.

Just when we were looking forward to things opening up and being able to come together with people, we have a series of hotspots of the virus and its restrictions again. Some of our family members or ourselves may have been tested and situations in some countries are grim. It's worrying times for everyone, as seen in this cartoon by Leunig.

No one wants to see anyone suffer from the virus, so we do need to care for one another. We all look forward to a vaccine, but that will take time. The waiting and how things are dragging out may be causing some of us to feel a little gloomy. Some of us may be feeling like we are being tested.

Now is the time to trust in God and God's faithfulness to us.

Today's reading from Genesis is about trusting God. Abraham trusted God. He said: Here I am. The classic cry of a person who listens to God, responds to God's call and acts for God. Abraham has been promised a future from God that will bring life. He has a son called Isaac, the first of many descendants, as many descendants as stars in the sky. Now, he is being commanded to sacrifice Isaac to God, which will mean a return to barrenness, shame and sadness. A sacrifice was about giving thanks to God for all he has received, so this seems a strange request. Perhaps even outrageous.

Abraham obeys and trusts God will provide. He sets out with his son to the mountain top and there is no sign of questioning or anger at this request. Isaac trusts his father who reassures him God will provide a lamb.

Just as Abraham is about to sacrifice his son an angel appears and intervenes, saying: *Do not lay a hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son, from me.* I wonder how this could be, when God knows everything about us.

Perhaps our responses to God are unknown, until we act.



In these two paintings, the first from Rembrandt's studio and the second by David Teniers in the 15th century, we see the drama of God intervening and then a peaceful scene of Abraham teaching his son to pray and give thanks to God, for providing a lamb for the sacrifice.

Abraham has been tested and the testing has shown him to be a faithful man of God, in awe of God. All along Abraham trusted in God and God's promise to him. We do not know what was going on in his heart. We only know of his willingness to put everything on the line for God. His son and his wife Sarah's and his own future hopes. Today, we would think of this as an act of madness.

Perhaps the purpose of this story is to provoke a reaction in us, a deep response of outrage, for it is a scandalous request which makes us think about our own response to God. How far would we go for God? It makes us ponder on what tests us to the limits of ourselves. We remember the times we have been tested and have had to make a choice for God, putting aside all that stands in the way, to make way for our faith in God.

Perhaps Covid-19 is testing our faith. All of us, despite lockdown and restrictions and the fears, isolation, loneliness and boredom it can bring on a bad day, have done our best to hold fast to our faith. We have continued to trust in God to provide a safe way through this time for our loved ones and ourselves. It's not easy being separated from all that matters to us the most, our relationships with loved ones, and our worshipping community and all the other groups we belong to. Relationships are what makes us tick and knits us together as a community. God has made us for relationships with God and others.

We are meant to be interdependent and need one another.

Perhaps we can be like the psalmist in psalm 121. One friend says: *I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come?* His friend replies with a pep talk. God helped me. God will help you too. Many of us have phoned up someone at what seems the right moment, just when they needed to be cheered up or needed a pep talk or words of encouragement or someone who would listen to them or someone to share the joys or sadness of life with. A friend. This is sustaining our community. This loving care for one another where we lift up one another's spirits or share the load.

My husband and I received this wall hanging, which also has a stand, for a wedding present. From time to time I stop and read it and the words encourage me and offer me hope for the future.

We can trust God in all times and circumstances.



We find peace in our heart when we trust in God.

A serene trust and surrender to God's faithfulness to us to bring good, a future and a hope.

There have been times in my life when I've felt tested and come through and it's deepened my faith, made it stronger and made God more real for me and it was my friends love and prayers which have brought me through those difficult times. I'm sure you have had similar experiences. This is a good time to reach out to family, friends and your church family and do your best to cheer them up and help them find hope and remind them to put their trust in God and in God's faithfulness to all of us.

Rev Tina

Hymn – Great Is Thy Faithfulness [3:14]

<https://youtu.be/dTKlqmdfHSk>

Thomas Obadiah Chisholm 1866-1960 alt.;

based on Lamentations 3: 22-23;

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Offering Prayer

(about offering up ourselves and giving thanks to God for all we have)

**Lord and giver of every good thing, we bring to you our lives and gifts for your kingdom
all for transformation through your grace and love
made known in Jesus Christ our Saviour, amen**

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

Michael Plumridge has prepared the Prayers of the people for you today

God of love, compassion, mercy; Lord our God, please hear us as we pray.

This morning we pray for Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda. Lord we bring before you the people of Uganda and we ask for your grace and mercy. We acknowledge before you that the Ugandan people are among the world's poorest after years of economic mismanagement and political instability. We pray that governments will manage the economy for the benefit of the people. We give thanks for those who work with the poor and marginalized and those who work towards economic justice and human rights for all.

In Sudan and South Sudan, we pray for an end to ethnic animosities and violence and ask that different groups may arrive at mutual understanding and respect. We ask you to bless the churches in Sudan and in South Sudan, as well as Ecumenical Network Sudan. Lord strengthen those church members and others who have pursued the peace process and sought to heal and reconcile in situations of conflict and war.

We pray for women and girls in these countries. We especially bring before you all those caught in situations of domestic violence. Lord we ask that violence be replaced by harmony and respect. We pray also for those lives that are compromised by HIV and AIDS. Lord we ask for healing and community acceptance. We pray for an end to the practice of genital mutilation and that women may have sovereignty over their own bodies. Lord we ask that we ask that destructive customs and practices be abandoned and that a new light may shine.

God of justice we pray for the victims of war crimes and ask for peace and healing.

Creator God we pray that the natural resources of Sudan may be used wisely. We pray that the loss of arable land due to desertification might be reversed and the land may become fertile and productive again. Lord we ask that the hungry may be fed.

Lord in other prayers for the world we ask for an end to racism. We pray for all people who experience racial discrimination. Help us to identify the causes. Help us all to question our own attitudes deeply. Help us to end racial discrimination and disadvantage.

We pray for an end to the COVID-19 pandemic and for the speedy development of a vaccine. We hold the families and friends of those who have lost loved ones before you. We thank you for the efforts of health professionals.

We pray for those for whom the circumstance of lockdown is putting increased strain of relationships within households. We pray for parents and children. We pray for those who may be experiencing any form of abuse. Lord we ask for peace and we thank you for those who work in these situations.

Locally we pray for our brothers and sisters at St Paul's Lutheran, Nunawading. We pray for their minister, the congregation and all who hold office. Today we also remember all those who are part of our Uniting Church at Glen Iris. Lord, bless them we pray. We also ask your blessing on the staff and clients of Uniting's Connections. We thank you for this work in the name of our Church and are reminded of the need for connection in times of isolation and lockdown.

We pray for ourselves here at Mountview. Lord bless us as we are apart from each other. We give thanks for all those members work on our behalf continues even though our worship activities are in abeyance. We pray for those known to us who have a special need for prayer at this time.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen

A Little Bit Of Hope

Open The Eyes Of My Heart – Christopher Duffley [6:21]

<https://youtu.be/-F W zl61bl>

<http://christopherduffley.com>

Posted on YouTube by All Around

Dismissal

Go out into the world in the power of the Spirit and in all things at all times remember Christ is with you.
Make your life your worship to the praise and glory of God. Amen

Shalom to You Now

Prayerfully read the words

Imagine your family in Christ and send them heartfelt blessings from the Lord

**Shalom to you now,
shalom, my friends.**

**May God's full mercies
bless you, my friends.**

In all your living and through your loving,

**Christ be your shalom,
Christ be your shalom.**

Elise Shoemaker Eslinger, 1942– ;

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I have provided extra resources to accompany you on the journey. Rev Tina

Extra Worship Resources

One of my go-to books is called: *Longing for God*, by Glandion Carney and William Long.

I bought it in Singapore a long time ago and find it's still relevant. It concerns the psalms. I've drawn from it today, to reflect upon psalm 121, a psalm about trust for the journey.



There are occasions on the journey when we need a friend. A journey brings to mind movement, obstacles along the way, unexpected joys and a sense of direction. In psalm 121 the psalmist sets out on their journey and looks up at the mountains around them and worries whether they have the strength to complete the journey. The psalmist's friend and companion on the journey says: *Do not worry, God will watch over you.* Their friends' words of encouragement, their trust in God and confidence in God's help, give them courage and hope to continue on the journey. Their friend shares their faith story saying: This is what God has done for me. God is my helper. They feel encouraged. Their friend has given them strength by drawing from their deep well of personal experience, has emphasized God's care and reassured them. Do not fear, says their friend. God is always there. God does not sleep. God is there for you twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Focus on the good things in this life and give thanks to God.

Another go-to book for me is *Anam Cara*, a book of Celtic Wisdom by John O'Donohue.

Anam Cara in the Celtic world was a soul friend. Someone who acted as a teacher, companion, or spiritual guide. With the Anam Cara people shared their inner most self, their mind, and heart and this friendship was an act of recognition and belonging. The friendship became a strong bond between two people. Most people have a need for a soul friend, someone who loves and accepts them, who understands them and where there are no masks or pretensions. We often find a soul friend with someone who has journeyed with us for many years, who knows most things about us and who we can be ourselves with. Someone we can go to discuss a problem or issue, who we know will be honest with us. Someone to feel at home with and who we trust.

Someone who loves and accepts us.



A Mexican Cross

It is like this with someone we love. When we open our life to someone, we love our barriers are down. We give the person permission to come into the deepest temple of our spirit.

It takes courage to let someone so near to us, where it's like they become part of us.

In the sacred kinship of real love two souls become almost one, like soul mates.

An Anum Cara can be our partner or a close friend, who is there for us for life, with all its up's and downs.

Or they can be someone called a spiritual director, who is there for us, to listen to us speak about the concerns of the soul, our spiritual journey and relationship with God.

Before Prayer by David Adam (try saying this before you pray)

I weave a silence on to my lips
I weave a silence into my mind
I weave a silence within my heart

I close my ears to distractions
I close my eyes to distractions
I close my heart to temptations

Calm me O Lord, as you stilled the storm
Still me O Lord, keep me from harm
Let all the tumult within me cease

Enfold me Lord in your peace



Christians throughout the world have been invited to say the Lord's Prayer every day.

Please join them:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen**

Rev Tina, for Mountview Uniting Church

<https://www.mountviewuca.org/worship.html>

Final collation by Mountview Multimedia team.

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