

Introduction to Worship

19 July 2020 – Pentecost 7



With so much time alone we can begin to notice things we haven't seen before and ponder about them. It's amazing really. The force of life within nature and ourselves. Such as this moss growing in the cracks between stone pavers. There's only sand between the pavers, yet the combination of wind, rain, and light has made growth possible. These little plants have adapted to their environment. Perhaps the seeds lay dormant over summer and autumn. Perhaps the wind blew them here and then they germinated and took root in the soft sand. When I looked closely the moss it was like a miniature forest. Imagine the tiny creatures who make their home in this forest. Perhaps, like the children's show, Ben and Holly, there are fairies living there. I'm usually too busy to pay attention, to notice this gift of life, growing between the cracks.

It's a gift that offers a message about adapting to this slowing down, brought on by the Covid-19 lockdown. There is beauty all around us, God's gift to us during this time, to lift our spirits and teach us about how to adapt to challenging times and to value the simple things in life more. We have more time to spend with loved ones (either face to face or using technology/the phone). We have more time to spend in our castle or nest, whatever we call home. More time to spend in nature, either walking or gardening or sitting quietly, to admire the scenery. There's no use battling against what we cannot control. That's exhausting. It's when we accept and surrender to circumstances that we adapt and discover new ways of perceiving our world. This may lead to discerning new ways of living, that are calmer and kinder to ourselves. Ways of living where they may be less stress, worries and striving, where we can choose to allow life to slowly unfold or be surprised by life or consider life a gift and appreciate it more.

This week's worship is about being appreciated and being appreciated and about being loved and valued by God. May you find it a blessing.

Blessings

Rev Tina

Mountview Worship @ Home

Sunday 19 July 2020

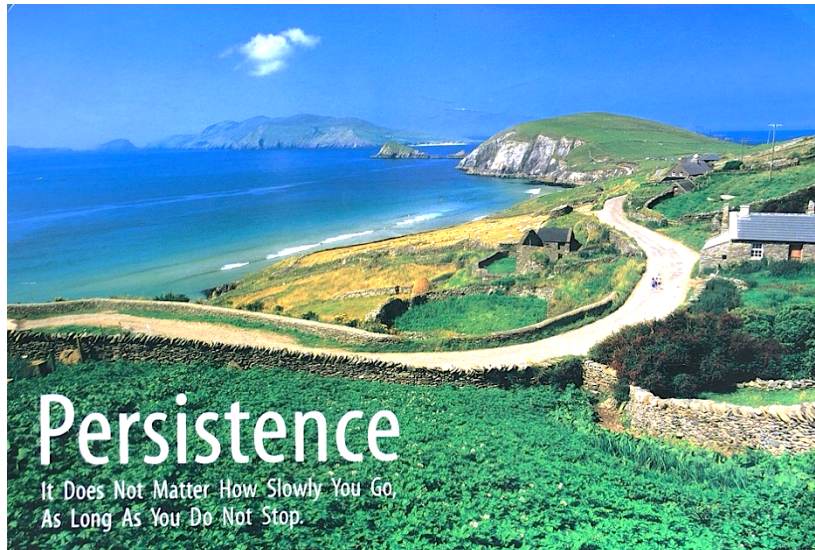
Hymn: [Here In This Place – Helen Jackson](#) [3:10]

<https://youtu.be/j0RQvnJeeYA>



Lyrics & Music by: Marty Haugen
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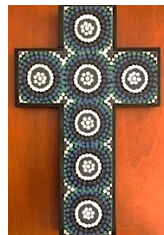
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Welcome to our Service

I hope you like this image about persistence. Sometimes the road seems to go on forever. Here we are in our second lockdown and here we are persisting in our faith. May today's worship bless and encourage you.

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 LORD, you have searched me and known me,
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works,
that I know very well.

Prayers of Adoration, Invocation and Confession

Lord our God, it is good to be known by you,
it is reassuring to know you care about us,
that you know what's on our hearts.
You are everywhere, in light and darkness.
Each one of us is precious to you.
Lord, we are never alone,
you are always with us.

We give you our thanks and praise.

Jesus our Lord, you are with us during these challenging times,
when many of us feel, stressed, lonely, worried and bored.

You speak to us through the gospel,
encouraging us to trust and have faith,
and reach out to one another with compassion.
You understand what's going on for us,
our struggles, fears and doubts.
You Lord carry us through these times,
you lift up our spirit.

We give you our thanks and praise.

Holy Spirit, you lead us.
You remind us, that because of Jesus we have become children of God,
blessed and loved by God,
because of this we can call out, Abba, Father,
just like the words in the Lord's Prayer.
You whisper into our hearts, saying, 'Do not fear, have hope in the future.'
So that we know, all will be well.

We give you our thanks and praise.

Come Holy Spirit. Come.
Open our hearts to today's gospel
comfort and reassure us
be with us

And 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

Hymn: Will You Come And Follow Me – [4:01]

<https://youtu.be/8HNR1fdAbi0>

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Readings

Genesis 28: 10-19a

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28:10 Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran.
28:11 He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set.

28:11b Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place.

28:12 And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 28:13 And the LORD stood beside him and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; 28:14 and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. 28:15 Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." 28:16 Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place – and I did not know it!" 28:17 And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." 28:18 So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it.

28:19a He called that place Bethel; but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

Psalm 139: 1-18

139:1 O LORD, you have searched me and known me.

139:2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

139:3 You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

139:4 Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely.

139:5 You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

139:6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

139:7 Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

139:8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

139:9 If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

139:10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

139:11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,"

139:12 even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

139:13 For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

139:14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

139:15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

139:16 Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

139:17 How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

139:18 I try to count them – they are more than the sand; I come to the end – I am still with you.

Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43

13:24 He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; 13:25 but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. 13:26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. 13:27 And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' 13:28 He answered, 'An enemy has done this.'

The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' 13:29 But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. 13:30 Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" 13:36 Then he left the crowds and went into the house.

And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field."

13:37 He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; 13:38 the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, 13:39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.

13:40 Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.

13:41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, 13:42 and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 13:43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Let anyone with ears listen!

Hymn: O God, You Search Me And You Know Me – Bernadette Farrell [3:23]

https://youtu.be/mEGc3_D19Vo

Lyrics & Music: Bernadette Farrell

Based on Psalm 139

Published to YouTube by Agnes Choo with attributions

For The Young At Heart



The Velveteen Rabbit is a favourite children's' book about a toy rabbit who comforts a little boy when he has scarlet fever. This is a well-known quote from the book:

'What is real?' asked the rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick out handle?

'Real isn't how you are made,' said the Skin Horse. 'It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become real.'

Becoming real speaks to me about prayer. I was baptised when I was five and sent to a Catholic school where a nun taught me to pray. One night when I was six years old and praying, it felt like I was surrounded by God's love. This experience made God real for me. Ever since that time I've felt loved by God and loving God and praying have sustained me through all times. I've done my best to teach my children and grandchildren to pray with the hope that one day they may reach out to God through prayer and discover God is real and over time come to know God makes us real through love.

Hymn: Jesu, Lover Of My Soul – Aberystwyth [2:49]

<https://youtu.be/XFaiiPv-Q6I>

Charles Wesley 1707 – 88 alt;

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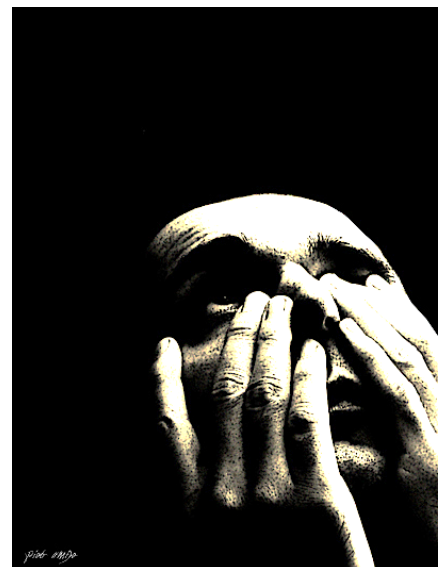
Sermon

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

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"
even the darkness is not dark to you;

the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Psalm 139: 11-12



Years ago, I was involved with street ministry. It was a time when homeless people and those from hostels and boarding houses in the city came together on a Friday night and formed a community. Buses from Open Family and Rosie's Bus (the Oblates) offered food, warm clothes and referrals and just for a little while people were less lonely and felt a sense of acceptance and belonging. They felt valued and cared for. Sometimes people would sit on the metal chairs outside St Paul's Cathedral and have a smoke and talk. One night I was sitting with three young women who were squatting, and a woman came up them and threatened them with a broken bottle. She was standing right behind me. Boy did I pray. Suddenly a man appeared from nowhere with a guitar and began playing and singing and the lady threw the bottle away and sat down beside him to join in singing gospel songs. The girls and I sighed with relief. Later on, the man with the guitar and lady wandered off and an elderly man walked over and joined us. He was wearing a coat and when he said down, I heard the clunk of the bottle on the metal chair and judged him. I gather he read my face, because next minute he brought a bible out of his other pocket and told me how a priest in the cathedral gave him the bible and his favourite was psalm 139, which he proceeded to sing, loudly with a slurred voice. He knew the psalm off by heart, word for word and said: God knows me and loves me. I've never forgotten Vladimir. I'm sure in the midst of the darkness of his addiction God can see the light in Vladimir's heart.

Darkness in psalm 139 is used to show the certainty of God's presence and transformation of light into darkness, where there is overwhelming trust in God. Something has happened to the psalmist. We don't know what. Perhaps his life has been threatened somehow or he's had an encounter with death. Perhaps someone with Covid-19 or who has recovered from it, may appreciate psalm 139. There is a darkness, a fragility and vulnerability about the psalmist and about those who have shared their story during or after having Covid-19. The psalmist speaks of coming through a difficult and harrowing time, where they now dwell in the light of God, where they have been found by God, and feel overwhelmed with gratitude and satisfaction with being fully known by God. Perhaps Vladimir felt like this as he sang this psalm. Who knows what he had suffered.

There is joy in being known and knowing God will never reject us. I remember a lady who used to wander all over the city with a shopping trolley of family law documents, for almost twenty years. She was a teacher and when she had a breakdown, her children were taken off her. I prayed that if only she could let go of the trolley and go and find her children, who would have been adults when I met her living on the streets, that they would be reunited. I'm sure they would not have judged her and would have moved beyond the mindset of stigma felt towards those with mental health issues. Today mental illness is considered in the same way as any other health issue. All of us have some kind of health issue and can do without stigma, which only adds to the pain and suffering we experience. I hope she has been reunited with her children.

I wonder how Jesus feels about imperfections. I'm sure he considers imperfections let the light into our soul and allow us to connect with others who have suffered or have been wounded or are not perfect or have experienced loss and grief, which is the majority of us. From my experience those who have suffered can relate on a deeper level than sympathy and empathy. They have more compassion and understanding and can offer hope and comfort to others.

God is like our best friend, who know everything about us and have spent a lifetime journeying with us. With God we can relax and be our true self. Nothing is hidden and we know we're accepted, warts and all. It's such a relief to be so free with God who knows us, our DNA, everything we've ever done in life, including our motivations and desires. Like the psalmist, we can celebrate our intimate relationship with God, a relationship that brings us gratitude, joy and peace.

I began by speaking about the darkness during these uncertain times which seem threatening, only to discover that today's readings reveal God is in the darkness, beside us and we are not alone. We are known and loved by God and each one of us is unique. God has no favourites. God loves us all equally and all of us are good and faithful servants, doing our best to live out the gospel. When challenging times come, we turn to God for strength. We reach out to one another for companionship and courage.

Joy is to be found in the midst of difficult times, joy in knowing God is close at hand, no matter where we are and what is happening to us in this beautiful world. I worked in the city as a lawyer off and on for over twenty years and during that time there was a good Samaritan who organised for people with disabilities to be buskers, singing or playing music. Listening to them made me wonder what it's like for people who are blind and live in darkness. A man used to play the flute at the entrance to David Jones.

His wife would bring him in the morning and return in the afternoon to take him home. He was blind. Yet, he exuded joy and his face looked so peaceful when he played. There was another man whose wife brought him to Templestowe Uniting many years ago, who was also blind and played the piano for us. His face was so peaceful when he played the piano. Another time I was walking with my husband along Orchard Road in Singapore at night and saw a man walking very slowly towards us and when he got close to us, noticed another man was walking behind him, hanging onto his shirt at the back of him. Both were blind. What I noticed was the trust between them and their faces, filled with light and peace. Another story is about Natalie. She used to push a shopping trolley around the city centre with all her possessions when she was homeless. I spoke with her on one occasion. She seemed to prefer the freedom of living on the streets. I've heard many stories about Natalie over the years. She has played at David Jones (two years ago) and more recently on the streets. She was a pianist and played in concerts. I've included a YouTube of Natalie playing the piano. I read in the paper Natalie is now living in a bedsit and is still playing at 84. All these stories witness to the awe-inspiring ability of people to rise above their circumstances and suffering.

*For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.*

Psalm 139:13b-14

The final story is about the Baptist church in Collins Street Melbourne. When Tim Costello was minister, the basement was converted into a café. Homeless people, people just out of prison and from boarding houses would sit down for lunch with interns and ministers. Police were not allowed inside and lawyers from Legal Aid came to offer legal advice. Georges, next door, sent over gourmet salads and sandwiches and soup was made.

It was regular feast, every week for several years.

My point is these stories reveal music, hospitality and love can bring hope, joy, and peace into people's life, especially when they're doing it tough.

Perhaps we too can find solace and joy in music, hospitality and love during these challenging times.

The Lord be with you

Rev Tina

Natalie Playing The Piano On The Streets Of Melbourne (My Favourite)

[Untitled Original Piece] – Natalie [5:43]

<https://youtu.be/s3PGNnG1OGw>

Music by Natalie;

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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

Heather Barnes has prepared the Prayers of the people for you today

Dear Lord, Our Heavenly Father,
Almighty and Everlasting God,

we thank you for bringing us safely to this day.

As your people, we humbly bring our prayers to you, for others and for ourselves.

Today in the World Prayer Cycle we are remembering the East African peoples of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda.

Ethnic rivalry has been a major cause of horrific violence and hatred for generations and we give thanks for those who have given their lives in protecting others and for those who are working for reconciliation and lasting peace, with justice, for all people.

A prayer for these countries -

When lives are lost and families split,
 Lord, comfort those that mourn.
 Where homes are crushed and dreams destroyed, give shelter to the vulnerable.
 When people flee and hope departs,
 bring calm amid the fear.
 When panic rules and courage fails,
 restore strength to all who carry on.
 Lord open our ears to hear,
 our minds to comprehend,
 and our hearts to respond
 with all compassion.

In the Ecumenical and Presbytery Prayer Cycles today our prayers are with the St. Mark's Anglican congregation, Forest Hill; Hartwell U.C.; along with Uniting's Harrison Community Services. Bless them in all their activities as they seek to serve you.

Lord we pray also for all who minister in your name and we ask particularly for Rev. Tina as she works amongst us in these difficult times.

Bless her and grant her good health and safe travel as she makes her very welcome visits and phone calls.

Dear Lord we are living through very disturbing and troubling times. Grant us strength and patience to endure. We pray earnestly for our government and community leaders. Guide and strengthen them as they strive to make wise decisions as to what is best for all, even if some decisions may be unpopular.

Heavenly Father be with all our community, but particularly with those who are burdened with ill health, sadness, grief or other deeply disturbing matters. We name them before You.

May your presence bring them comfort and peace.

As your people we bring these prayers to you and pray together the prayer you taught us –

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as 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 for ever. Amen.

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

May The Feet Of God – Helen Jackson

<https://youtu.be/YhiG-Vj8CGU>

May The Feet Of God

May the feet of God walk with you,
 and his hand hold you tight.
 May the eye of God rest on you,
 and his ear hear your cry.
 May the smile of God be for you,
 and his breath give you life.
 May the Child of God grow in you,
 and his love bring you home.

Lyrics: Aubrey Podlich; Music: Robin Mann;

Lyrics: © A. W. Podlich; Music: © R. Mann. Video: © 2020 the Multimedia team

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

Extra Worship Resources



Jacob had a dream about a ladder stretching from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending. Saint Columba had a similar experience. He led a Christian community on Iona, Scotland around 500 CE, an island where forty kings are said to be buried, one of whom is MacBeth. There are many stories and legends in this ancient place of Christianity and Celtic Spirituality. This one story. One day Columba was praying on a green hill that became known as the Hill of Angels. He saw a ladder leading from earth up to heaven with angels descending and ascending it. A fellow monk was a witness and Columba asked him not to say anything. He did after Columba died. I've been to that hill. It's just a small ordinary green hill. I didn't see any angels when I prayed on it. I wrote a poem instead. Years later I visited the hill again and looked down and amongst the grass was a large pink heart shaped stone. Someone had left it behind when they were praying on that hill. I prayed there too, as many thousands of others have prayed on that ordinary green hill. It as become a place of prayer, a place Celts speak of as a thin place, where barriers between Heaven and earth are said to be thin.

For The Young At Heart

Bees have an important role to pollinate where they transfer pollen between plants, helping plants grow, breed and produce food. However, their numbers are falling with widespread use of chemicals on farms and in gardens. (for example, it's said there is a forty per cent drop in managed bee populations in the United States.) It is worth familiarising yourself with what's happening to bees and find a way to advocate and pray for them.



This is a healthy Tasmanian Devil at Healesville Sanctuary and about forty-two little tassie devils are being cared for at the sanctuary. Most of the Tasmanian devils in Tasmania have facial tumour disease, which eventually kills them. There are many endangered species in Australia. I read in the newspaper last week about the Orange Roughy fish, a deep-sea perch, that lives for over one hundred and twenty years. Up to now I've eaten them, but after finding out how long they live for, I've stopped eating them. Each of us is aware of one endangered species and sadly, the numbers are increasing. What's hopeful is people are learning about endangered species and becoming more aware of their responsibility to care for our environment. Genesis speaks of our responsibility to care for creation and each one of us is called to this duty, child and adult.

Prayer by Leunig



*Dear God, we rejoice and give thanks for earthworms, bees, ladybirds, and broody hens; for humans tending their gardens, talking to animals, cleaning their homes and singing to themselves; for the rising of the sap, the fragrance of growth, the invention of the wheelbarrow and the existence of the teapot, we give thanks.
We celebrate and give thanks. Amen*

Reverence

I've been reading a book called *Reverence* by Paul Woodruff. It's an unusual book offering a different perspective on life. I'm drawn to his chapter about *Home* and this is an extract which I've adapted where he offers the image of a Nautilus shell.

The image of the nautilus is powerful. The chambers grow smoothly, each out of the smaller one that is left behind, and the whole history of the animal is carried in the shining spiral of its home. The things we do to make a home out of a shelter may form a linked succession as we outgrow our old quarters and stretch into new ones. In this image, there is nothing confining about our home. The poet says nothing to imply a home could hold back its resident until his last line, when the animal has left its "outgrown shell by life's unresting sea" and moved beyond the physical plane altogether. Home is a place to expand, or to expand in, and to expand smoothly. To enlarge a shelter, you push back walls or add rooms, but this is not what it is to expand a home. We have no trouble spreading out our accumulated treasures or the contents of our shrines to memories and bringing them to larger or smaller quarters. The challenge to a home comes when someone leaves, or when someone new arrives, or when someone returns – especially when someone returns from a transforming experience. A baby is born; children grow up and leave, a soldier comes home shattered from war; children drift back from college with new tastes and ideas; one spouse is transformed by a moment of epiphany – whatever it is, the change throws the home off balance. Making a place home, through all the changes that effect families, is a dynamic process; adjusting ceremonies and creating them, finding new ways to show respect as old ways lose meaning, or become less appropriate. Reverence gives us the power to make changes toward each other, changes in attitude and ceremony that allow us to go on being at home with new and changing people, or in the absence of loved ones. Reverence allows us to escape from dying rituals without losing direction, smoothly, continuously, as the nautilus blends chamber against chamber in brilliant mother of pearl.

During the first lockdown a family in our street, originally from another country were making their home here. A visiting niece and her partner from overseas got stuck here when flights were not allowed back to their country, so they joined the family of two adults and three children. One of the adult children and their partner couldn't return to Queensland. That meant seven people were living together, spending a lot more time together, the children home schooling and studying, the young adults at university studying online and the father working from home. They needed space to work and study and quietness. They needed to go for a walk, when things got tense. New ways of being needed to be created, relationships renegotiated, boundaries established, new rituals around the table and respect for each other maintained. Many of us can identify with this situation at the moment.

The dynamics of gathering together in our homes has changed, where we could have all the family over for a meal, we now use technology to gather together. Loneliness is a problem for those who live alone and haven't had a hug for a long time. We are not made to live like this. Thank God for our church family who sustain us. Loneliness can take its toll. This change that's been forced upon us has moved many of us to reach out to others, as much as we can, try to do things that get us out of our head where negative thoughts can be overwhelming and to find a way to get outside in nature or sit in the sun in a chair in the morning or watch shows about nature, which can be a balm for the soul.

Journeying through Covid-19 is changing the way we inhabit our homes and relate to one another. We need to take extra care to find ways to sustain ourselves so we can adapt to these changing and demanding times and we need faith, courage and to keep on praying.

*Love is like bread
It has to be made fresh every day*

By Leunig

*We simplify our lives
We live gladly with less
We let go of the illusion that we can possess
We create instead
We let go of the illusion of mobility
We travel in stillness. We travel at home.
By candlelight and in stillness
In the presence of flowers
We make our pilgrimage
We simplify our lives*



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

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