

## Worship and Prayer Resource for Sunday March 29

*Find a quiet place to sit comfortably as we join together in worship at home. You'll need a candle to light, your Bible and a journal or notebook to write in.*

9.30am

*Light candle and place it in a safe place*

As you light it, think of the light of Christ bringing peace into the world and give thanks.

Think of your sisters and brothers in Christ doing the same wherever they are and how that connects us as one people.

Breathe in slowly. Breathe out slowly. Say slowly: "Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)

Pray

Holy God, I come to worship you, remembering that wherever we are, we are part of your church, one in Christ, and you are with us. I set this time aside as a sacred time, that your Holy Spirit might bring refreshment and renewal. Amen

Psalm

*Read Psalm 130*

Pray

Name before God your cries and calls for help.

Name before God your concerns and fears.

Name before God those things for which you would ask forgiveness, then be assured of God's grace.

Read Psalm 130 again out loud, as a prayer of trust in God.

Give thanks for God's constant love, even in your waiting.

Scripture

*Read Ezekiel 37:1-14*

Reflect

Do you remember the well known spiritual song...?

*Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones...  
now hear the word of the Lord.*

In this Scripture, Ezekiel was addressing the people of Israel, who were in exile. Jerusalem had been destroyed, and many of them had been taken to Babylon. They had no temple in which to worship. They felt that God had abandoned their community, and that they were dried up and lifeless, like dry bones.



Ezekiel's vision brings them new hope, a promise of new life, in God's spirit. Their community will be restored, they will return to their own land, and will once more live as God's people.

At this time, more than ever, we need a promise of hope. We feel a little like those Israelites in exile. We have no temple in which to worship. Our communities seem to be closing down around us. What does the future hold?

*"Tell them that I, the Sovereign Lord, am saying to them: I am going to put breath into you and bring you back to life."*

We hold on to the promise of new life. Just as we know that green shoots will sprout from the ground after a long dark winter, we know that God can bring life and hope to any situation. We can trust in God's faithfulness and constant love.

*Dem bones, dem bones gonna walk around...  
Now hear the word of the Lord.*

### Respond

Where do you hope for God's spirit to bring new life?

What new opportunities might arise from a situation which seems dry and hopeless?<sup>i</sup>

*Write your thoughts in your journal.*

### Pray

Use this opportunity to pray in silence for our Church, our community and the world.

Pray for comfort, strength, wisdom and hope for:

- Our leaders – of our country, our health systems, our social systems, our churches
- Those who feel isolated, lonely, vulnerable, fearful
- People who are unwell, in pain
- All workers in health, aged care and disability
- School and University staff, teachers and students
- The many who find themselves unemployed
- Those still rebuilding from the nation's bushfires
- Those already at risk due to domestic violence, unstable relationships, chronic illness, poverty or homelessness
- Your own congregation, and yourself



### Affirmation of faith

We believe in the steadfast love of God,  
whose willingness to hear is greater than our despair;  
whose power to forgive is greater than our sin;  
we trust in this God to save us.

We believe in Jesus Christ,  
who wept in anger and grief;  
who faced life with hope and death with courage;  
at his command the bonds of death are broken;  
in him we find life and resurrection.

We believe in the Spirit of God,  
who breathes new life into dead bones;  
who dwells in us and brings us hope;  
who forms us into the people of God,  
always alive to new possibilities;  
this is the Spirit who dwells in us. Amen<sup>ii</sup>

### Offering

All that we are, and all that we have is first a gift from God. Our offering to God is from the fullness of all we have received. You may wish to consider how you can use the gifts God has given to you at this time. For some, the Coronavirus has resulted in huge amounts of work and stress, and God-given gifts may be called upon. For others, life is significantly quieter. Are there ways you want to offer your gifts to God in a new way: offering a listening ear for someone feeling lonely, helping someone navigate technology over the phone? Spend some time thinking about how we can use our resources – financial, physical, emotional and spiritual in these unusual circumstances.

### Blessing and Benediction

May God strengthen us in times of uncertainty,  
grant us peace when we are afraid,  
empower us to love, as we have first been loved,  
and grow within us eternal hope for the future.

In the name of God, the source of all life,  
Christ, the sustainer of all being,  
and the Spirit, who connects us all together.

Amen. <sup>iii</sup>

### Closing

Go for a walk around your backyard. Look for signs of new life: a new shoot, a budding flower, even the overgrown weeds! Give thanks to God for the hope of new opportunities and the promise of new life.

*For those of you who are on social media,  
please take a photo of your lit candle and post it online.  
#churchconnected #churchscattered #churchungathered*



## Further Reflection

Refer to week 4 in the Lenten study. Available here

[https://craigmitchell.typepad.com/mountain\\_masala/2020/03/weekly-lenten-studies-reflections.html](https://craigmitchell.typepad.com/mountain_masala/2020/03/weekly-lenten-studies-reflections.html)

or request a copy.

## Further Worship Ideas

Here are some more ways that you can connect with God's Word:

- Morialta Uniting Church have a weekly worship service on YouTube. Click here for more information: <http://www.morialtauca.org.au/virtual-church/>
- Our website has past sermons available. This is in the process of being updated. Please keep checking back over the next week or so. <https://athelstonechurch.org.au/sermons-2/>
- CMLA (the Centre for Music Liturgy and the Arts) are preparing resources: <https://www.cmla.org.au/resources/worship-in-times-of-isolation/>
- LifeFM radio station 107.9 are starting a 10am Worship music and address from 2 ministers this Sunday
- "A Sermon For Every Sunday" website has produced a worship service outline to use with others at home. Click here for a link to the resource. It also includes a link to sermons to listen to: <https://mailchi.mpa/asermonforeverysunday/this-weeks-sermon-1744145?e=e9aed2be77>
- Songs of Praise – a TV show with inspiring hymns and songs, together with uplifting stories of faith from around the UK and beyond is available on ABC TV and ABC iview
- The Synod of South Australia has published a full list of online congregations and resources. <https://sa.uca.org.au/documents/resources-board/Being-the-Church-in-Ungathered-Times.pdf>
- The Assembly are live-streaming services: <https://assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/3158-livestreaming-on-assembly-platforms>

*Take heart! Sampling many services, as Bishop Megan Traquair (Episcopal Diocese of Northern California) joyously proclaimed last week, is "like hearing Pentecost take place right here in March!" (World in Prayer)*

## Worship and other Creative Ideas for Children and Families

- See the free resource for families from Illustrated Ministry.com
- The Worshipping with Children Ministry site has newly posted resources for Children's worship at home. <http://worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.com/p/date-index.html>
- Have you gone for a bear hunt in the neighbourhood yet? Can you pray for the homes that you pass as you go?

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<sup>i</sup> Rev Cheryl Wilson <https://sa.uca.org.au/documents/resources-board/ascot-park-community-uniting-church-worship-at-home.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Cokesbury United Methodist Church

<sup>iii</sup> The Centre for Music Liturgy and the Arts: "Tethered to God" from "Worship in Times of Isolation"

