

## Worship and Prayer Resource for Sunday April 5

*Before you sit down, prepare your space. You'll need a candle to light, your Bible, a journal or notebook to write in and something to write with. Then take a walk outside and collect a few leaves.*

*Now find a quiet place to sit comfortably as we join together in worship at home.*

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)

### Psalm 118

In many Churches around the world, this Sunday is a celebration of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It seems hard to imagine, in our current social climate. No palm branches and celebratory processions today; just some leaves.

Place your leaves alongside your candle, then read these verses.

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.*

*Let us rejoice today and be glad.*

*You are my God, and I will praise you;  
you are my God, and I will exalt you.*

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.*

*New International Version*

### Pray

Reflect on the things you are thankful for today.

Write them in your journal and read over your list several times. If you are with others, share these things with them. Spend some time giving thanks to God.

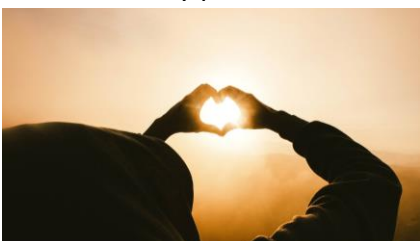
Place your list alongside your candle.

Read these verses from Psalm 118 again out loud.

Give thanks for God's constant love, which endures even through difficult times.

### Listen

If you are able, click here (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yO2QE1SNbd4>) and listen to The Secret Garden's instrumental piece, *Hymn to Hope*. As you do, let the hope of God flow over you, knowing that you are not alone. You are held in the love of God and connected with people of faith through every time and every place.<sup>i</sup>



## Scripture

Read **Matthew 21:1-11**

## Reflection

*“Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”*

This was a joyful time in Jerusalem, where God’s people had gathered for the Passover festival. A time for great feasting and joyous celebration. As Jesus rode in, the crowds cheered, hailing him as king. Hosanna, “Save us”, they cried.’

Jesus must have been an unlikely king, riding on a donkey. He had no crown, no wealth, no power, no political authority.

The celebration of Palm Sunday quickly turned to the sombre events of Holy week. It appears that Jesus’ grand and glorious parade made the religious officials, and the Romans, nervous. Jesus’ fall from favour was rapid, and within a few days the cheering crowd were instead calling for his crucifixion.

We can be so fickle. It is too easy to get caught up in the crowd, to follow the mass hysteria of whatever is claiming our attention at the time. When one stockpiles toilet paper and handwash, others follow. We are so easily influenced by what those around us do and say. At this time, there is rapidly changing and sometimes unclear information. The media, social networking, family and friends, each overwhelming our minds and our hearts with confusion and commotion.

This Palm Sunday might be a time for you to stop and consider, whose voice do you listen to? It is easy enough to trust when things are going well, in times of joy and celebration. But we can find it more difficult when the going gets tough, we are afraid, and the world seems to be collapsing around us.

We are about to enter Holy Week and reflect more deeply on the events of Jesus’ last week, his suffering and death. During that week, each of Jesus’ followers were challenged to consider for themselves the question: To whom do you give your allegiance? In whom do you trust?

Through this last week of Jesus, we see his trust. We see his commitment, his ordering of his life and priorities as he seeks first the kingdom of God. We see him stand firm. Most of all, we see his peace in a time of confusion, his compassion in the depths of despair, and his love in the face of hatred.

**When life is confusing and fearful, when you don’t know where to turn, in whom do you trust?<sup>ii</sup>**

## Respond

What are you most fearful of at this time? What are you confused about?

Whose voice do you give priority to? How might you trust God more fully at this time?<sup>iii</sup>

*Write your thoughts in your journal.*

## Listen

If you are able, click here ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84YASWe3\\_2Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84YASWe3_2Q)) and listen to Audrey Assad’s version of Abide with Me. Be assured of God’s presence this day.<sup>iv</sup>



## Pray

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

Pray for comfort, strength, wisdom and hope for:

- Leaders and decision makers
- Those who feel isolated, lonely, vulnerable, fearful
- All workers in health, aged care and disability
- School and University staff, teachers and students
- Parents adjusting to the new responsibility of helping their children with schooling at home
- 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, addiction, poverty or homelessness
- Your own congregation, and yourself

In this time of COVID-19, we pray:

When we aren't sure, God:

help us be calm;

when information comes from all sides, sometimes correct and sometimes not:

help us to discern;

when fear makes it hard to breathe, and anxiety is the order of the day:

slow us down, God;

help us to reach out with our hearts,

when we can't touch with our hands;

help us to be socially connected,

when we have to be physically apart;

help us to love as perfectly as we can,

knowing that God's love endures forever.<sup>v</sup>

Amen

## 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: gifts of kindness and compassion, gifts of skills and knowledge, gifts of money and time, gifts of love and connection. Let us give of our offering with grateful hearts. <sup>vi</sup>

## Closing

We are now entering Holy Week, with the feeling that events are getting out of control and there is nothing we can do to stop them. We do so trusting that God is with us in times of confusion and fear. We hold the promise of the cross before us as a symbol of hope and new life.

We give thanks for God's enduring love. Read the verses from Psalm 118 again out loud.



## Blessing

May you know the presence of God encircling you this day.

May you know the peace of God deep within your soul.

May you know the love of God upholding you always.

Amen. <sup>vii</sup>

## Actions

You are invited to send a message of love or peace to someone you know, to let them know you are thinking of them and praying for them today. You might want to do this as a phone call or text message.

Do you have any palm branches? If so, you might like to decorate your house with palm fronds and post on social media to keep up the Palm Sunday spirit.

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 5 in the Lenten study. See link in last week's resource.



Australia Celebrates Together

**PALM SUNDAY**  
5<sup>th</sup> April

*You are invited to celebrate Palm Sunday in an expression of unity with Christians around the country*

**THIS SUNDAY**  
decorate your driveway,  
balcony, letterbox, fence,  
or front door with  
palm fronds.

We may not be able to meet together  
but we can be joined in  
worship and witness.

Upload your photos as well  
#ozpalmsunday #palmsundayunity2020



## 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/>
- Tune in to LifeFM radio station 107.9 at 10am
- "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.mp/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

- Faith Family Trail At Home  
Explore the events of the Easter story through a variety of activity stations. Each station has a theme, Bible passage, questions to chat about, and simple activity and prayer ideas. Using locations and items from around the home, your household can choose at least one activity in the lead up to or during Easter. This is a great opportunity to grow faith at home for people of all ages, particularly families with children under 12. Most of the ideas use multiple senses to engage with the Easter story. Go here to download your own copy: <https://sa.uca.org.au/documents/intergen-docs/resources/Print-Easter-Family-Faith-Trail-Book.pdf>  
(Messy Church families will receive their own printed copy in the Messy Easter at Home pack.)
- 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> The Centre for Music Liturgy and the Arts: "Tethered to God – Palm Sunday" from "Worship in Times of Isolation"

<sup>ii</sup> Rev Cheryl Wilson <https://sa.uca.org.au/documents/resources-board/Non-Digital-Worship-Document.pdf>

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

<sup>v</sup> Adapted from "A Prayer during times of Covid-19", published by The United Church of Canada

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

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