

Worship Resource for Sunday May 17

For those who wish to have Worship at Home at their own pace (without Zoom)

This resource is for those who wish to Worship at Home in their own time. A separate resource is available of those who wish to join in with others using Zoom.

The service starts on page 3. First, let's get ready.

Preparing for Worship

Prepare your **meal** and your **space**.

Each week during the Easter season (which runs right up to Pentecost) we'll share our worship time together over a meal or snack.

Gathering around a computer or screen can feel 'less than holy'. These spaces are usually for work time or relaxing time. So, in order to make this an intentionally sacred space, here are a few ideas:

- Gather at your kitchen or dining table, with a laptop or tablet or a printout of this resource if you can. This allows you to participate with one another with space for your food and for you to write and colour. If you are unable to gather at a larger table, use a smaller, dedicated surface.
- In the middle of your table, place a candle and matches, your worry stone (see below), a journal or paper to write on and something to write with.
- There is also a colouring in page. Print one of these out and have some colour pencils or textas ready. Throughout worship time, you will hear or read the word "heart" again and again. To focus on the heart of the matter, colour or doodle in a heart each time you hear the word "heart."
- During this time when we are not able to worship in our church building, you might like to keep this home worship space set up throughout this time to remind you of God's constant presence in our lives.
- Your meal could be your breakfast or a light snack with a cuppa or juice. If it is warm, keep it covered as we won't start eating until part way through the service.

There are a number of songs which you may choose to listen to. You could take time now to click on the links so that they are ready to go (and so you don't need to wait for the ad to run during your time of worship).

1. *Sometimes I feel like a motherless child* sung by Brant Porter. <https://youtu.be/5h8KGI5JSzU>
2. *Spirit of the Living God*. <https://youtu.be/JYfzcYohWZg>
3. *Wa wa wa Emimimo (Come, O Holy Spirit)* https://youtu.be/_yn98ri6OBU
4. *For You Deep Stillness* <https://youtu.be/i2pJbDUyVQw>



Worry Stone



Throughout the Season of Easter, we invite you to use a “worry stone,” or we could call it a “heart stone” which is a stone you carry about with you to rub when you are feeling anxious or worried.

We encourage you to use your stone used in Easter services or find the one you took home at the beginning of Lent. Find some time to paint or draw a heart on it.

Your worry stone will remind you of the angel’s message, later repeated by Jesus, “Do not be afraid!”.



Worship

*This service is adapted from resources from www.worshipdesignstudio.com/series by Dr. Marcia McFee.
Other sources are developed by Rev Linda Driver or acknowledged within the text below.*

9.30am *Gather at your table with your meal and all the elements needed for worship ready to go as we join together in Worship at Home.*

Spend Time

We continue with our Easter Season because Easter isn't just one day. In our worship today we are reminded to keep Jesus' commandments and so to love one another is to keep each other in our hearts. Every week we remind ourselves why we gather. We are forming a habit of spending time together, breaking bread together, praising God together and having goodwill for all the people. In the account of the early church, they did just that:

*“Day by day, as they **spent much time together** in the temple, they **broke bread at home** and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, **praising God** and **having the goodwill** of all the people.”*

Acts 2: 46-47a (NRSV)

We create a “temple” of worship in our hearts that connects us across boundaries, distance and time. And as we share this worship, we are reminded that we remain connected. At the “heart of the matter,” we are connected through the Spirit that makes us one in love.

Centering Our Hearts as One

We are going to centre our hearts as one to begin.

Let's take a deep breath together. *Breathe in slowly and deeply, then breathe out slowly.*

Place your hand on your heart and let's lightly tap together in a slow heartbeat rhythm.
Continue this light heartbeat tapping as you pray:

Holy Living God, Heartbeat of Creation,
help us to take this time to centre on you,
for you made us,
you gave us life, and you continue to be with us
every moment...

[wait a couple of beats]

every breath...

[wait a couple of beats]

every step.

[let the heartbeat tapping fade away]



Hear this assurance from God:

[sing to the tune of Amazing Grace... if you aren't comfortable singing it, you can say it]

Be still, O heart, you're not alone, your beat is shared with me.

Come now, and calm, and centre here, you're mine, secure and free.

Let's take another deep breath, making sure our shoulders and any tension we feel in our bodies is letting go with the breath.

[Pause to do so]

Let's take another one.

[Pause to do so]

Let us pick up our heart stone, sometimes called a "worry stone," and let our touch on its surface remind us that God's touch is within us, between us, and around us.

As close and real as this object is in our hands right now, is how close Love is to us always.

Let us imagine letting go of our worries for now into God's heart of love.

We offer a prayer song of letting go:

[sing to the tune of Amazing Grace... if you aren't comfortable singing it, you can say it]

Into your care, we offer now,

our worries, fears and strife.

We turn to you and know you're near—

Your light, our love and life.

[Light candle](#)

Light your candle now, place it in a safe place and set your heart stones next to it (*not too far away!*).

[Break Bread](#)

[Blessing the Meal](#)

We keep all our friends in our hearts. We keep hope in our hearts. We keep gratitude in our hearts. That is the heart of the message today. Let us bless our meal by praying:

Holy and Living God,

We gather in your name, invited by Jesus, bound together with your Spirit, in union with each other. Feed our bodies and our spirits with your comforting presence so that we might be your comfort to others.

Bless this food and break open our hearts. Bless this drink and pour out your love.

Amen

Let us begin to "break bread" (eat) while we "break open the Word" in our scriptures.

Enjoy your meal!



Breaking Open the Word with Scripture

Listen

To prepare to hear the Word, we are going to listen to a song. This song is the spiritual, *Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child*. It is an emotional song – one that expresses the pain of separation from a parent. As you eat, or drink, listen to Brant Porter sing.

Click here: <https://youtu.be/5h8KGI5JSzU>

That was such a beautiful yet deeply sad expression of the pain of separation! This song is an African-American spiritual from the mid 19th century. It's the cry of a child being sold at a slave auction; being taken from his or her mother to become the 'property' of a slave master.

I wonder if you can picture yourself now as one of the disciples. Jesus, their Teacher, their Master, the One they had been following, the One they loved, was talking about leaving.. it was a scary and confusing time.

Let's listen now to the promise Jesus made to them:

Scripture

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.

John 14:15-27a New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God



Reflection

Remember what he said back at the beginning of John, chapter 14: "Do not let your hearts be troubled..."? Here Jesus summarises his teachings one last time, then reassures his anxious and confused disciples that they will not be left on their own, to fend for themselves, and to rely on their own resources.

Do you get the sense that the disciples would have felt lost? Just as we would if we had been there in that moment.

It reminds me of the song we heard, "Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child." Perhaps that's how the disciples felt, how terrified they must have been, after leaving everything behind for this Teacher, and then finding themselves in a minority and outside of "the mainstream" because of that decision to follow him. They couldn't just slip easily back into their lives; clearly, things would never be the same.

He will not leave them orphans, Jesus tells them, without a loving Father/Parent God to care for them. According to Richard Burrige, the word "orphan" can also refer to the disciple of a departed teacher.¹

What was Jesus talking about? Who was this Holy Spirit that he was promising? It would have been beyond what they could have imagined.

Here we are, on the other side of Pentecost. We know what happened next. The disciples didn't.

And yet, how often do we feel alone, lost, bereft when faced with uncertainty about the future?

Like us today, the disciples wanted to be reassured that someone greater, stronger, smarter is not only present but in charge. And they wanted to be reassured that this someone loves them. So Jesus promises to send them the Spirit, their Advocate, Intercessor, and Comforter. Through the power of this Spirit, they--and we--will live lives of faithful love, signs of our love for Jesus.²

Even as deeply sad as that song was, it still had a word of hope.. The first word, 'sometimes'... it's a lament that sometimes I might feel this way. This means that there are times when I do not - times when I have a deep sense of hope in the God who loves me. Who sent his Son to show me just how much. And who sent the Spirit to be my comforter and my guide in the hopeless times and the times of joy.

We are not left alone. We have hope. We are loved.

Breaking Open our Lives with Discussion

At this time in the church's calendar, we anticipate Pentecost and the celebration of the Holy Spirit in our midst. It is through the ongoing work of the Spirit that we continue to experience God with us, in our lives, in our church, in our world.



¹ The Lectionary Commentary: *The Gospels*

² Rev Kathryn Matthews: *Sermon Seeds*

https://www.ucc.org/worship_samuel_sermon_seeds_may_17_2020

Our theme scripture says, “they ate their food with glad and generous hearts.” One way we can be glad and generous is to share about how we are finding strength, hope, love and peace in these days.

This is part of “breaking bread” with each other as we break open our hearts to one another as well.

Have there been times when you have felt alone?

Where have you seen signs of hope?

How might the Holy Spirit be working in these strange times, shaping us and changing the world around us?

How might we as a Church be open to being led by the Spirit over the next weeks and months?

You might like to complete this sentence,

“I see signs of hope (in/when/where) _____.”

Let’s take some time at our tables to journal or talk about these questions.

Response

Let’s spend some time in prayer through song. Let’s pray for a new awareness of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Let’s sing, *Spirit of the Living God*. Click on this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYfzcYohWZg>

Breaking Open Our Hearts with Prayer

We are going to spend some time in prayer for others.

It is difficult in this moment not to be near some of the people we love and might be worried about.

Take a moment and write down the names of people you wish were right there next to you at your table today. As we name them, they are present with us in our hearts.

This week we pray for

- our church as we reassess priorities, make plans and embrace new opportunities as we move through the stages of returning to a new normal
- our communities as activities open up and we find new ways to engage with each other
- small businesses and families who are unable to manage with the ongoing restrictions
- leaders and governments who are still faced with many difficult decisions
- continued healing for our earth as our impact on the climate changes.

And Lord, we pray for those we know – and those we don’t know who...

- ... have lost loved ones
- For those who are sick and for those who are recovering
- For those who are caring for loved ones who are sick at home
- For those who are caring for persons in medical care



- For those who are separated from loved ones
- For those who are feeling alone and isolated
- For teachers, parents and students trying to make sense of the difficult circumstances they are in
- For those who are helping in so many ways and are so very tired
- For those who are struggling to find friends, food, and comfort
- For those who are not safe in their own homes
- For those who are afraid
- For ourselves.

Let us take another breath of Spirit as we say another “Amen” together.

We know that God sends out our prayers and the Spirit, Breath of God, is blowing from within us outward, as a Spirit of Compassion and Presence.

Praise God!

It is time to praise God and raise our endorphin levels to improve our heart-health, both physically and spiritually!

Let’s start with this affirmation:

**We know Jesus is present among us even in this very home.
We will not let fear be louder than love
but with glad hearts and rejoicing souls, we will sing God’s praise
for we are Easter People!**

Let’s sing this song from Nigeria, Wa Wa Wa Emimimo (TiS711) – which means Come, O Holy Spirit Come. We’ll get our hearts moving with the actions.. if you choose... you can hold your arms up outstretched and beckon down to yourself with your hands, inviting the Spirit to come down.

Click here: *Wa wa wa Emimimo (Come, O Holy Spirit)* https://youtu.be/_yn98ri6OBU

Have Goodwill - Spread Joy

That was great! I hope you feel some good vibes right now. So while we have our energy up, let’s decide to send some energy out to the world that needs it! What message does the world need? Perhaps you will decide to create a way to let more and more people know the message of Christ, “You are not alone. I am here. And my Spirit is your Helper!”

What can we do to create more love in our household, in our family, in our relationships with those we cannot be with right now? How can we offer our hearts to those who are working so hard right now? How can we tell others that we have hope?



In previous weeks we have suggested:

- making heart stones to give away,
- making God Boxes to place our worries in,
- offering support to neighbours by using one of our Self Isolation postcards (download here: <https://athelstonechurch.org.au/members-2/forms/>)
- and giving to the Uniting Communities Eastern Services Emergency Relief Food Appeal. Please continue to gather food and other grocery donations. Brenton Summers can either collect them from your front door or they can be left on his front doorstep. Cash donations will also be received with great thanks. Thank you to all those who have donated goods and cash so far. You have been extraordinarily generous! A wonderful witness of love overflowing.

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, from the depth of our hearts. 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.

Pray: Lord bless all we give so that it might be used for the good of all. Amen

Adapted from The Centre for Music Liturgy and the Arts from "Worship in Times of Isolation"

Benediction

(based on Psalm 16)

As we close this time together, remember:

God is always with you. No matter what you face, no matter what trials or hardships come your way, God is right beside you. The Companion is guiding and directing your path.

So, acknowledge your fear and your worry and know it is as true and holy as any feeling, including joy and hope and love.

Take heart! This is the heart of the matter.

Let the people say, **Amen!**

Blessing Song

Close by listening to The Sisters of Abundance sing *For You Deep Stillness*. For you...

Click here: <https://youtu.be/i2pJbDUyVQw>

The Peace

Share a sign of peace with those around you – or perhaps you might like to send a text to someone!

Exchange a sign of the peace by using a nod or hands-together 'namaste'-style gesture, with words such as 'Christ's peace be with you,' 'the peace of God' or simply 'Peace' or 'Shalom'.



Spreading Joy

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 Worship Ideas

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

- 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 Centre for Music Liturgy and the Arts has a **collection of Resources** available here: <https://www.cmla.org.au/resources/worship-in-times-of-isolation/>

Including **Prayers, Poems and Guided Meditations** and

Worship with your backyard: <https://www.cmla.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Worship-With-Your-Backyard.pdf>

Worship on the sofa: <https://www.cmla.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Sofa.pdf>

- The Assembly are **live-streaming services:** <https://assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/3158-livestreaming-on-assembly-platforms>
- Tune in to **radio station 1079 Life Together on Life**, Sunday 10am. Join 1079 Life's Kit for music and a message or two from great local pastors each Sunday. <https://1079life.com/>
- **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
Here is the Easter Sunday program: <https://iview.abc.net.au/show/songs-of-praise-easter-sunday>

Worship and other Creative Ideas for Children and Families

- The Worshipping with Children Ministry site has resources for Children's worship at home. <https://worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.com/2020/04/worshipping-at-home-on-april-19-2020.html>
- Have you gone for a bear hunt in the neighbourhood yet? Can you pray for the homes that you pass as you go?

