

Worship Resource for Sunday July 5

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

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

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

Each week while we gather for worship in our homes, together yet apart, and we'll share our worship time over a meal or snack.

- 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.
- In the middle of your table, place a candle and matches, your heart stone (see below), your study journal and extra paper to write on and something to write with.
- Your meal could be your breakfast or a light snack with a cuppa or juice.
- Make sure you can see a **colour** version of this week's artwork: *Anti-Creation Narrative* by Lauren Wright Pittman on page 8.
- You may also like to have 2 pop sticks, some coloured yarn and scissors.

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. Blessed be your name <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=du0il6d-DAk>
2. Let my people go <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vf6jBP4YXwo>
3. No longer slaves <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8TkUMJtK5k>
4. I the Lord of sea and sky <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgLwH5RdtPk>

We are in the fifth week of the *unraveled* series which explores how we can press onward even when our tightly-knit plans unravel into loose threads. This series will take us through to the end of July. Households associated with Athelstone Uniting Church have received a study journal to go with this series. It includes original artworks and reflections to help in personal devotions or with a small group. The file is available on request for those who wish to print out a copy. (Please contact Carol – office@athelstonechurch.org.au).

As we continue to worship at home in this ungathered way, we invite you to continue to use a “**heart stone**”. This is a stone you can hold on to when you are feeling anxious or worried. It can be used for personal devotions and for our worship services. Use a stone large enough to hold in your hand and draw a heart on it. (*Psalms 62: 5-8*).



Mini 'unraveling' Artwork

You might choose to make this during the service today or some time during the week

Supplies

- 2 pop sticks (or dry sticks from your garden)
- Yarn (the unraveled part of the artwork)
- scissors

Step 1

Connect your sticks - with a small bit of yarn, tie your two pop sticks together. Knot the yarn so it doesn't come undone.



Step 2

Wrap the yarn around the pop sticks - firmly hold the end of your yarn against the centre of the sticks. Wrap the yarn in a clockwise or anticlockwise direction around one of the sticks, move onto the next stick and wrap it again. Keep moving around in a circle, wrapping the yarn around each stick as you go, always in the same direction.

As you wrap the yarn around, prayerfully think about those unraveled parts of your life (or someone else's) being woven into something new and beautiful.

If you run out of yarn, or want to change colours, simply knot a new piece of yarn to the existing piece and keep going. When you are done make a final knot around one of the sticks to finish off.



Worship

This service uses resources from the unraveled series by A Sanctified Art. Other sources are developed by Rev Linda Driver or acknowledged within the text below. With thanks to Di Curtis and Meg Edwards for their creative input.

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.

Introduction

Do *you* ever feel a sense that your life is unraveling... getting out of control... falling apart? As you look at what is happening in the world, do you wonder the same? In this series we are encouraging each other to press onward *even* when our tightly-knit plans unravel into loose threads. In our unraveling, sometimes life surprises us with unexpected joy, love, and hope—with a new beginning we couldn't have imagined. Sometimes we need to be unraveled for God to be able to work in and through us.

Let us begin the holy unraveling by centering ourselves.

Spend Time

As we gather, across space and time and connect, in spirit, take in a deep breath and remember that wherever you are, it is the same air that we are all breathing, the same Spirit who breathes life in to and through us. Even though we are physically apart right now, we are still connected in the communion of the Spirit.

Pick up your heart stone. Feel the roughness, the smooth places, the strength and the weight of the stone. 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 stone is in our hands right now, is how close *Love* is to us always.

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

Let's take one more deep breath. In and out.

Light candle

Light your candle then put it in a safe place nearby and set your heart stones next to it.

Song

Let's sing '**Blessed Be Your Name**'. *Play this link if you are able -words are on the screen*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=du0il6d-DAk>

Call to Worship

Listen.

I have a story to tell—

A story of a God who longed for justice.

A story of a God who pushed back the waters to make dry land.

A story of a God who would not take "no" for an answer when it came to the safety of God's own.

For God's people were suffering.

God's people were crying out.

God's people were shackled and bound by oppression.

So God said to Moses, "Speak."

"Let my people Go."

And Moses spoke—

Over and over again.

Moses stood up for justice,
But over and over again, Pharaoh said no.
Power said no.
The path to justice is never easy, is it?
The path to change is never a straight line, is it?

So like Rosa, who sat on the bus, and Martin who had a dream,
Moses kept trying.
God kept speaking.
Moses kept listening.
Hope kept breathing.
And when power tried to unravel justice,
The people kept dreaming.

God longed for justice.
God *still* longs for justice.
So let us worship God—
For human injustice will never be strong enough to unravel God's dream that all might be free,
And all might know love.
Let us worship holy God.¹

Break Bread

Blessing the Meal

One of the features of this time of worshipping at home has been our sharing of a meal together as we worship. We gather at our table this day, giving thanks for all the people who have contributed to our meals and remembering all those who struggle to find enough food to feed their families. Let us bless our meal by praying ...

God of justice,
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!

Mini 'unraveling' artwork

When you have finished eating you might like to try making your own mini 'unraveling' artwork during the service.

The instructions are on page 2 of your resource.

Our time can be a combination of holy unraveling and making something new, beautiful and unique

¹ Prayer by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Breaking Open the Word with Scripture

Throughout this worship series we are exploring stories of unraveled shame, identity, fear, grief, dreams, and expectations. These are stories where God meets us in the spiraling, unraveling our plans—and us—into something new. Today we'll look at what happens when humans unravel God's plans for justice through the story of Pharaoh hardening his heart to Moses' requests. Moses follows God's plan—to stand up for justice for the Israelites. He was determined to demand what was right and not give up the fight. However, Pharaoh had another plan—to keep the Israelites as slaves.

Bible reading

Exodus 5:1-2; 7:8-23 New International Version (NIV)

Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.'"

Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go."

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Perform a miracle,' then say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,' and it will become a snake."

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes out to the river. Confront him on the bank of the Nile, and take in your hand the staff that was changed into a snake. Then say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the

Hebrews, has sent me to say to you: Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness. But until now you have not listened. This is what the LORD says: By this you will know that I am the LORD: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water.'"

The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs—and they will turn to blood.' Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in vessels of wood and stone."

Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt.

But the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts, and Pharaoh's heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said. Instead, he turned and went into his palace, and did not take even this to heart

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

Listen

As we begin to reflect on this story, let's listen to Louis Armstrong's arrangement of the spiritual, "Let My People Go" Feel free to join in the responses... let my people go..

Play this link if you are able -words are on the screen <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vf6jBP4YXwo>

Reflection

After relentless, long and hard days working in the fields, enslaved black people in America had little in the form of comfort. Singing spirituals was one way for enslaved people to come together, to sing about their hardships, to praise God, and to lift their spirits.

Spiritual songs like “Go Down, Moses”, centered on Moses and the Israelites’ escape from Egyptian slavery. This story helped them give words to their own longing for freedom.

Let my people go..

The history of humanity is marked by those in power oppressing minority groups, enslaving them to serve at their command.

Let my people go..

The history of humanity is marked by greed – fear of there not being enough, and a desire to take control – has started many wars, inspired conquests and monopolies.

Yet, we have a God of abundance...

Professor Walter Brueggemann writes about this in an article called “*The Liturgy of Abundance, The Myth of Scarcity*”²

“The Bible starts out with a liturgy of abundance. Genesis 1 is a song of praise for God's generosity. It tells how well the world is ordered. It keeps saying, “It is good, it is good, it is good, it is very good.” It declares that God blesses -- that is, endows with vitality -- the plants and the animals and the fish and the birds and humankind. And it pictures the creator as saying, “Be fruitful and multiply.””

“And Israel celebrates God's abundance. Psalm 104, the longest creation poem, is a commentary on Genesis 1. The psalmist surveys creation and names it all: the heavens and the earth, the waters and springs and streams and trees and birds and goats and wine and oil and bread and people and lions.”

“Psalm 150, the last psalm in the book, is an exuberant expression of amazement at God's

goodness. It just says, “Praise Yahweh, praise Yahweh with lute, praise Yahweh with trumpet, praise, praise, praise.” Together, these three scriptures proclaim that God's force of life is loose in the world. Genesis 1 affirms generosity and denies scarcity. Psalm 104 celebrates the buoyancy of creation and rejects anxiety. Psalm 150 enacts abandoning oneself to God and letting go of the need to have anything under control.

Later in Genesis God blesses Abraham, Sarah and their family. God tells them to be a blessing, to bless the people of all nations. Blessing is the force of well-being active in the world, and faith is the awareness that creation is the gift that keeps on giving. That awareness dominates Genesis until its 47th chapter. In that chapter Pharaoh dreams that there will be a famine in the land. So Pharaoh gets organized to administer, control and monopolize the food supply. Pharaoh introduces the principle of scarcity into the world economy. For the first time in the Bible, someone says, “There's not enough. Let's get everything.”

Because Pharaoh is afraid that there aren't enough good things to go around, he must try to have them all. Because he is fearful, he is ruthless.

The notion of scarcity has been introduced into biblical faith. The Book of Exodus records the contest between the liturgy of generosity and the myth of scarcity -- a contest that still tears us apart today.”

One could say that the sin of the current age is consumerism – the desire for “more”. More money, more power, more food, more nice things, more experiences, more, more, more...

Is it driven by a fear of missing out - of there not being enough?

In our search for more, how much do we miss when we are actually surrounded by so much abundance?

² <https://www.religion-online.org/article/the-liturgy-of-abundance-the-myth-of->

[scarcity/?fbclid=IwAR1fxG2e4kITWshJDp4EfW5jd0pTZ88Dw6bSAbTzDCwXp7df_v1sDSq7oRo#content](https://www.religion-online.org/article/the-liturgy-of-abundance-the-myth-of-scarcity/?fbclid=IwAR1fxG2e4kITWshJDp4EfW5jd0pTZ88Dw6bSAbTzDCwXp7df_v1sDSq7oRo#content)

What impact does this have on us and on others and on our world?

Stories of injustice begin with the individual and move out to whole groups in society

- people with mental health issues or addiction struggling to access services that will help
- refugees waiting for their story to be heard so that they can live in freedom and access free healthcare and education for their families
- the complex issue of mining and the damage done to the land, our history, the environment and the water

Back to Brueggemann: "The conflict between the narratives of abundance and of scarcity is the defining problem confronting us at the turn of the millennium. The gospel story of abundance asserts that we originated in the magnificent, inexplicable love of a God who loved the world into generous being. The baptismal service declares that each of us has been miraculously loved into existence by God. And the story of abundance says that our lives will end in God, and that this well-being cannot be taken from us. In the words of St. Paul, neither life nor death nor angels nor principalities nor things -- nothing can separate us from God.

What we know about our beginnings and our endings, then, creates a different kind of present tense for us. We can live according to an ethic whereby we are not driven, controlled, anxious, frantic or greedy, precisely because we are sufficiently at home and at peace to care about others as we have been cared for."

Jesus says: "Don't be anxious, because everything you need will be given to you."

"As a little child Jesus must often have heard his mother, Mary, singing. And as we know, she sang a revolutionary song, the Magnificat--the anthem of Luke's Gospel. She sang about neighborliness: about how God brings down the mighty from their thrones and lifts up the lowly; about how God fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty. Mary did not make up this dangerous song. She took it from another mother, Hannah, who sang it much earlier to little Samuel, who became one of ancient Israel's greatest revolutionaries. Hannah, Mary, and

their little boys imagined a great social transformation. Jesus enacted his mother's song well. Everywhere he went he broke the vicious cycles of poverty, bondage, fear and death; he healed, transformed, empowered and brought new life. Jesus' example gives us the mandate to transform our public life."

"Through his stories and parables, Jesus tells us that we can change the world. The Christian community performs a vital service by keeping the parables alive. These stories haunt us and push us in directions we never thought we would go."

The Uniting Church in Australia has outlined a set of principles and key actions that will guide the way to a better future as Australia recovers from the coronavirus pandemic.

UCA President Dr Deidre Palmer said the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the stark inequality and disparity in our Australian society and exacerbated the disadvantage faced by our most vulnerable people.

"In recent days, we have seen thousands of people around our country stand against inequality, specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the pressing need to address deaths in custody and the calls for Voice, Truth and Treaty." "It is a reminder that as a nation we must [do] better."

"As Australia looks to a post-COVID-19 world, we have a unique opportunity to renew our vision, to reimagine policy and to find creative ways to rebuild a nation that is just for everyone," said Dr Palmer. "One of the key learnings in this time of crisis is how deeply we are connected to one another, how deeply we depend on each other. What we have seen clearly is that we are only as strong and healthy as the most vulnerable members of our society." Dr Palmer commended the Federal and State Governments for their collaborative leadership in ensuring Australians were kept healthy and those impacted economically could access support. "It has shown us that when we make sacrifices for the well-being of the whole society, everyone benefits."

The document, Build Back Better: A Just Recovery, Post-Covid-19 draws upon the Uniting Church vision for a just Australia based on our belief that each person is created in the image of God and deeply loved by God.

You can download the document here: <https://assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/3197-a-just-recovery-post-covid-19> Or ask Carol to print out a copy for you.

As Christians, we see in the life and mission of Jesus, God's call for abundant life for all people and the renewal of the whole creation.

When we see life through the lens of scarcity, our hearts harden, we become frightened, greedy and controlling. When we see life through the lens of abundance, our hearts soften, we become thankful, generous and are set free.

God is always in the process of softening our hearts so that we can show kindness and love to others.

What is God calling you to cry out for? What is on your heart today?

Let my people go... Amen

Artwork

Take some time now to reflect on the artwork below *"Anti-Creation Narrative"* by Lauren Wright Pittman.

Take a few moments to gaze upon the artwork. Breathe deeply in quiet meditation as you observe the visual qualities of what you see: color, line, texture, movement, shape, form.

Now take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you overlook? Let's take a few minutes to do this.



"Anti-Creation Narrative" by Lauren Wright Pittman | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Breaking Open our Lives with Discussion

Let's take some time now to break open our hearts by sharing our thoughts. You may wish to journal and share these thoughts with God in prayer. If you are in a household with others, you might choose to talk for a few minutes. Choose one of the following to reflect on now.

- What has unraveled and/or is unraveling in this story?
- To what, exactly, is Pharaoh's heart hardened? Why is he driven by power and control?
- Artist Lauren Wright Pittman writes, *"This narrative reveals to us how a person's clinging to power can literally unravel creation."* In what ways is your heart hardened? What might it look like to soften your heart to actions and practices that cause harm?

Song

In reflection of the story of Moses cry to Let My People Go, Let's sing **'No Longer Slaves'** Perhaps this is a song that you can sing from your own personal story, or perhaps it is a song you can sing for someone else who is on your heart. *Play this link if you are able -words are on the screen*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8TkUMJtK5k>

Breaking Open Our Hearts with Prayer

We are going to spend some time in prayer.

As we think about our own lives and of the world around us, we can think of many things, people and circumstances unraveling. Let's spend a moment in silence, bringing those thoughts before God in prayer.

Let us continue in prayer for

- The 1.4 million Australians who are currently relying on emergency relief from community service agencies like Uniting Communities and UnitingCare.
- For international students struggling financially and isolated from their families
- every volunteer who is helping to serve those who are in great need of food, shelter and clothing right now.
- For the situation in Victoria and many countries around the world who are feeling overwhelmed by this COVID-19 pandemic
- the Medical HQ team as they run the COVID-19 Respiratory Clinic on our premises.
- Those working for a just recovery in Australia as we move beyond COVID-19 restrictions and seek to apply our learnings in the current recession environment.
- all those who are yearning for face-to-face worship but are still unable to gather safely.
- all those who are feeling anxious about returning to gathered worship soon – and those who are excited!
- those we know who are struggling with ill health.
- those recovering from medical procedures.
- those struggling with mental illness, addiction, chronic pain and other health conditions
- for those with young babies and those expecting one soon

Through Christ we pray. Amen.

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.

Have Goodwill

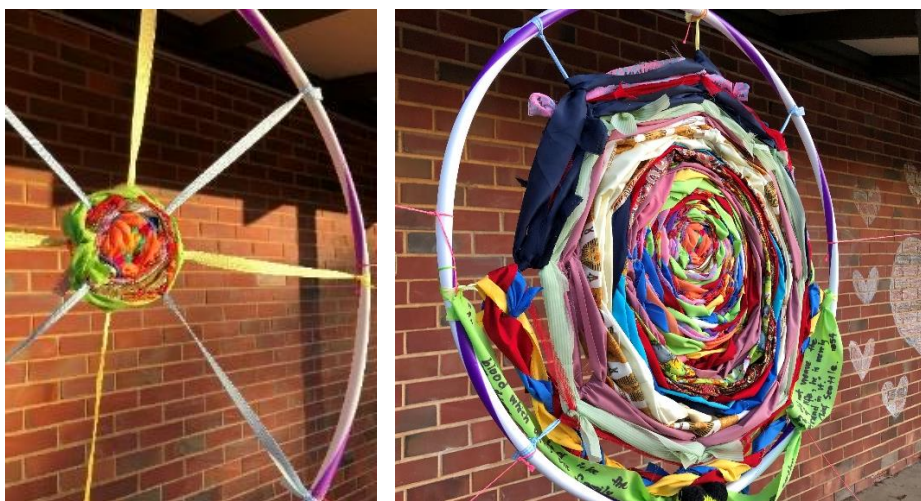
As we think of how we can respond to the story of how humans can unravel God's plans for justice, let us think about what action we can take for others. How can we cry out for justice and offer love and support to others?

Uniting Communities Eastern Services Emergency Relief Food Appeal

Please continue to give 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 so generously been donating goods and cash.

Community art project



As part of this series, we are developing an “unraveled” community art project at the Church. We invite you to add and weave into our art project... not just a strip of fabric or yarn but you may also like to write on your strip of fabric and weave in your hopes, dreams and prayers as well. **You can do this as often as you like.**

Mini ‘unraveling’ artwork

You might have made your own mini ‘unraveling’ artwork during the service – or you could make one during the week. As you wrap the yarn around, prayerfully think about those unraveled parts of your life (or someone else’s) being woven into something new and beautiful. You can choose to keep it, or to give it to someone you are praying for, or to pass it on to Meg so that we can add a collection of these mini artworks outside at the church.

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. Let us give of our offering with grateful hearts.

Pray: Generous God, you reach out to us with hands of love. We offer these gifts and ourselves and ask that they be used to extend your offer of love, care and justice for all of creation. Amen

Song

Let's sing “**I The Lord of Sea and Sky**” Play this link if you are able -words are on the screen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgLwH5RdtPk>

Study Journal

This week we invite you to spend time reflecting further using your study journal. Turn to “Pharaoh Hardens His Heart”, on pages 19-22. (See page 1 of this resource for more details about the Study Journal.)

Benediction

As you go into a new week, know that whatever is happening for you,
and whatever unraveling might be happening for you:
God blesses you with strength for the journey;
Jesus walks beside you;
and the Spirit guides you with dreams and visions of a glorious tomorrow.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.. Amen!

Candle

Extinguish the candle and watch the light change from a flame to smoke, like God’s Spirit that we carry with us now.

Spreading Joy

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

Worship Playlist

Here is a collection of songs you may like to listen to as you continue on in worship this week

Let my people go	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vf6jBP4YXwo
Blessed be your name	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=du0il6d-DAK
Guide me o thou great redeemer	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LXXh1-G7ns
Hear our praises	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etEkgLbs5Ik
I the Lord of sea and sky	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgLwH5RdtPk
My hope	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRgoOH-wgMU
No longer slaves	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8TkUMJtK5k
Send me	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v0slqO1eH8
For everyone born	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqpdZq6TAfo

Further Worship Ideas

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

- 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

Contemplative resources

- You might like to try going for an intentional prayer walk around your community: http://www.gungahlinuniting.org/?p=5369&fbclid=IwAR28tWeqlqfxcNPazMIpYJ99AUGapmXrMVQP_MiOiSQKeT-y8fvsf4rn0fkl
- Prayers and Meditation Resource from Stillpoint Community: <https://stillpointsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/11/Living-from-the-Stillpoint-Oct-17-mod.pdf>