

**Worship @ Home Easter 6, May 17, 2020**

**Hymn 398 Come Down O Love Divine**

Come down, O Love divine,  
seek now this soul of mine,  
and visit it with your own ardour glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear  
and kindle it, your holy flame bestowing.

There let it freely burn,  
till earthly passions turn  
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;  
and let your glorious light  
shine ever on my sight  
and clothe me round, the while my path  
illuming.

Let holy charity  
my outer garment be,  
and lowliness become my inner clothing:  
true lowliness of heart,  
which takes the humbler part  
and for its own shortcomings weeps with  
loathing.

And so the yearning strong  
with which the soul will long  
shall far outpass the power of human  
telling;  
for none can guess its grace  
till we become the place  
in which the Holy Spirit makes his  
dwelling.

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DOWN AMPNEY

**LIGHT YOUR CANDLE NOW**



Gathering God, here we are at home in  
worship.

**You love us and reveal yourself to us.**

We are discovering all over again what it  
really means to be church.

**You love us and reveal yourself to us.**

We are discovering all over again, that you  
don't live in our building but here in our  
gathering close and far.

**You love us and reveal yourself to us.**

Your presence dwells inside and within us,  
it is the mortar between us. We know you  
Spirit of Truth, for you abide in us.

**Help us to keep your commands, love us  
and reveal yourself to us.**

**Acknowledgement to Country**

We all gather on the lands and by the  
waters of the First Peoples of this place:  
And we pay our respects to their elders  
past, present and emerging.

We commit ourselves again to seek healing  
and reconciliation in this Nation and in this  
land.



## Welcome

Welcome to the Shearwater congregations and friends from all over. Welcome to you at home using these resources! Greetings to all our folks gathered in this space in community and connection...wherever, and whoever, you are!

In the past weeks, the lectionary has led us on a journey. We journeyed with Jesus to Jerusalem and sorrowed with the disciples in the grief of Jesus' death. Stunned, we witnessed with them the empty tomb. We have meandered in green grass and gracious places and gathered around the table after a walk to Emmaus. We have visited the early believers in the sharing of all they had together. Then we explored what it is to come together as believers, spending time on a building project, discovering that we can build a new temple using ourselves as living stones. For God doesn't live in our buildings, but rather in the people who are gathered. All this journeying, and yet we have not left our worship@home space!

## Opening prayer

As we embark on this next stage of our journey, our loving God, walk with us. We are pilgrims who are most at home as we journey along together for this is our natural gait. Dispersed as we are, gather with us, connect us and lead us.

God who is relationship at the deepest level, be present with us.  
Amen

## Prayer of confession

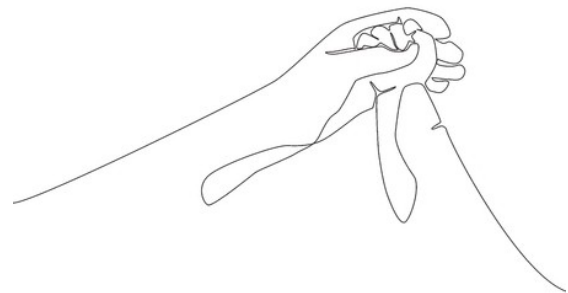
Gracious God, you have taken us through fire and water, but you bring us into a spacious place.

We come to you with our offerings and vows and yet we so easily forget you. Your promise to us is that when we cry aloud to you, you listen. When we grope for you we find you, often closer to us than our own breath! You hear our prayer and restore us to yourself. You continue to hold us in your steadfast love.

Sin is forgiven,  
WE are forgiven and reconciled.  
**Thanks be to God**

**“Come and hear, all you who  
fear God, and I will tell what  
he has done for me”**

(Psalm 66 v 16).



## The Readings

**Acts 17: 22-31**

**John 14: 15-21**

For these words of Faith and Jesus the  
Word

**Thanks be to God.**

## Reflection Easter 6, Sunday 17 May, 2020

In the latest Crosslight magazine, our friend Rev. Dr. Sally Douglas, Minister of the Word at Richmond Uniting Church, makes some comments about the Uniting Church and our growing congregations. Because we are growing. You are growing. I am growing. And our congregations are growing. There is a myth that the Uniting Church is shrinking. That myth is formed because some people recall church communities that included tennis clubs, social events, Sunday Schools, and Sunday services full of people. Sally challenges that memory: because the societal reasons people attended churches were far more complex than church involvement being the place for discipleship. Many people connected with church communities because it was 'what you did': because it was a mark of community respect: because the world had far less community activities.

People who do still attend churches, do so intentionally, almost counter-culturally and Sally suspects that there are more disciples and faith seekers in our congregational communities than ever before. People seeking that spiritual, relational, connection with the Holy, the Divine, the Sacred Other.

The church, after all is people: and a people of faithful living: in faithful relationship to God and with one another. And although we miss our buildings while we remain apart from one another in these cautious days, the church is never a building. Paul's words ring true as they ever have: *"The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands..."*.

Yet we yearn for a place. A place where we can gather and be together. Because God is found in the body of the church as people. *"For in him we live and move and have our being."*

We yearn for a place beyond our homes, where we can gather at the shore-line, or amongst the trees, or out on the country road.

In these days, I wonder if you are becoming curious about your own yearning for travel? I for one would like to have the opportunity to walk the shoreline without fearing that I am breaking the restrictions. My yearning for travel is far more locally oriented.

Some people say that are 'born with a travel bug'. With the advent of 'affordable' air travel world-wide, some people have crafted a lifestyle that included regular trips domestically and internationally that were 'normal', even a right. I often question the modern idea of a 'Bucket List'; a list of places to go and things to do before one 'kicks the bucket', so to speak. Being restricted in movements from our home must frustrate those who spend their holiday life and their imaginative lives planning for overseas destinations.

Yet, the improvements in local and international air quality statistics since COVID-19 grounded international travel are staggering. Air pollution has a massive effect on human disease. And, although reports of the canals in Florence being clean and full of wild life not seen for decades has more to do with the lack of shipping churning the sediments up into the canals, nevertheless, other environmental improvements are happening.

On one beach in Thailand, for instance, environmentalists have found 11 Leatherback Sea Turtle nests since November, the largest number of nests found there in the past two decades, and on Juno Beach in Florida, researchers found 76 Leatherback Sea Turtle nests, a significant increase when compared with the number of nests last year. I suspect that the Shearwater birds who cross Phillip Island Road will have a higher chance of starting their long journey to the northern hemisphere this season due to less road traffic.

There will be great positives that come from this time of social distancing. There will be wonderful new skills we bring with us, from the delight of home cooking to the deeper appreciation of eating out. There are people who have navigated great technological challenges and are enjoying the new skills of email, on-line conferencing and watching church services on the internet! And who knows, maybe we will have a deeper appreciation of the polluting effects of our western lifestyle? Maybe we will be able to more deeply appreciate the stresses on the families around us, in our neighbourhoods and find ways to support them. Perhaps even, we might be able to help our neighbours caught in domestic violence, because we have actually been in the neighbourhood for longer periods of time, and have developed more than a 'nod of the head' relationship with them?

But the yearning to be somewhere else reminds us of our isolation.

It also reminds us of how much we distract ourselves.

The Gospel today reminds us of something profound about Christian Spirituality. Jesus reminds us of the gift of the

Advocate: the Holy Spirit *'to be with you forever'*. Jesus goes on to say *"You know him, because he abides with you and he will be in you."*

Is the yearning to be somewhere else a modern reflection of distraction? We all know the grass is not greener on the other side of the fence. Yet, if you're like me, do you still, even in these days of social distancing, when we have a little less distraction in our days, still wonder 'where did the time go?'

Any wonder our souls are starved of comfort, nurturing: that we can't feel whole: because we yearn beyond the fence line, forgetting that Eternity dwells inside of us all: *"You know him, because he abides with you and he will be in you."*

May this week be a time when you might find that nourishment: some time, often, to experience that God abides with you and in you.

May this week become a time when the distraction of yearning becomes a creative opportunity to dwell with God.

May this week be an expression of the love in which you live and move and have your being: dwelling with God, *"who doesn't live in shrines made by human hands"*, who has not left us orphaned, but yearns for us to dwell in response to the great love we profess and know.

**This is growth.  
This is how we grow.  
This is living faith.**

## Prayers of the People



### Prayers of the People

*God who builds us together as one  
with Jesus as the cornerstone,  
send your Spirit, bless your people.*

We pray for the people we carry  
in our hearts;  
family, friends and neighbours,  
strangers whose stories we have heard  
and can't forget...  
(time of quiet to name these people)

*God who builds us together as one  
with Jesus as the cornerstone,  
send your Spirit, bless your people.*

We pray for the people in pain,  
in their spirits, minds, bodies and hearts,  
struggling with meaning or hope,  
illness or grief, fear or anxiety ...  
(time of quiet to name these people)

*God who builds us together as one  
with Jesus as the cornerstone,  
send your Spirit, bless your people.*

We pray for people displaced,  
whose shelter is not a home,  
whose safety is not secured,

whose future is uncertain...  
(time of quiet to name these people and  
places)

*God who builds us together as one  
with Jesus as the cornerstone,  
send your Spirit, bless your people.*

We pray for our earth, our seas and skies,  
creatures that run, walk, fly and crawl  
and all things living,  
may we learn,  
from the wisdom of our First Peoples,  
to walk more gently and live more lightly  
for the good of all.

*God who builds us together as one  
with Jesus as the cornerstone,  
send your Spirit,  
bless your world.  
In Jesus' name, Amen.*

*Hear these prayers of our hearts as we  
share in **The Lord's Prayer***  
**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.**

### Offering

We offer all that we have to you, God who is our dwelling place.

Take our lives and our thoughts, our days and our nights,  
along with the money we set aside,  
so that others may see your grandeur  
and know your embracing love within and around them. May it be so, Amen.

### Hymn: Deep Stillness

For you, deep stillness of the silent inland;  
For you, deep blue of the desert skies;  
For you, flame red of the rocks and stones;  
For you, sweet water from hidden springs,  
From the edges seek the heartlands,  
And when you're burnt by the journey,  
May the cool winds of the hovering Spirit  
Soothe and replenish you,  
In the name of Christ, in the name of Christ.

For you, warm comfort of the flickering  
firelight;  
For you, sweet melting of winter snows;  
For you, bright green of the land's  
emerging;  
For you, clouds lifting from darkened skies;  
From the cold place, seek the heartlands,  
and when you're chilled by the journey,  
May the warm breath of the hovering Spirit  
Soothe and replenish you,  
In the name of Christ, in the name of Christ

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### Blessing

God who made the world and all that is, in you we live, and move and have our very being. You do not live in temples we build with our hands but you give us life and breath and everything else. You mark out the appointed times and boundaries of our

history and we are yours. Abide in us and may we abide in you.

Design your lives then, community of believers, around seeking the divine, indwelling presence. Love God and keep God's commands. Go forward to reveal the love of God to others.

Tell them what God has done for you.  
Go in peace to love and serve.



### God's Grandeur

BY GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?  
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared  
with toil;

And wears man's smudge and shares man's  
smell: the soil

Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;

There lives the dearest freshness deep down  
things;

And though the last lights off the black West went

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward,  
springs —

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah!  
bright wings.

