



**uniting  
church**  
Kiama Jamberoo

### **Minister's Musing**

Life, at least the routines we are used to, for all of us, has changed dramatically in the past week. How might we reflect on the times we find ourselves in and seek God's leading in who we are called to be?

As people of faith, we look for stories that might help us make meaning of the circumstances we find ourselves in, and we seek wisdom for how we might respond. There are lots of ways we might go about this searching, but one way I find helpful is what is known as "Wesley's Quadrilateral". John Wesley proposed that as we reflect on the world and how God might be speaking to us, we need to consider four parts elements : Scripture, reason, tradition and experience.

*Scripture* reminds us again and again that God is with us – always. The gospels tell of Jesus the healer, the one who is concerned for those who suffer, who weeps with us. Most of all, the gospels call us to live with hope- hope of healing, hope of wholeness, hope that we will come through this together and we will have the strength and wisdom and grace to rebuild whatever it is we have to rebuild.

*Tradition* Our tradition is deeply challenged at the present moment as we are unable to gather freely, to express and share our faith together, publically. This is a deep part of who we are as disciples of Jesus Christ. So it is important for us to remain connected. In a world where many of us prefer to meet face-to-face, we need to learn to use the phone, or even to text or email or video chat in some way. And where some of us might be tempted to enjoy some time of solitude and quiet, what is important is that we don't shrink into our shells so far that we become unaware of the people around us who might need some support or encouragement.

*Reason* Importantly, how we listen to government and expert health advice is vital right now. Heeding the advice to remain separate is important to slowing the spread of the virus. Our Creator gave us the ability to use our minds and to make wise decisions. Here is our opportunity to offer some degree of rationality into a world that has shown itself to be highly irrational at times (We cannot survive on toilet paper and tomato sauce!).

*Experience* None of us have ever experienced anything like this before. But there are stories in human experience that can offer us something to learn from. We have stories from throughout the ages of people struggling to contain illness. Our advantage is that we know far more about the nature of COVID-19 and how it is spread than our ancestors did when dealing with bubonic plague or cholera. And the media of today makes our current stories far more accessible than they ever would have been in centuries past. One story that is special to me is about a tiny village in the middle of England called Eyam. When the bubonic plague was spreading throughout England in the 1660s, the village made a decision together to quarantine the entire village – no one was to go in or out until the plague was gone – that is, until the last person who contracted the disease in the village had

died. It took four months. It was a truly courageous decision and it cost the lives of 260 of the villagers. But the plague was unable to spread any further north. That tiny village is credited with helping to stop the spread. Check out <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-35064071> for the story of the vicar in the middle of it all!

Today, many of us are confined to our homes. Our experience is hopefully to not experience the illness itself. In the meantime, we find new routines. Perhaps instead of heading out to bible study group, you could phone someone in the group to talk about the reading or study. Instead of catching up for coffee or lunch you could video chat with someone as you eat together. Some of my colleagues are organising a wine and cheese hour – BYO, of course!

We are planning on setting up a closed Facebook group that will enable us to share more freely amongst ourselves and I'll be in touch about that in the coming days. I am also hoping that we will have a video conferencing tool available to us so that Church Council, Pastoral Partners and small groups might be able to talk to each other more easily.

It is all new. We are having to learn new skills. And we are having to adjust to different circumstances. God is with us, holding us and guiding us. So stay in touch – with God, and each other, and with your neighbours.

Rev Kath Merrifield  
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