



**uniting
church**
Kiama Jamberoo

Easter 5
Sunday 10 May 2020



Room For Everyone!

"Jesus is the Way the Truth and the Life"
John 14:6
Ain Vares
www.ainvaresart.com

We Gather

*Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.
It would be appropriate to find a white cloth or scarf to signify the Easter season.
Start by lighting the candle. The candle helps to centre us.
Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

Acknowledgement of Country

We recognise the stewardship of the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation for the land on which we gather today.

From river to ocean
from campfire to hearth
may the First People
who have cared for this land
be blessed.

From breath to song
from step to dance
may those who follow your Songlines

guide us on the journey
to living honourably in this place.

From greeting to Amen
from silence to chorus
may our worship
join with the voices
of the First Peoples
of this Land.

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Introduction

Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed!

Mothers' Day, as we know it in Australia, has its roots in the American Civil War. The call to women to demand an end to war, was made by Julia Ward Howe in 1870. (*I have included a copy of her statement at the end of the worship service.*) Believing that women had a responsibility to engage in political action to shape their societies, she asked for a day of peace to be observed annually on 2 June.

Whilst this didn't catch on, in 1908, Anna Jarvis, whose mother had been an associate of Julia Ward Howe, held a memorial to remember and celebrate the death of her own mother. It was this celebration that captured the imagination of her community, and Anna spent a good deal of her later life fighting off Hallmark and other commercial operators who sought to commercialise the day...

So today, we pause to remember our mothers and those women who have nurtured us throughout our lives. We give thanks to God for them.

We also remember those whose memories of their mother is not a happy one - whether because of sickness, abandonment, mental illness, violence or addiction - we pray that you will know God's comfort and healing.

We think of women who have lost children to illness, accident, addiction or violence.

We think of women who have longed for children and women without children of their own who have offered their hearts and homes to others.

Whether joy-filled or a struggle, we pray together that God's love and grace will surround us all.

Call To Worship

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

Come and know that God is good!

We come seeking God's shelter.

Come and know God's mercy.

We come seeking wholeness and God's peace.

Come and abide in God's steadfast love.

Receive us as we are, as we come to worship you, O God.

We pray...

Merciful God, our hearts are troubled.

We long for a world free of hate and destruction.

We yearn to know your presence in our daily lives; as we awaken and sleep, as we play and work, as we eat and pray, in moments mundane and profound.
Receive us, shelter us, and nurture us as your beloved people, for your purposes and to your glory. Amen.

Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for Easter 5, 10 May 2020

Sing - Shout To The Lord

With lyrics: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uMeuhxftiQ>

Prayer of Praise

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

- ¹ In you, O Lord, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.
- ² Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.
Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.
- ³ You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
for your name's sake lead me and guide me,
- ⁴ take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.
- ⁵ Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

- ¹⁵ My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.
- ¹⁶ Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.

A time of confession

God of mercy, we confess that we do not trust you with our lives.
We hurt others with our words and with our silence, with our deeds and our inaction.
We block out your still-speaking word with busyness and traditions.
Forgive us.
Open our hearts to know you and follow in your way, today and all the days of our lives.
Amen.

Words of Assurance

Beloved of God – hear the good news.
God forgives us.
God calls us home to abide in the shelter and nurture of God's faithful love, now and always.
Praise be to God!

Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for Easter 5, 10 May 2020

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

We Listen for God's Voice

Reading: John 14:1-14

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.' ⁵Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' ⁶Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

⁸ Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' ⁹Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹²Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

Reflection

A video of this reflection can be found here:

<https://vimeo.com/416227145/2fa14862fb>

God, open our hearts and minds to you - in this moment, at this time. May we hear the voice of your Spirit and compel us to respond. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

As we spend this forced time of slowing down the hectic pace of the world, of spending more time with ourselves than with other people, do you find yourself assessing the directions your life has been taking?

When was the last time you stopped and asked for directions?

For most of us these days, in our fantastically mobile world, when we need directions, we plug an address into our phone or GPS and off we go.

And, may I boldly suggest, that in many ways our relationship with our GPS is a bit of a mirror to our relationship with God!

Let me explain... so we punch in the address we want to go, and then what happens? We dutifully follow where that gentle but demanding voice tells us to go. Well, that's the idea but we don't, do we? - not always.

I love how, when we get it wrong, miss the turn or turn when we shouldn't, the gentle voice says nothing more than, "Recalculating". It is a far more patient response than I recall my mother giving to my father in the days when he drove and she read the map and gave directions!

Even with the GPS, there are times when I think I know better, and either ignore that voice or switch it off altogether - and sometimes that works out, but often it doesn't.

Sometimes choosing to go my own way led me to a place where I was more lost than when I started and I had to concede and re-instate the GPS voice.

When I had to navigate Sydney traffic on a regular basis, I had a GPS in the car that supposedly could tell when the traffic ahead was bad and so lead me around the hold-up. Let's just say that sometimes the detour took far longer than if I had been patient with the hold-up. And sometimes I ignored the voice and ended up sitting in gridlock for an hour...

And isn't that what our relationship with God is often like?!

This passage from John 14 is part of what Jesus shared with his disciples as they shared a last meal together before his death. He has gathered them together and has already washed their feet. They have shared a meal together and, in John's account, Judas has already left. Now Jesus spends time with them, reminding them of how much he loves them and of what they are now called to be and to do.

This passage from John 14 is also often read at funerals - and I think, as a result, we don't always hear it as a word for all days and every day. When Jesus speaks of his "Father's house" (14:2), he is not speaking only of some place that we will go after we die. Rather, he is more concerned about us doing stuff in *this* world, "greater works" than he did (14:12). And clearly in this way of being in the world, there is room for everyone - for you, and for me, and for any who seek to follow the way he has shown.

So when he speaks of being "the way, the truth and the life", it is not about what we might call an "after-life", Jesus is speaking about how we live now.

We all search for direction in some way, shape or form, through our lives.

Jesus tells us that we need search no further than him - "know me and you know the Father" (14:7), he says.

Thomas, the one with the courage to follow Jesus even to death (in John 11:16), the one who later wants to see the nail holes before he will believe Jesus is risen (20:25) and then who makes a courageous statement of faith, "My Lord and My God" (20:28); it is Thomas who has the courage to express his questions - "We don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (14:5)

And in response to his question, Jesus replies, "I am the way" - the way to life! Jesus claims to be the one who sets the example for our living and for making the best use of the life we are given.

"I am the truth" - the source of all wisdom

"I am the life" - the source of life itself - the very breath we breathe, our way of being.

Now too often we get distracted by the tag-line to Jesus' statement, "No-one comes to the Father except through me." (14:6) There is no doubt that this one line has caused much consternation as Christians lay claim to the exclusivity of Jesus. And, as a result, we have gained a reputation for "elite-ist exclusivism" which has too often prevented us from sharing freely with people who follow other religious beliefs and ways of life. Scholars seem to agree that indeed Jesus is being exclusive - it is a big claim he is making - I am the way, the truth and the life - but it is in the context of other Jewish teachers making claims to being God's chosen one and other Jewish sects competing for followers. It is a claim that establishes Jesus' way of being as the way to life, the way to truth - following Jesus' ways, knowing Jesus, leads us to a knowing of God's intention for ourselves and for the world - a fulfilment, if you like, of God's way of being.

So while we are slowed down a little, while we have stopped for a moment, perhaps we can be courageous like Thomas and ask Jesus for direction.

And as we listen for his response, as we choose to follow his teaching, may we discover a new way of being, the source of all wisdom and truth, and indeed, life in all its fullness. And may those discoveries drive us to love more deeply and live more fully, doing greater works that point always to the grace and embrace of God where there is room for everyone.

Let us pray...

When we cannot see the path,
Jesus, you are the way.

When we cannot trust the voices we hear,
Jesus, you are the truth.

When it feels like death is closing in,
Jesus, you are the life.

So our hearts need not be troubled.

Send us into the world to do the works you have called us to.

In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

*Adapted from Joanna Harader,
<https://revgalblogpals.org/2020/05/06/worship-words-for-easter-5/>*

We Respond

Reflection and Thanks for Mothers

A link to the reflection is here:

<https://vimeo.com/416233903/16e41983cf>

Today, we give thanks for the women in our lives who have nurtured and cared for us. For the one who gave birth to us, for the ones who have taught and shown us your love and grace. We pray for families of all shapes and sizes that your love will be known in and through our lives together.

We pray for women and children who live in fear and we pray for your protection, peace and healing.

We pray for mothers who struggle to provide for their children or to protect them from harm. Give them your strength and assurance of your presence with them. Show us how to be your presence in their world.

Prayer for Others

Spend some time praying for people who are on your heart and mind - either in silence or with others who may be nearby. Pray for:

- *family, friends, neighbours*
- *people you know who are ill*
- *people who are struggling financially or who are lonely*

Holy God, Resurrected and Resurrecting One, hear our prayers today as we are separated in body but united in spirit and united by your Spirit.

We give you thanks for the joy of music, the beauty of creation, the kindness of friends. We give you thanks for these things in our lives ...

We pray your healing presence be with those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit: for those infected with Covid-19; for those with other physical ailments; for those struggling with depression, anxiety, and other troubles of the spirit right now. We lift these people to you in prayer ...

We pray your strength, protection, and encouragement be with those working with

the public during this time: medical workers; food service workers; those serving at food banks, soup kitchens, and shelters; postal and delivery people. We pray for these people helping our community through their work ...

We pray your comfort for those who are grieving: for those who are mourning the death of a loved one; for those who have lost jobs; for those who have had to cancel anticipated plans; for students who have lost their concerts, plays, sports seasons, graduation ceremonies; for grandparents who have temporarily lost the ability to be physically present with their grandchildren. We offer these names to you in prayer ...

Creator God, this week, people will gather online around the globe to encourage each other and to call on governments to do more to protect, nurture and care for the world we all share. Give wisdom to leaders; open the ears of governments, business leaders and policy-makers; open our hearts to the wonder of your creation and strengthen our will to be good stewards of all that you have created - for our own sake and for the sake of generations to come.

God, grant us your wisdom, patience, and compassion as we continue to live as your church in this world. Amen.

Joanna Harader,
<https://revgalblogpals.org/2020/05/06/worship-words-for-easter-5/>

God we give thanks once more that here in our community, the spread of Covid-19 seems to have slowed. We give thanks for the efforts of health professionals, community leaders, police, and all who have worked tirelessly to protect us. We pray for continued strength, wisdom and patience for us all as we come to terms with what it means to live with the threat of illness for some time yet.

We pray for teachers and students as they begin to return to schools. Protect teachers as they go about their work, give students a sense of purpose and peace, and ease the uncertainty and anxiety of families who worry for the well-being of their children and loved ones.

We pray for your Church at this time - scattered - yet united in your love. Nudge and prompt us, open our eyes to see ways in which we can be your hands and feet in the world today. Give us courage to engage with a changed and changing world.

Sing - Come To The Banquet There's a Place For You

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czRLWLOoqj8>

Holy Communion

Lockdown Liturgy for Communion

Adapted from liturgy prepared by Cara Heafey, UK
<https://worshipwords.co.uk/call-to-communion-on-line-cara-heafey/>

Invitation

Jesus shared meals in all kinds of homes:

The home of Zacchaeus
a collaborator and a crook.

The home of Simon, a Pharisee
where he defended the woman
who caused a scene at the dinner party

The home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus,
his friends,
a house where he could laugh and relax.

We're used to sharing this meal
in grander buildings,
spaces set-apart as sacred.

But this is where it all began:
in ordinary houses.
In upstairs rooms and wayside inns
and around kitchen tables.

In the spaces where people live,
surrounded by the ordinary clutter of living.

Come, living Jesus, be our guest
here in our homes.
Come, living Jesus, be our host
here at your table.
Amen.

Sharing the peace

When the risen Jesus appeared in the house
where some of his disciples were holed up
grieving and afraid,
he said to them "Peace be with you."

Let's use sign-language to share, through our screens,
this greeting of peace.
Peace be with you [demonstrated and shared using Auslan]

The story of the Lord's Supper

Let's hear, again, the story of Jesus' supper with his disciples on the night before he died,
as it's been recorded by the writer of the Gospel of Matthew:

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, [*take bread*]
and after blessing it he broke it,
gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.'
Then he took a cup, [*take cup*]
and after giving thanks he gave it to them, [*lift cup*]
saying, 'Drink from it, all of you;
for this is my blood of the covenant,
which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'

Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts!
We lift them to God!
Let's give thanks to the source of life!
We bring our thankful praise!

We praise and thank you, Eternal One,
Love that will not be contained.
For you created the earth:
it's grandeur, its detail, its delicate balance.
And you created us, women and men,
to tend and protect and delight in it.

And when we forgot our beginnings,
neglected our purpose and lost our way,
you sent prophets to call us back
and laws to illumine our path
and finally came yourself
to show us how to live
and to demonstrate the magnitude
of your love for us.

Love that will not be contained.
Love that will not give up on us.
Love that will journey into the darkest places,
even the grave,
to find us.

And so, we lift our voices
to join with nature's song
and the great chorus of witnesses
on earth and in heaven:

***Holy, holy, holy,
Love that will not be contained,
heaven and earth are filled with your glory,
Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is the one who is risen from the dead
Hosanna in the highest!***

Blessing

And so we pray...
Holy Spirit, here with us always,
uniting us even though we are apart,
pour out your blessing on our bread and wine
and on us, your gathered people.

We don't need an altar,
a silver chalice or starched table linen.
It's your presence
that makes these ordinary things holy. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

And so we pray a prayer that has united Christians for two thousand years, we pray in the words Jesus taught us:

***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 in the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.***

Sharing bread and wine

Here is bread [*invite someone to hold the bread*]:
broken, as the body of Christ was broken
broken, as the heart of God was broken
broken, as the seal of the tomb was broken
broken to make us whole. [*break the bread*]

The body of Christ, broken for us. [*share and eat the bread*]

Here is wine [*invite someone to hold the cup*]:
a cup that brings us together, even in our social distancing
a cup of forgiveness and blessing.

The cup of Life, poured out for us. [*share and drink the wine*]

Prayer after communion

Thank you for the grace that makes space for us at your table.
Thank you for the familiar and beloved faces on our screens.
Thank you for the closeness we experience through technology,
and through sharing this meal together.

May we continue our lives
having been nourished and strengthened,
filled with your uncontainable love
that spills over to bless the world.
Amen.

Offering

In responding to what we have read and how we have heard God speak to us, we commit ourselves to breathing life in the world around us.

If you make a regular financial contribution to the Kiama-Jamberoo Congregation, consider putting that amount aside now and keeping it safe.

O God who gives us life, receive our offering as tokens of our desire to trust you and to abide with you. May they be agents of help and life that proclaim in tangible ways your love and presence in this world. Amen.

Notices

Keep an eye on the website, facebook page and the e-news for updates.

If you hear of or notice anyone needing a bit of extra support, please let Kath, Janice, or one of the Elders or Pastoral Partners know.

Sing - Teach me To Dance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDyFgNX4es8>

We Go

Sending and Blessing

Whatever this week brings, remember that God remains faithfully present.

For as Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God."

So, as we are scattered across our community, commit your life once more into God's hands.

Go, knowing that you are God's people.

Go, knowing that God's mercy abounds and that you are precious in God's sight.

Go, knowing God's face shines upon us and that God's love for us is ever true. Amen.

Adapted from Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for Easter 5, 10 May 2020

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
in the name of Christ. Amen.

Christ is Risen!

Christ is Risen indeed!

Appeal to womanhood throughout the world (also known as: the Mother's Day Proclamation)

Again, in the sight of the Christian world, have the skill and power of two great nations exhausted themselves in mutual murder. Again have the sacred questions of international justice been committed to the fatal mediation of military weapons. In this day of progress, in this century of light, the ambition of rulers has been allowed to barter the dear interests of domestic life for the bloody exchanges of the battle field. Thus men have done. Thus men will do. But women need no longer be made a party to proceedings which fill the globe with grief and horror. Despite the assumptions of physical force, the mother has a sacred and commanding word to say to the sons who owe their life to her suffering. That word should now be heard, and answered to as never before.

Arise, then, Christian women of this day !

Arise, all women who have hearts,

Whether your baptism be that of water or of tears !

Say firmly :

We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies.

Our husbands shall not come to us, reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause.

Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of
charity, mercy and patience.

We, women of one country, will be too tender of those of another country, to allow our sons
to be trained to injure theirs.

From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with our own.
It says: Disarm, disarm!
The sword of murder is not the balance of justice.
Blood does not wipe out dishonour, nor violence vindicate possession.
As men have often forsaken the plough and the anvil at the summons of war, let women
now leave all that may be left of home for a great and earnest day of council.

Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.
Let them then solemnly take council with each other as to the means whereby the great
human family can live in peace, man as the brother of man, each bearing after his own
kind the sacred impress, not of Caesar, but of God.

In the name of womanhood and of humanity, I earnestly ask that a general congress of
women, without limit of nationality, may be appointed and held at some place deemed
most convenient, and at the earliest period consistent with its objects, to promote the
alliance of the different nationalities, the amicable settlement of international questions, the
great and general interests of peace.

— Julia Ward Howe, 1870

*[Note: Julia Ward Howe also wrote the words to the Battle Hymn of the Republic, said to
be in response to a visit to the battlefields of the American Civil War. Her words are a
warning and a plea to those who perpetuate the violence of war.]*