



Never Alone



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.

Introduction

Today we will hear the second part of Jesus' conversation with his disciples record for us in John 14. Jesus reminds them again of his love for them and tells them that they will not be alone, that the "Paraklete" will come, the "Spirit of truth". As we gather today, may God's Spirit breathe life and hope over and through you.

Call To Worship

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

We gather together though apart,

Taking sanctuary in our own homes.

We gather together though apart,

Confident that God is present with each and every one of us.

We gather together though apart,

Trusting the Holy Spirit to knit our hearts together as one.

We gather together though apart,

To celebrate Jesus, God's gift of unconditional love and grace and give thanks.

God of all Creation, you are within and beyond.

Out of your being all things were made, yet in all things your being is uncontained.

Help us to see you within all things, within all people.

Help us to know that you are beyond our understanding, beyond our imagining, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen.

Adapted from Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for Easter 6, 17 May 2020

Sing - Bless The Lord O My Soul

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXDGE_IRI0E

Prayer of Praise

God of Love, we praise you that we are never alone.

God of Compassion, we praise you that you invite us to share in your ministry of grace and healing.

God of all creation, we praise you for the beauty of the earth,
for the wonder of love shared,

for life in all its fulness, known and experienced in the love of your Son, Jesus Christ,
and for the presence of your Spirit - in us and amongst us, now and always. Amen.

A time of confession

God of all, whom we have learned to see in the person of Jesus the Christ,
open our eyes to your presence around us.

Open our hearts, that we might see your incarnation continuing in the living and growing of
your Creation.

For we confess that we see you more easily in those who look like us, think like us, act like
us.

We confess that we can struggle to see you in those who are different – in the diversity of
Creation;

we confess that we do not always see that you are more significant than we are, more
diverse than we are, more inclusive than we are.

We confess that in refusing to see you in all our neighbours, we have refused to love you as you have loved us.
Forgive us, we pray.
Help us to see beyond ourselves.
Help us to keep your commandments.
Help us to feel confident enough in your love for us that we can acknowledge your love for others without fear. Amen.

Words of Assurance

God of grace, you invite us to love one another as you have loved us.
And so we remember your abiding love.
We remember that you did not wait until we were ready but sent Jesus the Christ to guide us in your way.
For your grace is poured out upon us before we even ask, calling us always back to you.
By your mercy, we are beloved. By your grace, we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Amen.

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Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

We Listen for God's Voice

A video of the reading and reflection can be found here:

<https://vimeo.com/418779357/6323f98587>

Reading: John 14:15-21

¹⁵ 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. ¹⁷This 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.

¹⁸ 'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹They 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.'

Reflection

Holy God, pour your light upon us, that we may see you where we least expected to, and follow in your way rather than in the way of the world. Amen.

What a great passage to read when we are largely confined to our homes; when we are tempted, having not seen many people face-to-face for some time, to begin to think that we are on our own. In the past few weeks, Lifeline has reported a substantial increase in the number of calls to their crisis support counsellors - something like a call every 30 seconds. And a substantial number of those callers tell us they are struggling with feeling like they are alone. Rachel Bowes, Head of Crisis Services and Quality at Lifeline Australia suggests a figure of 1 in 4 Australians who say they are lonely or believe they have no-one to talk to.¹

¹ <https://www.mamamia.com.au/mental-health-australia>

The followers of Jesus are never alone. We are not alone.

This passage from John 14 follows on from the part we heard last week where Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life". It is part of a long dialogue recorded for us by the writer of John's gospel in chapters 13-17. Jesus knows this is likely his last meal with his disciples and he is preparing them for the coming challenges he knows they will face when he is arrested and killed, and beyond.

This section has both assurance and challenge.

Assurance in the promise that we will never be left alone.

And challenge in the call to love Jesus and keep his commandments.

Jesus promises his disciples and all his followers to come that we will never be left alone. "I will not leave you orphaned," he says (14:18). Not that the disciples were alone as such - they had each other - a group that would have included at least the 11 who are named, as well as the several women that accompanied them.

Jesus tells them that God will send "another Advocate, to be with you forever" (14:16).

Who is this Advocate?

The Greek word that is used here is *paraklete* (παράκλητον).

Depending on the version of the Bible you have, you will see this word is variously translated into English as "Advocate", "Counsellor", "Helper", and "Comforter". Each term on its own offers something to our understanding and yet doesn't quite capture it all.

There is no single English word that captures all the nuances of the Greek, so really, we need all of these terms to fully capture the nature of the "paraclete". All of them together round out the picture. God sends us:

- an advocate - the one who represents us and speaks for us;
- a counsellor - the one who guides us, walks alongside us, meets with us face-to-face to help us process life and who offers advice;
- a helper - the one who offers aid;
- a comforter - the one who offers consolations when we are hurting

There is a word here in Jesus' description that is easy to miss but is important to our understanding of the work of God's Spirit, and indeed to our understanding of who we are called to be. Jesus says, "I will ask the Father and he will give you *another* Advocate." Jesus is linking the work of the coming Spirit to his own work.

The *paraclete* will continue the work Jesus has himself been doing - as advocate, counsellor, helper and comforter.

The Spirit working through us continues the work that Jesus was doing.

And this *paraclete* is promised to be with us forever.

"The Spirit of truth" (14:17), says Jesus, unseen and unknown by the world, but known by you, abiding in you, in and amongst you.

As we draw on the presence and truth of God's Spirit to guide and comfort and advocate for us, so we are called to live lives that reveal this same Spirit to the world around us. For this is what gives us our identity as followers of Christ. This is how we are known, and this is how Christ is known.

Jesus asks us to live lives that show we love him by keeping his commandments - to love God with all our heart, soul mind and strength; and to love our neighbours as much as we love ourselves.

And he makes another promise. As we love Jesus, Jesus says, "I will love them and reveal myself to them" (14:21). Again the translation here doesn't give a complete picture. The Greek infers not only that Jesus will reveal himself to us, but also something more like "I will make myself manifest in them". So as we love Jesus, as we live lives that love God with all of our being and love our neighbours, Jesus Christ is known in us. How good is that?!

And how challenging is that?!

It is *our* very living, *our* attempts at loving, that make Jesus known to our friends and family, to our community.

We are the ones who continue to hold truth, the truth of God's love for all God's creation, before the world.

Jesus knows that there are some who will see and hear and respond, but there are many who won't. His followers will know and his followers will respond, and through his followers, through you and I, God's love is known.

That's not to say we will always get it right, we know we don't. And the confronting thing for me, is when we don't get it right, we misrepresent Jesus to the world.

But our commitment is to continue to try, as best we can, to reflect God's love and light in to the world around us.

God's commitment to us is that we will never, ever be alone.

Perhaps we can be that commitment to our family, our friends and our neighbours - let them know they are never alone. Call, write, text, drop by - even if you have to stand at the gate or on the verandah - let them know, they are never alone.

Let's pray,

Gracious God, Spirit of Truth, thank you that you are with us always. Even when we mess things up, you are with us. Prompt us and nudge us to be your presence in the world, sharing your love with all we encounter. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Listen: We Are One In the Spirit - They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HV-f92IbN2U>

Just accompaniment with lyrics: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7_wHi0PNHg

We Respond

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*

God of all, we have gathered here to praise and worship you because we have known your power and movement in our lives. We have felt your love surrounding and upholding us. Your Holy Spirit, the Advocate, has walked beside us through celebration and grief; a gentle, constant reminder of your presence.

God of mercy, we commit ourselves to be your church together because we know that you will not abandon us or leave us orphaned, but will be our sustainer forever. We commit ourselves to be a community that shows your abiding love to those who have felt abandoned by this world.

And so we pray this day:

for those who are grieving, and seeking a new way forward;

for those who are experiencing housing insecurity, hunger, or food insecurity;

for those with health concerns, mental or physical, that keep them isolated or unable to live into the fullness of who they could be;

for those who have been rejected by their families or communities;

for those who have been blamed or shamed by those who were supposed to give support or accountability;

for those who are living with violence and trauma as part of their daily lives.

Holy God, we know that the hurts of this world are not what you want for us. We know that you are with us, our comfort and consolation, even in hard times. Help us to come alongside each other, as well. Help us to be the tangible presence of your Holy Spirit, the hands and feet of your love in this world.

Help us, O God of grace, to love each other as you have loved us.

Amen.

Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for Easter 6, 17 May 2020

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.

Holy One, bless all of the gifts that we bring to you, that they may be a pure offering of love to your Creation. Bless our financial offerings, bless our hands, bless our feet, that in all our giving and moving through this world, we might show your compassion and grace.

Bless our seeing, our hearing, our understanding, that in all times and places we may know that you are present with us. God of love, bless us and all peoples, we pray. Amen.

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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 - This Is My Commandment That You Love One Another

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAkMhF3SdRA>

We Go

Sending and Blessing

Let us go from this place with our eyes or ears, our hearts wide open to the movement of the Holy swirling around us.

Let us go from here prepared to see our God, even in the most unexpected times and places.

Let us remember that God will not leave us, even though we might leave this space.

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We ask this blessing for us all:

May the Creator of all joints and sinews keep our connections strong.

May the Healer of all brokenness piece our hearts together for compassion and hope.

May the Wisdom of eternal truth guide our movements together to the next right step for us all.

May the blessing of God - Creator, Healer, Wisdom - be upon us all and grant us unity in heart, mind, and service - now and forever. Amen.

Julia Seymour

<https://revgalblogpals.org/2020/05/12/worship-words-for-easter-6-love-love-love/>

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

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!