



Bathurst Uniting Church

Sharing God's love by connecting people to God;
people to people; and people to community.

Newsletter Sunday, 17 May 2020

Physical Distance - Social Connection - Community Care

Sunday Worship: 17 May 2020

Resources for this Sunday's worship will be available by Sunday morning on the website bathurstunitingchurch.com.au including a printed liturgy and video to download.

Virtual morning tea will be at 11am on Zoom

'Sunday at 5' on Zoom

Our informal evening 'Sunday @ 5' service meets via Zoom at 5.00pm each Sunday evening. If you'd like to join us, click on this link <https://zoom.us/j/640626609> or enter the Meeting ID 640 626 609 in the Zoom app. All welcome!

Staying Connected

Minister of the Word
Rev Claire Wright
For pastoral matters Sunday to Friday contact 63311306 (Manse) or 0490 678 593 or email rev.claire.wright@gmail.com

Coronavirus Response Team:

BUConnect@gmail.com

Pastoral Response Group:

David or Ellie at BUConnect@gmail.com

Welfare Response Group:

Julie at BUConnect@gmail.com

17 May 2020

Easter 6A (and Ascension)

In every life the question of God's presence is raised at some point. For many, it is an academic issue related to the existence of evil in the world. But for most, it relates to our own personal struggles and pain, and our need to connect with something bigger than ourselves. Unfortunately, we may fall into thinking that God's presence is available only to a select, chosen few. Sometimes we may imply that God cannot be found except within the walls of our church buildings. We may even fall into the Old Testament view that those who suffer do so because of God's judgement, and those who have much are "blessed" by God's presence and provision. The result of this is that we have made God into a fickle, partisan deity who favours some over others, and who cannot be turned to for refuge in our darkest times. What a pity this is – and what a travesty of the Gospel.

The Scriptures make it clear that God's presence is everywhere, and that God draws close to all who need refuge and protection and comfort. Every human being "lives and moves and has their being" in God's presence. We need only recognise this... Our calling, as followers of Jesus, is to learn to see that God is at work and present in the most unexpected and surprising places, and then to help others to see it for themselves, and enjoy the healing and empowering that this spiritual sight brings.

John Van de Laar, 17 May 2020

<https://sacredise.com/daily-worship/week-of-17-23-may-2020/>

VIRTUAL MORNING TEA

We'll be meeting for Virtual Morning Tea (via Zoom) on **Sunday morning after the service at 11.00am**: everyone welcome to join us! This week, we are delighted to welcome Rev. Simon Hansford, Moderator of the NSW/ACT Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia. Conversation guaranteed to be stimulating!

Simply click on this link

<https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/98096879145>

or enter the meeting ID 980-9687-9145 in the app.

This week, we read together, from the Lectionary readings for this Sunday (Easter 6A) and Thursday (Ascension of the Lord):

Acts 1:3-9 ('As they were watching, he was lifted up')

Psalms 47 ('God is the king of all the earth')

Ephesians 1:15-23 ('Raised from the dead and seated at God's right hand')

John 14:15-21 ('I will not leave you orphaned')

IMPORTANT COVID-19 NOTICE: UPDATE ON GATHERING

14 MAY 2020

We have received important new guidance from the UCA NSW/ACT Synod on the Government's plans to relax restrictions around COVID-19. I am sure that many of us have been watching media announcements, wanting to know when gatherings for worship, Bible Study and other activities can resume. We are not there yet. Synod and Presbytery leaders from across the state have carefully and prayerfully discerned together that – whatever may now be 'permissible' – the Church's priority is the safety of our church family and community, especially the most vulnerable among us.

The consensus decision was that we should continue NOT TO MEET in person for services of worship or face-to-face meetings in our churches.

Exceptions have been made only for weddings, funerals, pastoral visits by Ministers or Pastoral Visitors, and essential welfare programmes – subject to State Government restrictions, social distancing, hygiene and other requirements.

We need to understand that, even though some of our groups may be small enough to gather (including gathering in homes) there is still a risk, particularly in sharing spaces. The work required to ensure safety – cleaning, disinfecting surfaces and objects touched, attendance tracking and so on – cannot be taken lightly. Even singing, which so many of us are missing, has been found to pose a particular risk of transmission.

Synod reminds us that 'we must avoid framing our situation in terms of a false choice between reviving the economy – or our churches – and saving lives. Our commitment to supporting the safety and well-being of people must remain our priority... Re-opening our buildings and resuming gatherings prematurely, even with the practice of social distancing, could unfairly force people into a choice between personal health and the desire to re-join the beloved congregation.'

The Synod guidance therefore strongly advises us to continue to suspend face-to-face worship and other gatherings; and to continue to deliver worship – and offer pastoral care, social contact and welfare support – by other means.

At Bathurst Uniting, we have all made wonderful efforts over the last two months to worship 'virtually' together; to use this time to deepen our personal faith journeys; and to reach out to one another and our neighbours in safe and creative ways. We have juggled 'physical distance' with 'social connection' and 'community care' – and grown in grace, love and strength as a result. Let's hold firm – and continue on this path for as long as it takes, until we can gather again in full confidence of safety.

Presbytery and Synod leaders continue to meet each week (as does our own Coronavirus Response Team, reporting regularly back to Church Council and Elders). We will continue to monitor future developments and keep you informed.

From this week's Lectionary reading: 'I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and your love toward all the saints. And so I do not cease to give thanks for you, as I remember you in my prayers.' (Ephesians 1: 15-16)

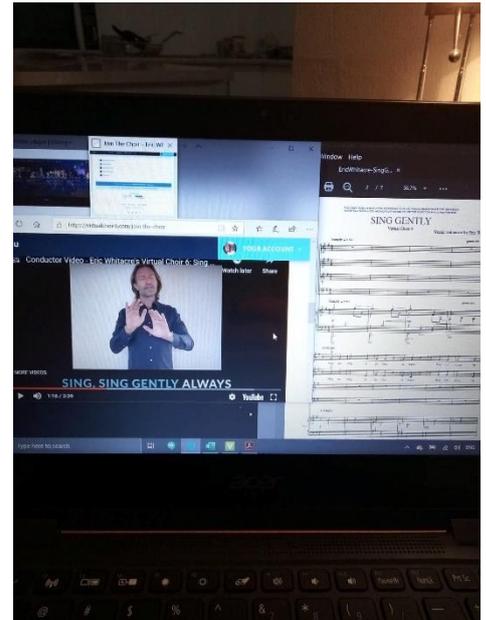
Rev. Claire Wright, Bathurst Uniting Church

Photo competition: 'What sustains me?'

I'm inviting you all to take a photo that captures for you the theme of our Assembly leaders' reflections: 'What Sustains Me?' (posted again in this week's Worship resources, if you're interested: beautiful short devotions for our use at home.) What is *sustaining* you – or your faith – during this difficult time? Send your photos to rev.claire.wright@gmail.com over the next 3 weeks, with just a few words (if you wish) about what the photo is, and how it relates to 'What sustains me?' There will be a **prize** for my favourite photo (warning: the judge's opinion is completely subjective and arbitrary, but final!) at the end of the month.

Those sustained by music at this time will appreciate this contribution from Fi Peel. Perfect snapshot of a singing life in lockdown...

Nikki Tomlinson also shared a beautiful shot of sunrise at her workplace (the one sustaining thing about having to do early shifts!). But since her workplace is a power plant, I'm not sure we're allowed to show the photo...



'What's good about it?'

The Coronavirus Report Team is starting to compile a report for Church Council about the *good things* that have arisen from the current situation – the lessons learned, the tools developed, the spirit adopted, the good habits embedded – that we'd like to see *carry on* (at least in some form) after the current crisis has ended.

If you have seen or experienced things you have really *liked* or *valued* about this difficult time, we'd love to know. What Good Things from this time would you like to see us maintain as part of the 'New Normal' – that might get lost if we just slip back into the 'Old Normal'?

Email BUConnect@gmail.com with your responses, and we'll build them into our report.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Phil & Cath Snitch are looking for cast for their production of **The Persian Queen** in October 2020 at the Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre (BMEC). It is based on the Old Testament book of Esther.

For more information please contact
Email: thepersianqueen@outlook.com

Or email Ruth at BUConnect@gmail.com and I can send you the detailed information booklet

Dates for your Diary

Please note that – despite the NSW Government’s easing of restrictions – all ‘in-person’ events and groups of our Church *continue to be suspended* until further notice, following guidance from Presbytery and Synod. Our priority is not ‘resuming activity’, but ensuring the safety and well-being of our church family and community. (See the full-page *Notice: Update on Gatherings* in this Newsletter for more details.)

Photos for the Bathurst Uniting Church webpage, social media and newsletter

If you are happy for photos of you to be included on the Bathurst Uniting Church webpage, social media and in the newsletter, please email YES to BUCCconnect@gmail.com. Most of the photos have been taken by Sharynne and she will only include ones where you look good!

The Newsletter

The Newsletter will continue to be sent out (and posted on the Website) weekly with updates and resources.

Please contact Ruth at BUCCconnect@gmail.com if you wish to be added to the e-mailing list – or to submit prayer requests or good news stories of how you are staying connected and active!

Prayer Matters

We pray together:

- For all affected by coronavirus, or impacted by fear and social isolation
- For wisdom and care in our communities as the country ‘opens up’
- For those in our church family suffering bereavement or the illness of loved ones
- For residents and staff in Aged Care facilities, and their loved ones
- For the homeless, refugees in detention and other vulnerable populations
- For our Church Council and committees as we seek to ‘keep the ship afloat’
- For each other and for your neighbour – whether known to you or unknown

Remember to email BUCconnect or call Rev. Claire if you’d like to pray with someone.

‘With glad and generous hearts’ (Acts 2:46)

THANK YOU

A very big thank you to all of those members who have money invested in the church’s Self Help Fund. At this time when regular weekly offerings are not able to be received, the church has been able to use interest earned from the Self Help Fund to help meet ongoing expenses.

.....

Even though we aren’t physically attending worship, please remember that we rely heavily on your generosity in making regular financial offerings, to enable us to continue to minister to you, and our networks and neighbours - *especially* in a time of widespread distress.

Money can be deposited by calling into any branch of the Westpac Bank and depositing to

BSB: 634634

Account No: 100027964

Account Name: Bathurst City – Giving Direct

Internet transfers can also be processed to this account. Alternatively contact BUCCconnect@gmail.com to obtain a Direct Debit form to send to Uniting Financial Services