

St Paul's Presbyterian Church [online](#)
Weekly service and news May 17th, 2020
Worship prepared by Rev Sally Carter and the team

Welcome!

*Talofa lava, Kia orana, Bula vinaka, Ni Hao, Anyeong ha seyo, Kon'nichi wa,
Malo e lelei,
Nau mai, haere mai, welcome!*



Pre-service music:

*Here I am to worship
It is well with my soul*

Candle lighting: *As we light this candle
We feel the warmth of your presence
And see the light of your hope
For us and for our world.*

Call to worship:

Lord God of heaven and earth,
Creator of our world, and everything in it,
yet as close to us as our own breath—holy is Your name.

*In You we live and move and have our being;
we are Your own children,
the work of Your hands.*

We pray that Your Holy Spirit
would move among us as we worship,
opening our eyes to Your presence,
opening our ears to Your Word.

*Receive the worship of our hearts and minds and bodies; may it be
a pleasing offering to You.*

*We pray in the name of Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, in
whose death and resurrection we find life. Amen.*

Hymn: Immortal, invisible

Reflection: Treasures

Paul begins his interaction with the people of Athens by noticing the things that they value and drawing lessons from them

So I invite you to think about something that you treasure

Think about how it came into your life.....

If it is something you have with you, hold it if you can.

Ponder why it is a treasure for you.

What has it taught you in life

How does it connect you with God and your understanding of God's nature?

Take some time to know that you are treasured.....

Song in response: Spirit of the living God

Spirit of the living God,

fall afresh on me

Spirit of the living God,

fall afresh on me,

Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me.

Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the living God,
move among us all,
make us one in heart and mind,
make us one in love.

humble, caring,
selfless, sharing
Spirit of the living God,
fill our lives with love.

Prayer:

We worship the God who inhabits our world
and indwells our lives.

We need not look up to find God,
we need only to look around:
within ourselves,
beyond ourselves,
into the eyes of another.

We need not listen for a distant thunder to find God,
we need only listen to the music of life,
the words of children,
the questions of the curious,
the rhythm of a heartbeat.

We worship the God who inhabits our world
and who indwells our lives.....*followed by the Lord's Prayer*

Telling our story:

Ella, Noneen, Maurice and Anne kindly shared their treasures with us....

Ella's treasure is a bell pull embroidered with flowers made 40 years ago by her Yorkshire pen friend, Jean. They have been writing for 72 years and Ella has been able to meet her three times.

Among Noneen's treasures are her photos of Frank and the grandchildren. In a glass case she has pottery miniatures bought by Frank in Portugal in 1957, when he was on his OE.

One of Maurice's interests is history. He recently had a birthday so he was very pleased to be given a subscription to the New Zealand Heritage

Magazine, New Zealand Memories. Now he won't need to read it in his dentist's waiting room!

Anne Burden enjoys looking at her family photos from her chair. "Photos of when we were young, and of my son Ross, and of Kirsten as a baby"

Reading: Acts 17:22-31 (NRSV or NIV)

Acts 17:22-31 The Message paraphrase

22-23 So Paul took his stand in the open space at the Areopagus and laid it out for them. "It is plain to see that you Athenians take your religion seriously. When I arrived here the other day, I was fascinated with all the shrines I came across. And then I found one inscribed, to the god nobody knows. I'm here to introduce you to this God so you can worship intelligently, know who you're dealing with.

24-29 "The God who made the world and everything in it, this Master of sky and land, doesn't live in custom-made shrines or need the human race to run errands for him, as if he couldn't take care of himself. He makes the creatures; the creatures don't make him. Starting from scratch, he made the entire human race and made the earth hospitable, with plenty of time and space for living so we could seek after God, and not just grope around in the dark but actually *find* him. He doesn't play hide-and-seek with us. He's not remote; he's *near*. We live and move in him, can't get away from him! One of your poets said it well: 'We're the God-created.' Well, if we are the God-created, it doesn't make a lot of sense to think we could hire a sculptor to chisel a god out of stone for *us*, does it?

30-31 "God overlooks it as long as you don't know any better—but that time is past. The unknown is now known, and he's calling for a radical life-change. He has set a day when the entire human race will be judged and everything set right. And he has already appointed the judge, confirming him before everyone by raising him from the dead."

Reflection:

Hymn: Spirit of God in the clear running water

Spirit of God in the clear running water
Blowing to greatness the trees on the hill.

Spirit of God in the finger of morning:
Fill the earth, bring it to birth,
And blow where you will.
Blow, blow, blow till I be
But the breath of the Spirit blowing in me.

Down in the meadow the willows are moaning
Sheep in the pastureland cannot lie still.
Spirit of God, creation is groaning:
Fill the earth, bring it to birth,
And blow where you will.
Blow, blow, blow till I be
But the breath of the Spirit blowing in me.

I saw the scar of a year that lay dying
Heard the lament of a lone whippoorwill.
Spirit of God, see that cloud crying:
Fill the earth, bring it to birth,
And blow where you will.
Blow, blow, blow till I be
But the breath of the Spirit blowing in me.

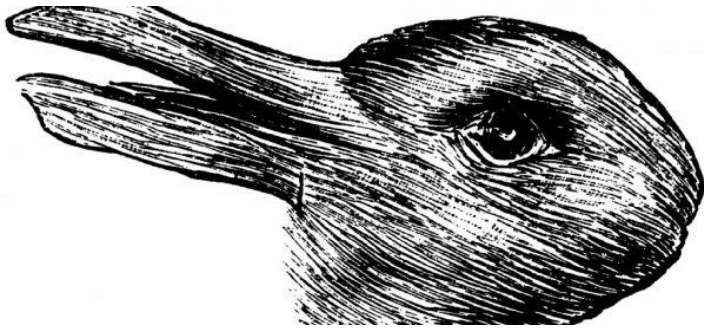
Spirit of God every man's heart is lonely
Watching and waiting and hungry until
Spirit of God, man longs that you only
Fulfill the earth, bring it to birth,
And blow where you will.
Blow, blow, blow till I be
But the breath of the Spirit blowing in me.

Sister Miriam-Therese Winters

Seeing in plain sight

Have you ever been looking for something determinedly, looking, looking, until you realise (or are told!) it is right there, in plain sight! Paul taught the Athenians about a God who does not play hide and seek, a God who is very near if only we can look rightly. One of our family members was trying to explain how to see the hidden pictures in Magic Eye books. Just relax your eyes, he said. Then you will be able to see. Look at this picture....Is it a duck or a rabbit?.....a rabbit or a duck? ...a duck...a rabbit?

The duck doesn't vanish when you see the rabbit. The rabbit doesn't vanish when you see the duck. God is very near....



Song: Father, I thank you for all you have done....

Father I thank You for all that You've done
You gave Your Son freely for me
And I praise You for calling me
Drawing me near
Out of blindness You caused me to see

Spirit of life, You are God's holy fire
You've kindled my heart with Your blaze
And I know You're refining me
Changing my life
And by faith You're revealing Your ways

Jesus, I need You as Lord of my life
I give all I have unto You
Lord, I want to come under
Your heavenly hand
And to praise You in all that I do.

Prayer from Corrymeela:

God of this latest moment, God of this lifelong path: we are meandering through unbounded time without clarity of an endpoint. Like Samuel in the night, or Mary in the garden, we remain lost until we know the voice of the one calling our name, telling us life has won. Take our fear and confusion. Give us purpose and peace. Replace this anxiety with joy. Place us again in this world that you love so this moment reopens our eyes. Amen.

Offering:

Benediction:

*You are the body of Christ.
May you have the heart of Christ,
tender for mercy.
May you have the eyes of Christ
to see a world in need.
May you have the feet of Christ
to bring good news.
Go in peace!
And God go with you.*

Hymn: Blessed Assurance

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Devotion for the week of May 13-19th.

Welcome to this week's devotional. We hope this helps you as you deal with these strange times, and helps you feel that you are still an important member of the St Paul's church family.

Be encouraged and comforted by God's word.

Bible Readings for 13-19 May

Wednesday: Psalm 102:1-17; Proverbs 3:13-18; John 8:31-38

Thursday: Psalm 66:8-20; Genesis 6:5-22; Acts 27:1-12

Friday: Psalm 66:8-20; Genesis 7:1-24; Acts 27:13-38

Saturday: Psalm 66:8-20; Genesis 8:13-19; John 14:27-29

Sunday: Acts 17:22-31; Psalm 66:8-20; 1 Peter 3:13-2; John 14:15-21

Monday: Psalm 93; Genesis 9:8-17; Acts 27:39-44

Tuesday: Psalm 93; Deuteronomy 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:8-12

I have found it really interesting that as we have looked at the readings during the past 7 or is it 8 weeks you would think that they had been selected to perfectly match the interesting times that we have been going through. But the Lectionary is set a long way ahead, so whoever put all the readings together had no idea of the situation we would find our selves in. Or is it just that we are seeing the readings with new eyes?

I had a birthday at the weekend and Murray gave me the best birthday present. Well just about as good as the garden mulcher I got a few years ago. This time it was a small battery run hedge cutter that I can use to do a lot of the pruning that has to be done at this time of the year. So on Saturday I found myself wandering around the garden looking at the different plants, asking myself if they would handle being cut back with my new cutters. Yes to the salvias, in fact they have been done and the prunings fed to the goats already, yes to the meulanbeckia which is normally an enormous job, I think so too the hebes and grevillia, but I don't think the hydrangeas would react well to that kind of treatment. The plants haven't changed, but the way I am looking at them certainly has. Instead of seeing them as tired, overgrown plants due for a serious tidy up, I'm seeing them as a challenge, can I do it quickly and efficiently with my new toy?

It is the same with our bible readings, they have been there for centuries, but suddenly there seems to be a new, more pertinent message in them. As I read Psalm 102 a new understanding of David's cry arose in me. I could stand in his place. But the answer is still the same, and it will be the same in the future, "For the Lord will rebuild Zion and appear in glory. He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea."

That is what I need to hear today, God will hear my prayer, He will not turn His back on me!

Prayer from Corrymeela

God who speaks from out of the whirlwind, and hears sighs too deep for words: as we come to terms with what we do not know – a timeline for return, a safe social distance – as we struggle to make sense of the world around us and imagine what life will be like, ground us in our kindness. May a gracious word begin our next encounter, a patient thought accompany our coming breath, so that with little left in our control, we may control ourselves with grace and faith and compassion.

God bless you all, Lynne

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13 May 2020

Greetings to you all, my brothers and sisters in Christ

This week we heard about the conditions of alert level 2 in our response to the COVID19 virus. I am sure you have been encouraged, as I have, by the low number of new cases being reported. I am sure that you also appreciate the desire to remain as free as possible of the virus. And you are probably longing for some easing of the restrictions on our social lives.

Session has been pondering how we will respond when alert level 2 is put in place for New Zealand. As you have probably heard, gatherings are still limited to ten people, and social distancing and hygiene requirements are still very important. The PCANZ office has confirmed that public gatherings for worship will remain suspended until further notice.

Weighing all that up, and considering the health and safety of our community, Session has decided that for the first month or so of alert level 2:

- We will not gather for worship at St Paul's
- We will not gather for meetings at St Paul's
- We will not re-open our venues to our user groups.

But we will

- Deliver service sheets and other information to everyone who is not able to receive them electronically
- Continue to think of ways of involving as many people as possible in the life of our community of faith
- Continue to build and strengthen our networks of care
- Provide information about services on TV and on the radio

Things continue to change rapidly around us, so our decision-making will need to be fluid and responsive to what is happening around us. Session and the pastoral care team would appreciate any thoughts you have about how we can continue to take our part as the body of Christ in our

community. How can we support one another; how can we strengthen our own faith; how can we share our faith with those we encounter even and especially in these strange times.

Thank you for all the phone calls, letters and messages you are sending to one another - I know from talking with you how much they provide strength, comfort and support.

Loving blessings,

Sally

St Paul's Parish – Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand