



Sapphire Coast Uniting Church 'Lockdown' Newsletter

Week Ending Sunday 12th April

Welcome to another of our weekly emails, keeping our congregation connected during the Corona Virus shutdown. As we won't be printing our regular pewslip, this email will be part of our approach to keep our folk connected. Contributions, and any items for future inclusion can be forwarded to Jeff, Tony or the church email.

Birthdays next week: No listed birthdays for this coming week! But we missed recognising **Reg Dew** who had a birthday last week, on 6th April!



Church News

* Rev David Russell's time with us will come to an end on 31st May when his current 'Terms of Placement' concludes, as previously advised. A Joint Nominating Committee (JNC), composed of Presbytery and local representatives has been formed to carry out the process of having conversations with any possible candidates put forward to us by ACOMP (Advisory Committee on Ministerial Placements), with a view to choosing our new ministry agent. This process is likely to be a long one, made more difficult by the impacts of the coronavirus and our current inability to meet together as a committee. Nevertheless, an initial meeting was held on Saturday 29th March by video link, with the first conversation taking place. We must stress that this process is still in its early stages and it is likely to be some considerable time before any resolution is reached. We will let you know once there is anything further to report.

* Rev David will be on annual leave from Sunday 12th April. During his time away from duties please direct any necessary calls to Church Council Chairman Colin on 64950961.

* We received an email during the week from Graeme and Meena Clugston at the Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital in Nepal. In brief, Graeme says: *Here, although Nepal is on national lock-down – our hospital is also an essential service. The government – desperately unready to face the COVID-19 situation – has asked us to run both a quarantine service, and also a COVID-patient treatment facility in our Isolation Ward. And of course, we are running emergency services too... and continuing the battle with leprosy. Very busy.*

Heartfelt thanks for your years of faithful support – love, prayers, funds, and encouragement. Please continue to lift up the work and mission outreach here at Lalgadh Hospital, to God's amazing throne of Grace. You are in our prayers too.

If you would like to receive a full copy of Graeme's email (11 pages – lots of pictures), just let us know.

* With the Op Shop closed for the foreseeable future, the church has suffered a loss of income as a consequence. This has been mitigated in some way by the very generous offer from the Op Shop landlord to forgo rent for the time being. This gesture is very much appreciated!

* We received the following message from Mardi Lumsden at UnitingWorld, regarding our ongoing project supporting communities in Fiji:

How are you and our friends at Sapphire Coast UCs dealing with this strange new world of online church and physical distancing? I hope you are ok. At least you are in a stunning part of the world! Just to let you know that the Fiji Informal Settlement project, like most of our projects, is being affected by the threat of covid-19 and life in lockdown. What we are seeing around the world will impact the way forward for many of our projects, especially in the short-term. But for some it will lead to reshaping the project in the longer term too. While we are not sure what this will mean for each project, your donations will support us to work with our partners to determine the best way forward for them and the people in their communities. We are already doing this work to help people attempt to prepare for this new reality we are experiencing. But for many of the churches and communities we work with, they will go through it with limited healthcare, food and job security and even clean water. Please keep them in your prayers.

The Fiji Informal Settlement project manager (Tanya) recently returned from a monitoring visit and is writing an update (in isolation) which I will send on when I receive it.

Elders

Thank you to our Elders who have been working hard to maintain contact with the small groups in their charge. It is important that are people do not feel disconnected from the church during this difficult time. Secretary John can send out copies of the Elders Group List on request, or copies of our latest Contact List, so Elders can identify people in their group who may not be receiving emails. Please continue to 'letterbox drop' to those in this category if possible, and pass on any new telephone or email contacts you come across.

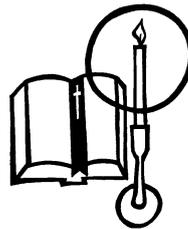
Lectionary readings this week:

Acts 10:34-43

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Colossians 3:1-4

John 20:1-18



Message

WHO WAS IT THAT WAS RAISED?

John 20: 11-18

Who was raised on Easter Day? Jesus of Nazareth. That's who!

Mary, supposing him to be the gardener, said to him: Sir, if you have carried his body elsewhere, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.

Jesus said to her: "Mary!"

Mary turned to him and exclaimed "Master!"

If Christ Jesus were not raised from the dead, I would pack my bags and leave the church forever. The witness to his transcending death, and making himself known to his friends, lies at the very basis of our faith.

Without hesitation I agree with Gerhard Ebeling, who when he was professor of theology at Zurich and writing of the resurrection of Christ, said:

In my opinion the very existence of Christianity is at stake in the way it answers the question [was Jesus raised up]. Whether it repeats the creed of the risen Jesus half-heartedly with a bad conscience, or whether it does it with conviction- joyfully and convincingly, finding itself at the source and basis of faith."

I do not understand the resurrection. It certainly was much more than the mere resuscitation of a body. But those first Christians were convinced (convinced enough to suffer and die for their conviction!) that Jesus had been lifted up out of the realm of death into a new and glorious eternal life. They met him. He was real. He was alive.

THE SEAL OF APPROVAL Easter Day is not primarily about some general theme of life after death. Not about general survival. It is specifically about one special person who was raised up by God, and made himself known to those who loved him dearly. Jesus, son of Mary and Joseph, the man who was crucified, is the person Easter is about.

In raising this particular man God emphatically refuted the evil ways of those men who plotted Christ's downfall and had jeered him all the way to the cross.

In raising this particular man God has placed a seal of approval on all that Jesus was, did and taught. His way is the true way to live if we want to be truly human.

God did not raise up the remarkable nation builder, Moses, or the poetical prophet Isaiah.

God did not raise up the Greek philosophers Socrates or Plato, or the mocking founding emperor of Rome, Augustus Caesar, whom men had worshipped as divine.

God certainly did not raise up the duplicitous high priest Caiaphas, or the hand-washing Roman Governor Pontius Pilate.

It was not even a kindly Jewish rabbi like the wise Gamaliel, who was famed for his generous spirit and willingness to listen to others.

Neither did God wait for later centuries to raise up a genius like Michelangelo, nor Isaac Newton, nor Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Mozart or Albert Einstein.

And certainly it was not Elvis Presley or John Lennon, not Humphrey Bogart or Audrey Hepburn. Not Winston Churchill, J.F Kennedy or even that truly wonderful first secretary of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld.

None of these received the full divine seal of approval.

THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE God raised up Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was the key figure. God said a momentous YES to Christ, to the obscure Galilean prophet, rubbished by many then and still scorned by many "sophisticated" people today. This unique person is the one whom God mysteriously but emphatically raised.

It was the man who told us to take a long look at the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, and to learn from them instead of from our money driven way of life.

The person raised up is the one who dared to say, "Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed at the poor, the gentle, and the merciful"

It is the man who stunned his listeners by asserting: ' Love your enemies, pray for those who abuse you.'

God has raised up the fellow who was relaxed in the company of tax routers, prostitutes and other outsiders, and went on to say that many of them would get into the kingdom of God long before those self-righteous people on display at synagogue and temple.

It is the Jesus who told parables about a generous welcome home given to prodigal son, and challenged us to a new way of loving others through his story about a Samaritan who helped a Jew who had been mugged on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho.

This Jesus, who insisted that we cannot worship both God and money, who declared that the truly ruthless people are those who put themselves last, and who claimed that not one sparrow falls to the ground without God knowing and caring. This person is the man at the heart of the glorious Easter affirmation.

It is the man who wept in the Garden of Gethsemane, was bullied by thugs, mocked by respectable people, judged by power-brokers, sentenced by a political coward, and died feeling forsaken on a terrible cross. This same Jesus is the core message of Easter.

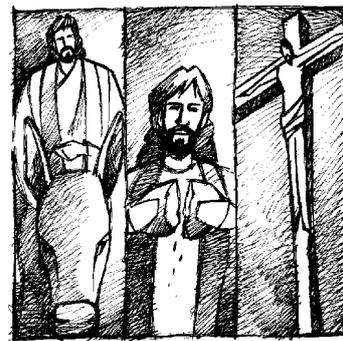
MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT Without the message of Easter, we are to be pitied.

Make no mistake about it. On that terrible Friday, when a broken body was taken down from a cross and given a hasty burial in a borrowed tomb, at that point all that Jesus did and said appeared to be discredited as useless in this real world.

He and his message were finished, and the disciples were a spent force forever. They were in hiding... Their master had got it wrong. Back to the real world where greed, hatred, cunning, revenge, and brute power rules supreme. Jesus had lost.

But a couple of days later, something remarkable happened that changed everything. This same Jesus was raised up alive, and appeared first to the women and then to the men who had loved and trusted him.

Mary, supposing him to be the gardener, said to him: Sir, if you have carried his body elsewhere, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.



Jesus said to her: " Mary!"

Mary turned to him and exclaimed "Master!"

Christ has risen! And with that rising all his loving, creative, merciful, strong-minded and generous-hearted way of life was also raised up.

Jesus gets the divine seal of approval. Easter. Joy. Hope. Awe and wonder. Christ has risen indeed!

Adapted with permission of the author, Bruce Prewer

Moderators Easter Message If you would like to view the Uniting Church Moderator Simon Hansford's Easter Message, copy the following link into your search engine. It will take you to the 'Saltbush' site, and a 2-minute video clip:

<https://saltbushcommunity.uca.org.au/video/the-word/christ-is-risen/>

Prayer (*Words for Worship*)

Go out into the world, declaring, Christ is alive! Death is silenced and love triumphs.

Alleluia!

The good news is shared and has spread through all the world.

Alleluia!

May God, our Creator, renew, reform and reshape us;
may Christ, giver of life and source of light, grow within us;
and may the Spirit, presence of joy and hope, lead us in the ways of love.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen.



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Missed a newsletter? They can be viewed on our website by clicking on the link on the front page, or going through to 'Notices and News' and clicking on 'Lockdown Newsletters'.

Keep safe,
Ed.

Please let us know if you no longer wish to receive these emails