



## Sapphire Coast Uniting Church 'Lockdown' Newsletter

Week Ending Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May

**Welcome** to the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of our weekly emails, keeping our congregation connected during the Corona Virus shutdown. Contributions and items for inclusion can be forwarded to Jeff or Tony.

### Birthdays next week:



**Merle Evans – 19<sup>th</sup>**

**Joan Winwood – 21<sup>st</sup>**

**Gloria Grant – 22<sup>nd</sup>**

## Church News

**Morning Tea:** Feel free to join some of the regulars for our virtual morning tea again this week. For those who have internet access and would like to join us at 11:00am each Sunday, just log onto zoom.us and click on 'Join a Meeting'. When prompted, enter the **Meeting ID: 961-8350-2388**. Due to new security measures you will be asked to enter a **Password: 705601** Alternatively, just click this link:  
<https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/96183502388?pwd=d2l4MDhJQnZqeEh5cVU5NyttUi9lUT09>  
Be sure to have your computer/laptop/ipad camera and audio turned on. (If you need some assistance, call Jeff or John beforehand). So, grab a cuppa and a biscuit and join us – no agenda, just a social catch up with whoever who can make it on the day.

**Congregational Meeting** – Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May at 11:00am, via Zoom video link. Notice of this meeting was issued previously, with the main business being to vote on a motion to issue a call to a new minister. It is important we have as many "attend" as possible. If you are unable to join via the internet yourself, it should be possible to meet on the day with someone who can, so you can participate. Please arrange this beforehand. Note that the IDs for joining the meeting are different to those of our regular morning tea. Log onto [zoom.us](https://zoom.us) and click on 'Join a Meeting'. When prompted, enter the **Meeting ID:920-0139-9670**. You will be asked to enter a **Password: 678146** Alternatively, just click this link:

<https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/92001399670?pwd=TzVGWHM1MEFJYmliZTF5SGNHRVV5dz09>

Be sure to have your computer/laptop/ipad camera and audio turned on.(If you need some assistance call Jeff or John well beforehand). Please address any queries regarding the meeting itself to Chairman Colin.

The next **Church Council** meeting which was scheduled for 21<sup>st</sup> May has been deferred a week and will now be held at 2.00pm on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May, so that the result of our Congregational Meeting is known. At this stage the meeting will be held by Zoom video, unless restrictions on indoor gathering are changed in the interim, with further details to follow.

**The UnitingCare Merimbula Board** meets 3-4 times a year, with the role of overseeing the administration of our local Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) and supporting Greg Wollaston in his role as co-ordinator. At the moment we have a vacancy on the board. If you are looking for a small volunteer role where you can make a contribution to your local community, please call secretary Shirley Bazley on 64959231. The UnitingCare Merimbula/CVS Board have also deferred their next meeting until such time as will allow an indoor face to face meeting.

***From Rev Dr John Squires***

***Presbytery Minister - Wellbeing***

### **When will we be able to meet together again in church?**

Last week, the Prime Minister indicated that, because of the good response across society to observe the restrictions on social gatherings and the limitations on moving around, there is now a plan for a three-stage move away from the current restrictions, towards a society where more mobility and more interaction in person will be possible. This has, unsurprisingly, raised expectations amongst Congregations, that various activities might recommence. These activities include small groups, business meetings, hall rentals by local business or community groups, and, of course, Sunday worship. In response to the statement by the Prime Minister, leaders of the 14 Presbyteries across the Synod met on Monday with the Synod leadership team. As a result, this leadership group has issued a clear statement, strongly recommending that we should not be meeting in person for services of worship or face to face meeting in our churches. You can read this at:

<https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/8680/covid19-information-guide-gathering-12-may-2020v2.pdf>

## Lectionary readings this week:

Acts 17: 22-31

1 Peter 3: 13-22

John 14: 15-21



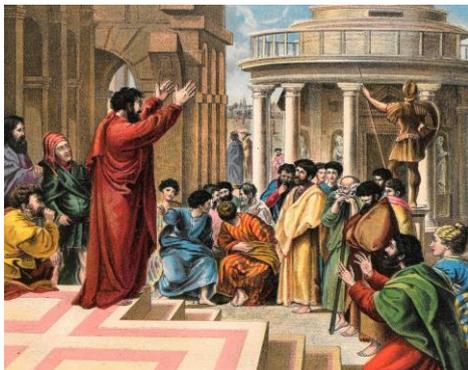
## Commentary by Bruce Prewer on Acts 17: 29-31

*Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead."*

Whenever we talk about the resurrection of Jesus, there are some who shake their heads with pity and say: "We have come a long way since that stuff... We are too sophisticated to believe those naive tales."

Too sophisticated? That is debatable.

### ST PAUL AND A "SOPHISTICATED" AUDIENCE



*Paul preaching in Athens*

*Painting by Raphael*

Today we read from the Acts of the Apostles. The story of that tireless missionary, St Paul, arriving in Athens and trying to preach the Gospel in that most sophisticated city in the then known world. Beautiful Athens. Architecture. music, theatre, philosophical academies, skilful oratory, esoteric religions.

After spending some days chatting people in the public squares and market places, talking with philosophers of various schools, and speaking with Jews at the local synagogue, Paul came to the attention of the elite Athenian sophisticates. He was invited to address the famous Athenian assembly in their meeting place on Mars Hill, not far from where the glorious Parthenon stands. Paul, himself an exceedingly well educated man, learned in both Hebrew, Roman and Greek literature, took his place in the midst of the assembly and began his address in fluent Greek. They listened attentively as he complimented them on their

spiritual quest, their public altars and places of worship. He even quoted from their poets: *We are indeed God's offspring*. The audience was impressed. Things were going very well for Paul.

Then he came to the core of what he had to say:

***If we are then God's own offspring, surely we should not think of depicting God with idol made of stone, silver, gold or any other visible form inspired by human imagination and art. Such things belongs to the era of ignorance, which God in his pity has overlooked. But now is the time to renounce such things. This is the era when the world is to be justly judged by one particular man who God has appointed. He has sealed the appointment of this one man by raising him from the dead. (Acts 17:29-31)***

Hear that last sentence again:

***He has sealed the appointment of this one man by raising him from the dead.***

That was the moment in Paul's address when things turned decidedly sour.

Were these sophisticated dignitaries of Athens, expected to sit there and listen to such superstitious prattle? This Jew was not the philosopher they had assumed. He was not worth listening too. Some of the council members whistled and jeered when he spoke about the man who had risen from the dead. The more polite Paul ushered to the exit, covering their embarrassment with saying "Maybe we will hear you again on this matter at some other time." Paul left in chagrin.

You see, it is not just smart contemporary thinkers who balk at the idea of resurrection. We did not discover the skill of asking smart questions, and of doubting trite answers that some might give. There were plenty of the so-called sophisticated people around in New Testament times. Jews, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians. There were plenty of educated thinkers. They knew that dead men remained well and truly dead. They did not rise up from death and (in some form of new body) present themselves to adoring disciples. The dead were entombed and they rotted. Dead was dead. That was it. End of story.

Paul himself was a sophisticated man. Unlike most Jews, Paul held full Roman citizenship. It was this sophisticated man who once had been the enemy of Christ Jesus, who now made his witness to a sophisticated audience. He knew what he had to say could well be scorned.

As I said earlier, at first Paul tried to woo them by showing that he too was a man of letters. That was okay for starters. But he had to go further, or there was no point in him being there. He had to make his testimony to the fact of the risen Christ. He had to tell it as it was. He had to speak of the crucified and risen Christ Jesus.

***This is the era when the world is to be justly judged by one particular man whom God has appointed. He has sealed the appointment of this one man by raising him from the dead.***

Always been erudite men and women who have scorned the resurrection. Doubts are not a modern phenomena. Only stunning arrogance permits us to think ourselves smarter and wiser than cultures that went before us. It is an arrogance that is close to hubris. Hubris? That Greek word used to describe the kind of human pride that the gods despised and would bring tumbling down. There is much hubris around in our world today.

## **ARE WE REALLY MORE SOPHISTICATED?**

I would harshly question whether we are in any way more sophisticated than those Athenians were. Or for that matter than St Paul was.

It is true that we have exchanged a willow sprig for an electric toothbrush, flickering oil lamps for electric lights, and a choice of wine or ten wines for a selection of hundreds, but does that make us more sophisticated?

It is true that we may have replaced communal story telling while gathered around an open fire, with sitting around a TV and watching ads for face-lifts, condoms, and jeans, or viewing episodes of *Neighbours* or *Who wants to be a Millionaire*?

It is true that we have traded in donkeys, horses and camels for motor vehicles that slaughter and permanently maim millions of road users every year. Are we therefore wiser?

It is true that we have thrown away our spears and arrows and slings and gone in for machine guns, rockets and cluster bombs. Is that a mark of sophistication? It is true that we have conquered polio yet acquired aids, installed a network of drains and sewers and pumped much of it's pollution into rivers and the ocean.

Sophisticated should mean wise. Wise in the way we think and the way we live. Wise in the goals we set and the methods we use to attain them. Wise in our choice of pleasures, wise in our politics and law making. Wise in our care for the young and the vulnerable. Wise in the home and in the workplace. Wise in our relaxation and recreation.

Are we wiser than those Christians of New Testament times? Too well educated to believe in the resurrection of God's true Son? Proudly cultured like those Greeks who jeered and ushered Paul out the door? Or are we just as blind and self-opinionated? Maybe even more arrogant than the Athenians?

## **FAITH IS A GIFT OF GOD**

Belief does not result from wisdom. There was no shortage of worldly wisdom throughout the empire of New Testament times. There is no shortage in our times.

There are plenty of people with IQ's that may vastly outstrip ours, yet who firmly trust the risen Lord with all they have and are. They do so after fully weighing the arguments of others with similar intelligence who doubt the truth of Christ Jesus... And there are others with much lower IQ's who imagine themselves as being far too smart and sophisticated to take Christ seriously.

That Jesus lives, and is the source of liberation and healing to all who believe in him, has nothing to do with scientific or technological sophistication. Our faith is a gift of God, confounding worldly wisdom and transcending mere logic. It is a gift, to be either accepted or rejected. If ever we start thinking we are wiser than the first Christians, we are being abysmally stupid.

**Prayer** (Bruce Prewer)

**IN CHANGING TIMES**

When world events seem to spin so fast  
that I am afraid of losing my foothold,  
when the rate of change tosses me about  
like bull dust in a willy-willy,  
come to me, O Spirit of quietness,  
and gather me up into the great stillness  
of your unflappable love, joy and peace.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Keep your “distance” and keep safe and we will get there  
Ed

**Contact Details**

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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'.

Ps

Inflation is when you pay fifteen dollars for a ten-dollar haircut you used to get for five dollars when you had hair.

*Sam Ewing*

Most people are bothered by those passages of Scripture they do not understand, but the passages that bother me are those I do understand

*Mark Twain*



The official mascot of 2020.  
Washes his hands insensately.  
Always wears a mask.  
Rearrange the the letters in  
racoön it spells CORONA!