

Monthly Prayer Gathering of Ringwood Church of Christ April 2020

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We hope that on the whole we are now a little more understanding of what is expected of us in our own little pockets of life and have mostly settled into some new kind of rhythm of our own making for the foreseeable future. As we have had to adapt in every area of our lives, our monthly Saturday prayer gatherings have also changed. They have now become an opportunity for us to set aside some time to pray at home or wherever we are.

You are invited to pray, contemplate, make your own prayer journal, discuss with others whatever comes up for you in prayer, and encourage each other to keep thinking about the good things of God.

Our monthly prayer gatherings are intentionally focused on being in prayer together for our church. We encourage you to pray with gratitude for the strength and calibre of our Ministry Team and Elders. Pray for the body of the church, especially for those who are particularly vulnerable. We believe that this year is pivotal in the life of our church. You are encouraged to keep praying around four main areas of our church life.

1. Elders. The elders hold a lot of responsibility and will be stretched over the coming months.
2. Ministry team. The ministry team are adapting beautifully as they respond to the new pastoral needs and ways of equipping and empowering us all to care, disciple, and connect together. We are very grateful to God for the way they are leading us.
3. Our future mission and facilities. We continue to communicate with Council and meetings are being held with a range of other groups of people. Please pray that God would guide us and that the way would be made clear in this time of transition. There are exciting possibilities and we want to be sure we are following God's lead.
4. Those who are lonely and afraid in their isolation, those who are struggling to meet their own basic needs practically, spiritually and mentally. Pray for teachers, parents and children as they adjust to new ways of education.

At such a time as this when we are forced to slow down and pause, remember to look for opportunities that may emerge to express God in many and varied ways, and to bring his Kingdom closer.

Our Bible reading for contemplation is going to be the same for the whole year. It is short and comes from Matthew 6:10:

"May your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

The reading for today is from Roman 8 with excerpts from verses 35-39:

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword (*or coronavirus*)? No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us! For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Here are some questions to think about and pray into:

- Where do you see a separation from the kingdom of God here (in Australia, or your suburb, or the world, or your street, or your house) right now?
- What happens in you when you see this separation?
- How can you participate in bringing the kingdom closer when you see these things?
- How do you think that we, as a church, can participate in the coming of the kingdom in new and different ways in this unique time?

Today I'm sharing a poem written by Muriel Rukeyser, written from the perspective of a woman walking through the wilderness as part of the 40-year wanderings of God's people. This is her perspective on 'Your kingdom come' in an overwhelming situation.

The Way Out

Into that journey where all things speak to all things
refusing to accept the curse, and taking for signs
the signs of all things, the world, the body
which is part of the soul, and speaks to the world,
all creation being created in one image, creation.
This is not the past, walking into the future,
the walk is painful, into the present, the dance
not visible as dance until much later.
These dancers are discoverers of God.