

# PAPER CHURCH

## A New Imagination for Neighbouring – John 13:34-35

*Sunday 12 July 2020*

### Some Tips

Our hope is that this is a resource that will help us all to engage meaningfully with God's word for us and invite an open and experimental sense of worship today. Use it in a way that feels comfortable and helpful to you. Here are a couple of suggestions that might help the process.

#### *Get prepared for worship*

Have your Bible close by, perhaps set up some favourite music to listen to, find some food and drink to have during communion. It doesn't have to be bread and grape juice; it could be whatever is available (tea and a biscuit) to use in this symbolic time.

#### *Get into a 'sacred' space*

When we are not physically in a dedicated worship space (like a church building), it is important to mentally and spiritually shift into a sense of worship.

Be intentional. Sit somewhere where you feel receptive and responsive to God (e.g. a cosy chair or outside in the garden). Have some visual representation of God (perhaps a small cross, your Bible, a symbol or image). Start with a few moments of silence and deep breathing.

#### *Consider your environment*

Consider your environment and what will work for you. If you have others in your house (house-mates/family), consider sharing this time with them, each reading or participating as appropriate. You might simply reflect individually, in your own time and space. Afterwards, you might connect with others through technology to share your reflections, or an encouragement, with them.

## Song: Who You Say I Am

Who am I that the highest King  
Would welcome me  
I was lost but He brought me in  
Oh His love for me  
Oh His love for me

Who the Son sets free  
Oh is free indeed  
I'm a child of God  
Yes I am

Free at last  
He has ransomed me  
His grace runs deep  
While I was a slave to sin  
Jesus died for me  
Yes He died for me

In my Father's house  
There's a place for me  
I'm a child of God  
Yes I am

I am chosen not forsaken  
I am who You say I am  
You are for me not against me  
I am who You say I am

CCLI Song # 7102401  
Ben Fielding | Reuben Morgan  
© 2017 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia  
CCLI Licence # 30581

## Song: Oceans

You call me out upon the waters  
The great unknown where feet may fail  
And there I find You in the mystery  
In oceans deep my faith will stand  
Chorus 1

And I will call upon Your name  
And keep my eyes above the waves  
When oceans rise  
My soul will rest in Your embrace  
For I am Yours and You are mine  
Verse 2

Your grace abounds in deepest waters  
Your sov'reign hand will be my guide  
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me  
You've never failed and You won't start now

Interlude

Oh and You are mine oh  
Bridge

Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders  
Let me walk upon the waters  
Wherever You would call me  
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander  
And my faith will be made stronger  
In the presence of my Saviour

Interlude

Yeah yeah yeah yeah  
Oh Jesus yeah my God  
Chorus 2

I will call upon Your name  
Keep my eyes above the waves  
My soul will rest in Your embrace  
I am Yours and You are mine

CCLI Song # 6428767  
Joel Houston | Matt Crocker | Salomon Lighthelm  
© 2012 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia  
CCLI Licence # 30581

## Song: O Praise the Name (Anástasis)

I cast my mind to Calvary  
Where Jesus bled and died for me  
I see His wounds His hands His feet  
My Saviour on that cursed tree

His body bound and drenched in tears  
They laid Him down in Joseph's tomb  
The entrance sealed by heavy stone  
Messiah still and all alone

O praise the Name of the Lord our God  
O praise His Name forevermore  
For endless days we will sing Your praise  
Oh Lord oh Lord our God

Then on the third at break of dawn  
The Son of heaven rose again  
O trampled death where is your sting  
The angels roar for Christ the King

He shall return in robes of white  
The blazing sun shall pierce the night  
And I will rise among the saints  
My gaze transfixed on Jesus' face

CCLI Song # 7037787  
Benjamin Hastings | Dean Ussher | Marty Sampson  
© 2015 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia  
CCLI Licence # 30581

## Bible Reading: John 13:34-35 (NIV)

<sup>34</sup> "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

## Message

*Kaye Reid*



Don Giuseppe Berardelli, is the name of an Italian priest in Northern Italy who has become known around the world as the priest who didn't keep a ventilator for himself. He contracted COVID at 72 years of age and with a respiratory condition. Due to this condition he already had access to a respirator, it had been provided for him by his parish because of his respiratory condition. It was widely reported that he donated the ventilator to make it available for a younger person he didn't know, and subsequently died from COVID in mid-March.

A Global Pandemic brings out the best and the worst in us. We have seen panic buying (again). Of toilet paper (again)! And on a much bigger scale are global questions we need to ask about which

countries have access to the global stocks of personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators during a global pandemic. These questions shine a light on the polite capitalist geo-political version of hoarding toilet paper, but on a medical and global scale. A GMP update on Facebook indicated that South Sudan has only one unit to do testing for COVID. Here in Victoria we have conducted now over 1 million tests.

A Global Pandemic is a really good time to be a great neighbour. We are reminded that we are in this together. We are each other's neighbours. Globally. We have seen inspiring, creative, generous acts of love. Community spirit. Care and compassion. Sharing and sacrifice.

What prompted Don Guiseppe Berardelli to give the ventilator he needed to another person?

Over 2,000 years ago, Jesus of Nazareth was in Jerusalem after Palm Sunday, at an evening meal just before the Passover Festival with his disciples. In an astonishing and unexpected reversal of roles Jesus washes the feet of the disciples. And then Jesus explains that he won't be with them much longer and gives them a new commandment.

*"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* John 13:34-35 NIV

What is 'new' about this command is not the notion of love within the community, that was already present in the laws given through Moses, but the expression "just as I have loved you." Through his life and ministry the love of Jesus has been demonstrated with and to the disciples, and as a sign and foretaste to the whole world. Love one another, just as I have loved you. The foot washing lives this out, as well as being powerfully symbolic, and this will be further and ultimately demonstrated in the crucifixion of Jesus on the cross on the next day.

In Matthew and Mark, a similar command is given, known as the greatest commandment, the scene is also in Jerusalem after Palm Sunday (in the week before crucifixion), but in dialogue with others. And Jesus is asked

*"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"*

*Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Or (in Mark) "There is no commandment greater than these."* Matthew 22:36-40 and Mark 12: 28-34

Who do we have a responsibility to? How do we live? Jesus, who became flesh and moved into the neighbourhood, is disrupting the usual ways of seeing power and influence and success and, in our time and culture, disrupting individualism and self-sufficiency.

Jesus addressed this earlier in his ministry (in Luke 10) with an expert in the law who asked what must I do to inherit eternal life? With Jesus' prompting he answered his own question correctly. *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself."* But he then went on to seek some limits or technicalities on who is my neighbour. And Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan. Who is my neighbour the expert asks? Everyone is your neighbour, even the most unlikely of people. What

does it look like to be a neighbour? A neighbour is not necessarily just who you would expect, but a neighbour is the one who shows mercy.

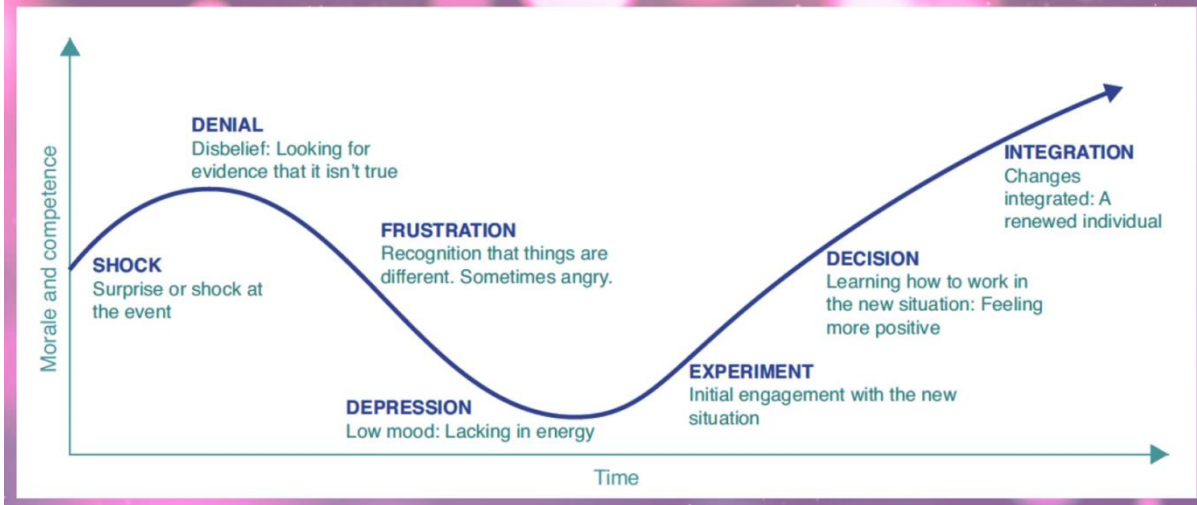
When we are loving our neighbour who are we loving? Who are we giving food or drink to, who are we inviting in, or clothing, or looking after, or visiting. Through the story of the King and the separating of the sheep and the goats (in Matt 25) , Jesus tells us that *“whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”* Matt 25: 40

When you are a good neighbour you are loving God. The commandment is a complete package - Love God, Love self and Love others. Do this and you will live. There is a wholeness, and a holiness. Recognising that everyone is created in the image of God, that everyone is seen and valued and valuable. That we are each holy. That we each experience joys and sufferings and these are given purpose and meaning by experiencing them in community. That we all need each other. A global pandemic reminds us that our lives are intertwined. That we will not be ok until we are all ok. I would like everyone around our world and in our neighbourhood to know that this is what Jesus is on about. That being a follower of Jesus is about loving our neighbours.

A Global Pandemic is a time of huge disruption and unprecedented change. And here in Melbourne our lives have changed again this week, with a six week lockdown. We have been experiencing a variety of emotions and different responses to this. For some people it doesn't make a huge difference to how they have been experiencing isolation and are glad that we are taking things more cautiously and for others it is a devastating set back from the easing of restrictions that were being enjoyed. That kids had been able to go back at school, many people had been able to return to work at cafes and restaurants and other places had been able to reopen and some businesses were getting back on their feet somewhat. At the same time we experience this while being aware of what is happening around the world, which is far worse. We think of some countries that simply do not have the resources to respond proactively, and in some countries that have plenty of resources but a lack of moral leadership or a willingness as a community to sacrifice individual freedoms for the greater good. Some people have made their way through this week ok, and others have been surprised that they have felt so sad or devastated. A level of exhaustion has returned, surprising us perhaps as we had felt like we were doing ok.

This Change Curve can help us to understand what we have been experiencing and identify where we are at ourselves (this might have varied considerably even in the last week or so).

## The Change Curve



Take a moment to pause, read the curve, and if you are able, discuss with other people which aspects you identify with.

The Change Curve helps us to understand some of what we have been feeling and experiencing and to perhaps appreciate and understand what others may have been experiencing differently from us. We might need to give ourselves a little time after this week's setback, before we feel like we are able to bounce back again, for our resilience to kick in and pick us up again. But as we do keep in mind this change curve which also includes an invitation or an encouragement towards acceptance and integration of changes that have occurred, and that we can continue to live into these, experimenting and deciding to embrace life just as it is, to the best of our ability. It is tempting to just see COVID - and the tightening and easing of restrictions - as a disruption from our normal, and stay in that space of feeling frustrated and depressed as we wait it out and look forward to things all going back to the way they were. But in doing so we may miss out on what God is already up to.

We know that God is always working for the good in all things. In Isaiah, as we heard earlier in our worship content, the invitation "don't dwell on the past, see I am doing a new thing". An invitation or an encouragement towards acceptance and integration into the new things that are always emerging. An openness that allows us to see the possibilities, and the opportunities, that God has before us. Not when everything is fixed and returned to how it was, as though our lives are on hold, but in these very moments, and the ones still before us because this, now, is the moment that we have. All the way through scripture we hear God inviting His people into the future that he has provided for us. (We will look some more at this in the second half of this year). When we are ready, we may be able to shift beyond this feeling of frustration and depression, towards trying out this new life at it is right now, and imagining possibilities for a new future, that has been opened up by these circumstances.

A Global Pandemic triggers a new imagination and new possibilities. Including a new imagination for loving our neighbours. The creativity and generosity of people caring for others has been

inspiring and encouraging. It is limitless what you and I can be a part of. But here are just a few opportunities that you can get on board with.

### **Being a good neighbour to someone far away**

Act for Peace is the international aid agency for the National Council of Churches in Australia. For \$26 a month you can support a family who doesn't have a safety net during COVID like we do here. If you have JobKeeper or have been able to keep your job, consider being a good neighbour to someone far away during COVID.

### **Being a good neighbour to someone in physical proximity**

We have a specific responsibility to our actual neighbours who we live near. They are ours. We don't choose our neighbours but we do need to do the work of it. Do life together. Make the effort, find common ground, build relationships, meet the needs of others, let them help you, listen, offer to pray, invite, create community, invest time and effort. Walk, chat, knock on the door, send a text, ask, offer. It is as simple and transformative as seeing other people, each person, as valuable and sacred. Love them in a way that they know they are seen and valued. Making the effort to connect, say hi and then build a relationship is what helps to break down social isolation which is a huge concern in our communities. During our first lockdown there were some great simple steps that people in our community were a part of.

- Trease family. 11am morning tea with neighbours in their open driveways while working and learning from home.
- Brown family. Making a gift hamper with a note of introduction and offer of help for their neighbours.
- Menzies family. Wrote a letter and delivered it to the 80+ homes in their street creating a network of connection.

### **Being a good neighbour by allowing God to transform the way you see your neighbours**

Being able to deeply and sensitively love our neighbours comes through the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, shaping and guiding us to see and know our neighbours through God's loving eyes. We can do this through prayer and contemplation. Let's do a simple reflection exercise focused on our neighbours.

Get yourself comfortable, perhaps close your eyes if it helps and visualise your local neighbourhood, or look out on your street if you are able.

Think of a neighbour, one that you have a good relationship with, someone who is easy to get along with.

Now think of another neighbour, perhaps someone you don't know so well yet.

And now think of another neighbour, near or far, perhaps difficult to connect with.

Become aware of your breathing, noticing when you are breathing in and breathing out. As you breathe in, focus on what you know about one of these neighbours that they might be struggling with, some difficult stuff they might be going through. And breathe out into the world your loving care. Do this a few more times with each breath in and out. Breathe in your neighbours struggle, and breathe out your love and care.



And now just take a few moments to love them, pray for them, and ask yourself gently what does God want me to do or change in my attitude or actions?

Take a moment to pause to do this exercise. If you are able, discuss with others what you experienced and have been challenged by.

As each one of us is trying to be a great neighbour we are being the church. Church has not stopped. This is what the scattered church looks like, in each household in our neighbourhood who is following the way of Jesus, in the actions of each person loving their neighbour. This time of disruption and not being able to gather helps to shift our focus to this and reminds us that this is the church, the body of Christ, doing as Jesus commanded us to "love one another, as I have loved you."

## A prayer for world neighbourliness

*written by Peter Marshall*

O God, we pray for a broader vision of the needs of humanity, and a deeper compassion to fill those needs;

For a planting of the seeds of concern for all humanity in our hearts; for a tapping of the wells of generosity.

May we live together as people who have been forgiven a great debt.

May we be gentle, walking softly with one another.

May we be understanding, lest we add to the world's sorrow or cause to flow needless tears.

May we be as anxious for the rights of others as we are for our own.

May we be as eager to forgive as we are to seek forgiveness.

May we know no barriers of creed or race or gender, that our love may be like Yours – a love that sees all people as Your children and our kin.

May we be ministers of humanity.

Amen

## Communion

*Have some food and drink prepared for this time*

If you're able, join us at 11am Sunday through Zoom to share in communion together at [rngwd.com/communion](http://rngwd.com/communion) or after you have shared in communion below, consider who you can call to have a chat as you would on a Sunday morning after a church service.

---

*"...I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up..."*

---

You may not feel you have a huge imagination. You may feel that there's so much routine in your life that there's nothing "new" - it's the same old same old. But there is "new" in us and all around us, all the time. Our challenge is to perceive it.

When we share in communion, we're sharing a memory of Jesus' "Last Supper" with his disciples, immediately before he was arrested, accused and killed... and shortly before he showed his authority over absolutely everything by coming back to life. Jesus would have sat down to dine with his disciples very regularly - the meal was in their rhythm of life together. Yet, even if they ate the same food and drank the same drink each time, it was still a new and unique experience.

As we sit together in our homes, we might be holding on to the same food and drink as last week and the week before. But think about the molecules that make up that food and drink - they are not the same as last week. Even if they are highly processed, they are things that God has (at some point) sprung up from the ground in a highly (mind-blowingly) creative act. Every breath we take is new atoms of oxygen and gives fuel to new thoughts in our brains. Every sunrise is familiar, yet unique and once-in-a-lifetime.

Your time of communion today is a one-off... a gathering in time and space that will never occur again - a combination of familiar and new, both at the same time.

What is something that is new, something you've noticed today, something that God has put in your imagination, something that God is revealing to you? Together, as the dispersed-but-communing body of Christ, God is revealed to us and to the world.

*See, God is doing a new thing! It springs up... the invitation for us is "to perceive it"*

Let's pray... Thank you God for your sacrifice on the cross, and for showing that you are more powerful than everything else. Thank you for giving us brains that think new thoughts, hearts that sense your call and imaginations that catch glimpses of your vision for the world. Thank you for this moment in time to gather as followers, to celebrate who you are and to be empowered to bring you glory as we go about our lives. Amen.

---

*What is something that's new for you? Something you've noticed today?  
Something that God has put in your imagination?*

***Who could you share this new thing with, right now?***

---

## Song: Novum

*An original by Jess and Daniel Hammond*

Wake up you who are sleeping  
There is life that brings healing  
It's time for you to rise again  
Call forth light from the darkness  
Call out life from the ashes  
It's time for you to live again  
And the days of yesterday are gone  
Don't look back don't hold back

Shine shine your light  
Greater things than this are still to come

Lift up hands that are weary  
Sing out hearts that are heavy  
There is a new song to be sung  
Hold out hope in the darkness  
Hold on hold to the promise  
Take heart see your God has come  
And the days of yesterday are gone  
Don't look back don't hold back

Shine shine your light  
Greater things than this are still to come  
Shine shine your light  
Greater things than this are still to come

You make all things  
You make all things new  
You make all things  
You make all things new

Shine shine your light  
Shine shine your light

CCLI Song # 7006769  
Daniel Hammond | Jessie Hammond  
© 2013 INSIDEOUTLIFE  
CCLI Licence # 30581

## Benediction

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord  
Amen.

## Connect cards online

*Click this link or enter it into your web browser [rngwd.com/connect](http://rngwd.com/connect).*

We love to know that you have been able to connect through worship today. Please click on the link (or enter it into your web browser) to our online connect cards letting us know which ways you have been able to worship, and if you want to let us know how we can praying with you.

Thank you!