

PAPER CHURCH

Becoming: Adaptive Renewal – 1 Corinthians 9:19 -23

Sunday 30 August 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.

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Tell us what you think

We'd like to know how you are finding paper church and in what context you are using it. Send an email to: office@ringwoodchurch.org.au to let us know how you're using paper church (e.g. with or without the worship video, by yourself or with others), things you've found helpful, any frustrations and any ideas you have to help us improve your paper church experience.

Call to Worship

Cam Moss

Hello everyone, welcome to church for this week 30th August. It's almost September, which means I'm getting ready for Safe Water September! I'm looking forward to engaging with the worship resources for this week. This is the third week in our *Becoming* series. Last week Kaye gave us a message looking at the city of Ringwood, which was accompanied by a video presentation put together by Marg of some of the places that make up this wonderful place where we live.

I was particularly taken by what Kaye had to say about astronauts observing the Earth from space and how that had impacted their view of the world. I'd love to be able to see the Earth from space, even though it's a bit hard to think about right now seeing as it's outside my 5km zone. Maybe one day we'll be able to get the youth group there for a Friday night!

This week Penny will be bringing us a message about Adaptive Renewal, so I'm looking forward to getting into it. Before we start, I invite you to centre yourselves, and join me in prayer.

Prayer

Cam Moss

God, we thank you that you are a loving and creative God.

We eagerly anticipate what you have on your heart for us to hear today.

Help us to be receptive to your word for the world, and to be open to reflecting you in all that we do.

In your name we pray, Amen.

Song: Oceans (Where Feet May Fall)

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

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

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

Oh and You are mine oh
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

Yeah yeah yeah yeah
Oh Jesus yeah my God

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 Ligthelm
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Song: No Longer Slaves

You unravel me with a melody
You surround me with a song
Of deliverance from my enemies
Till all my fears are gone

I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God
I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God

From my Mother's womb
You have chosen me
Love has called my name
I've been born again into Your family
Your blood flows through my veins

You split the sea so I could walk right through it

My fears were drowned in perfect love
You rescued me so I could stand and sing
I am a child of God

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Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 9: 19 - 23 (NIV)

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.



Message

Penny Martin

I am drawn to nature when it comes to thinking about our current sermon series on Becoming, and particularly as we come to this week's theme on adaptive renewal. Nature is a most powerful example of adaptive renewal. We see evidence of this powerful force all around us in nature. After the devastation of fires just this past summer we can see nature's robust resilience pushing green shoots out of blackened tree trunks and small green shoots pushing up through blackened soil. As spring rolls in we can feel the air beginning to warm and the earth waking up. We can see trees pressing out their blossoms and see plants grow and thrive. Woven into the very fabric of creation is an adaptive and renewing force.

Interestingly for us as humans there is much for us to be reminded of in this time.

What we have all been through recently is evidence of our ability to be very adaptive when required. However, this does not mean that this is adaptive renewal. Some of us can adapt to difficulty and hardship and circumstances beyond our control. But adaptive renewal is something different. Adaptive renewal is about being creative and courageous and sacrificial and intentional in order to step boldly into an unknown future expecting good things. And frankly it's not just about a sense of personal renewal (as important as that is) ...

In the passage from 1 Corinthians 9 read to us today we find an exemplary model of Paul's ability to be adaptive.

Adaptive (adjective)

able to adjust; able to adjust to the conditions of a particular environment.

We know what this means – but the renewal part is intriguing.

It is easy for me to default into thinking through the topic of adaptive renewal for me individually as a personal challenge or encouragement ... and whilst this is important it is not the focus of today's reading - Paul speaks nothing of this in 1 Cor 9. In fact, for Paul the entire focus is on other people "All things to all people ...".

Paul is describing, in some detail, his adaptability (not to serve himself) but in service of evangelism. In service of reaching people with the gospel – the good news of the Kingdom of love and hope.

For Paul, whatever advances the gospel governs his actions and responses. He goes to people where they are, on their own terms. He does not require them to come to him or that they meet him on his own ground. He is a Jew, but he goes to those who are gentiles (non-Jews) – not requiring them to become Jews to be welcomed or listened to.

"He knows that the gospel bridges ethnic [and many other] boundaries and works its power in whatever context."

(Sampley, "The First Letter to The Corinthians", in The New Interpreter's Bible Volume X, 2002, 911.)

This text has been used to justify all kinds of permissive behaviour, e.g. I am being all things to all people – so I can get away with certain behaviours or patterns. This in fact is not a permissive passage but a restrictive one, a disciplined one ... Paul decides, in light of God's call on his life, to set aside his freedoms (his rights even) and become a slave to everyone. For example we might choose to: sacrifice some time to learn a new language or dialect; choose to give up our favourite foods and eat the local food; give up our fancy car and clothes to be able to relate to those who live

with very little – the poor and the weak. These are the hallmarks of incarnational mission as modelled by Christ, who humbled himself, became flesh and pitched his tent in our neighbourhood.

So our individual and communal capacities to be adaptive are not just self-serving or self-protecting behaviours, they are within us so we can get creative and busy about bringing life and renewal to our world. Spiritual renewal always comes through renewed commitment to God and His Word and this is how all historical renewal movements have come about.

When I consider this text from Corinthians today I think of an immediate and sacrificial context that we can consider pressing into ... Safe Water September. What does it mean to adapt and bring about renewal for communities that struggle to access safe and clean water? For one short month I can, and will happily, go without some things I love in order to reach out, build awareness and demonstrate a spirit of love - reflecting the good news of the gospel.

(Clip from Safe Water September:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U096AvLR0JI&feature=youtu.be>)

Safe Water September is an immediate and practical way to reflect on being adaptive toward renewal – but there are many more ways to think this through and commit to some action. The times we are living in are a real invitation to press into deep reflection around some of the issues from today. In a recent article called “The Meaning of Life – Australians Praying more during Covid-19” from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the contributors are all reflecting on the fact that people are more in tune with the transcendent – in other words they are looking for more than just their lived experience right now. This is another example of adaptive renewal – when people are beginning to rethink things, adjust their ideas and responses and is leading to an emerging sense of renewal.

(Link to article from the Sydney Morning Herald: <https://www.smh.com.au/national/the-meaning-of-life-australians-praying-more-during-covid-19-20200820-p55nla.html>)

*Let us aspire
Toward a life of attentiveness to God
In Expectation
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 ringwood.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.

Grief and Hope and Weirdness – A reflection by Penny Martin (Written Wednesday 19 August 2020)

So much work to do but no desire to sit for another 2 minutes within the same walls, staring at the monitor my only window on the world, and bang out my thoughts and my ideas and my words and my voice into the stifling air in this room.

So I found my jacket, the dog lead, the dog (of course), my headphones and stepped out the door. Two minutes later I stepped back in to grab my face mask that I had forgotten (again).

The air was cool but the sun was peeking through the scattered clouds. I flipped on some music - a random mix of new release songs that I'm deciding if I love or not yet, and we set off at a cracking pace.

It was just the dog and me - these moments of being on my own are precious and I enjoyed not having to speed up or slow according to others with me. So we walked.

And I felt all at once energised and alive and in the same desperate minute felt a weight of guilt. That old unwelcome companion guilt - that pushes into an otherwise great moment. *"You should be working harder."* *"You should be making the most of your solitude to get work done."* *"You should be cleaning the house - it sure needs it!"* *"You should be thinking or doing just about anything and everything other than this."*

Even as I am writing this I am thinking how ridiculous it all is - but I am all too aware that this is the pattern of me, and many others too, in moments when we are under unique pressures and just hanging together.

As I walked, I shook off my irrational guilt and began to listen to the music in my ears and absorb the sights that were all around me.

I love the feeling of when you push your body to work a bit harder than it really wants to. You can feel your heart doing what it is supposed to do. You can feel muscles just doing what they are designed for and the blood begins to move and the air is a rich feast as you suck it in. Senses feel heightened and focussed - and today that is how I felt and so I purposefully took a long and meandering way in order to prolong the walk as long as I could within my allocated hour. My walking took me, of course, just around the streets in my neighbourhood - over many familiar footpaths and dirt tracks. Paths I have walked for years.

I walked and thought and then began unexpectedly to feel that familiar and awkward feeling of emotion rising. Then the unbidden tears came. They came and came and it felt like rain, and it felt like hurting and hoping all at once. I have no clear idea why I felt so overwhelmed in those moments. I was embarrassed to appear to be so upset, but at the same time it felt so powerfully like the exact thing I needed to do. And so I cried and walked ... and I realised that whatever was rising in me was true and good and grief. Not just grief for me and my small experience, but for things right now, for another 13 beautiful and much loved people passing away over night from a horrible and insidious disease that is holding us all hostage ... and for the days upon days of precious people dying. For the hundreds of people here in our part of the world who have died and

the reverberating impact of the loss of those lives and stories, of the sadness of such a close. I hear the numbers every day like we all do right now - and it has felt recently that I am kind of immune to the reality of what is happening ... but the loss is deep and real and for all of us.

So I cried for people and families and lives and for missed opportunities, for experiences and things and so much that is missing or gone right now.

I cried with each step and eyes down let my dog lead me on the paths that were the ones we needed to walk.

And finally, as I began to look up I saw the hills of Mt Dandenong rising before me and recalled:

Psalm 121:1-2

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

I felt a surge of hope, felt a little bit more together than I had.

I wiped my eyes.

I blinked furiously.

I pulled off my mask - it is hard enough to breath in one when you are walking uphill but crying as well is a recipe for damp asphyxiation.

Then I saw a couple walking toward me, holding hands, face masks on, enjoying their walk.

I quickly replaced my soggy mess of fabric mask and as they drew near I looked at them in their eyes - attempting to connect despite our mask barriers, and smiled as hard as I could, no longer embarrassed by my shining eyes.

They returned the grin and I was captured for a moment by the smile lines that lit up around their eyes, and how beautiful human eyes can be when we choose to look deeply into them.

I don't know who those people were - but for that second they held my gaze I felt a precious hope for the world.

There is so much that is hard and weird right now.

Tears and irritation rise to the surface so much more quickly. I reach for all kinds of comforts and fixes.

But today I walked and cried and was held. Held by a little black and white dog who walked with me without judgement or concern - just comfortable companionship. Held by the gaze of two strangers and their warm eyes. Held by the words from a beautiful song:

We've been struck down, we're not destroyed
We've sown in tears, we'll reap in joy
My eyes are open
Behold, behold
Behold what love can do
Behold, behold
He's making all things new

Continue to make me new God - continue to break me up so I can be made whole again, more deeply resembling you.

A risky prayer I know - but I'm up for it if you are.

Let's listen or read the words of this song as we prepare to take our communion elements.

Behold by Mission House Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EMWE-beKto>

The empty filled, the wounded healed
The broken back together
The poor are blessed, the weary rest
We will dance forever

The blinded see, the chained are free
The doubtful now believer
The outcast known, the orphan home
You are my Redeemer

Behold, behold
Behold what love can do
Behold, behold
He's making all things new

The lost return, the voiceless heard
The mourner now rejoicing
The mountains shake, the world awake
Creation all composing

The sad untrue, the earth renewed
The song has found its singer
The darkness light, the dead alive
You are my Redeemer

Behold, behold
Behold what love can do
Behold, behold
He's making all things new

We've been struck down, we're not destroyed
We've sown in tears, we'll reap in joy
We've been struck down, we're not destroyed
We've sown in tears, we'll reap in joy
My eyes are open
Behold, behold

Behold (Behold), behold (Behold)
Behold what love can do
Behold (Behold), behold (Behold)
He's making all things new
He's making all things new

CCLI Song # 7144966

Taylor Leonhardt

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Communion is a dedicated practice that we do week to week – to set aside time to pause and remember Jesus’ death on a cross and the loving sacrifice that he made for each of us. As we pause for a few minutes and take simple food and drink – we remember Jesus meeting with his followers:

*Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying,
“Take, eat, this is my body”.*

*Then he took the cup gave thanks and offered it to them,
and they all drank from it.*

Please share in your version of communion.

Communion is usually a time of being *in* community, breaking bread together as a symbolic remembering of Jesus’ last supper with his disciples and followers. If we are not in our normal community it might feel strange to do this alone, as a couple or with only a small group of people.

Intentionally consider who you are communing with:

- Think of the people in close proximity to you e.g. neighbours. Give thanks for them.
- Consider and visually bring to mind friends in our church community who would normally be sitting close by at this time. Give thanks for them.
- Consider the community of the Trinity – God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit – a divine community into which you are embraced today as a beloved child of God.

Heaven to Earth (We are Blessed)

Bring heaven to earth, Lord
Bring peace where there's fear
Bring life where there's death, Lord
Bring joy in these tears
Bring love where there's lust, Lord
Bring hope where there's pain
Bring rest where there's chaos
Bring faith where there's fame

You invite us to partner with you
To see your kingdom come

We are blessed, to bless a world in pieces
We are loved, to love where love is not
We are changed, to be the change you promised
We are freed, to be your hands, O God

Bring home to the homeless
Bring keys to the chained
Bring worth to the purchased
And touch to the shamed
Bring flesh from your word, Lord
Bring truth where there's spin
Bring risk where there's safety
And grace where there's sin

In the broken, we shall see restored
The image of our King

We are blessed...

Lord we cry out to you
Change the atmosphere
Breathe new life in all who gather here

We are blessed...

Bring justice to profit
Bring patience to growth
Bring wisdom to progress
Plant trees on this road
Bring freedom from debt, Lord
An end to excess
Bring closer your kingdom
By quiet success

May we grow in the knowledge of you
Through every heart and face

We are blessed...

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Song: The Potter's Hand

Beautiful Lord wonderful Saviour
I know for sure all of my days are
Held in Your hand crafted into
Your perfect plan

You gently call me into Your presence
Guiding me by Your Holy Spirit
Teach me dear Lord to live all of my life
Through Your eyes

I'm captured by Your holy calling
Set me apart I know You're drawing
Me to Yourself
Lead me Lord I pray

Take me mould me
Use me fill me
I give my life
To the Potter's hand
Call me guide me
Lead me walk beside me
I give my life
To the Potter's hand

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Connect cards online

Click this link or enter it into your web browser 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!