



## **Rest: Release**

*Sunday 17 January 2021*

### **Before You Begin**

Our hope is that this is a resource that will help us to engage meaningfully with God's word and invite us into a sense of worship, despite being unable to meet face-to-face. Use it in a way that feels comfortable and helpful to you.

A table of contents has been added to give you a sense of what will follow and allow you to move more easily through the worship elements.

#### ***Prepare***

Have your Bible close by and some food and drink prepared for 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***

Be intentional. Sit somewhere. Have some visual representation of God (perhaps a small cross, your Bible, a symbol or image) or you might play some reflective music. Start with a few moments of silence and deep breathing.

#### ***Consider your environment***

What will work for you in the space you have? If you have others in your house (housemates/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.



### **What's Inside**

*On a computer, you can click these links*

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## Call to Worship

*Kaye Reid*

Welcome to this week's paper church. It's great to be back after two months of leave, after two months of rest; coming straight back into our summer series on rest. At this time of year our minds probably go straight to thinking about our own rest; whether we are enjoying the opportunity to rest at this time of year. I love how we do Summer in Melbourne. It's so quiet and relaxed, everything slows down and we enjoy being outside - at the beach or the river or the bush - and with less work happening and no school or uni many people have the opportunity to enjoy this time together.

Our theme of rest this Summer is not just about whether we are getting some rest, a vital practice and rhythm that we will keep talking about and living into some more this year, but importantly it's also about who and what we are resting into. Our rest, true rest for us that is soul filling and nourishing, comes from resting in God. In particular, today's worship is focused on trusting in the God of this universe who loves us unconditionally and invites us to let go of unhealthy levels of anxiety, worry and restlessness and to go with God's plan for us and for our world; to rest in God's love.

So, as we worship through this resource today, with some songs and dwelling in scripture and Harley's message, I am inviting you to not just jump in but to set aside other distractions, to pause if you are multi-tasking, achieving, problem solving, and bring your full focus and attentiveness to worship. In spirit and fullness, not just in the time it takes to play the worship video or read paper church. Be present to this time, space and experience so as to be fully present to God. You might want to distinguish this from other time by pausing to prepare the space you are in, preparing your body and your mind by slowing down and honing your focus. Open your heart and mind and welcome the presence of the Holy Spirit with you.

## 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

CCLI Song # 2449771

Darlene Zschech

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## **Dwelling in the Word**

*Pat Greig*

Rest can be experienced in a range of ways. One of those is dwelling in the Word.

As you prepare to read our bible reading for today, I would invite you to adjust your position so that you are sitting or lying in a comfortable position.

Take some time then to be aware of your breathing. As you breathe in ... and out ... notice the gentle rise and fall of your chest ... and abdomen.

Notice that your breathe is slightly cooler as you breathe in and warmer as you breathe out. There is no need to control your breathing in any way. Just let the breath breathe itself.

Now be aware of your thoughts. Just notice them, acknowledge their presence and let them go like passing cars.

Now in a space of stillness, allow your mind to dwell fully in the word as you read the scripture passage for today.

## **Bible Reading: Phil 4:6-7 (NIV)**

*Read this reading slowly, dwelling in the Word.*

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®

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## Be Still and Know

Be still and know that I am God  
Be still and know that I am God  
Be still and know that I am God

I am the Lord that healeth thee  
I am the Lord that healeth thee  
I am the Lord that healeth thee

In Thee O Lord do I put my trust  
In Thee O Lord do I put my trust  
In Thee O Lord do I put my trust

I am the Lord that strengthens thee  
I am the Lord that strengthens thee  
I am the Lord that strengthens thee

I am the way the truth the life  
I am the way the truth the life  
I am the way the truth the life

CCLI Song # 4436380

Margaret Evans

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## Message

*Harley Kitchen*



I think I have always had some anxiety when I've had to walk along a boardwalk or a jetty - whether at the beach or on a lake or river. Especially one without a high-enough fence on both sides. Some have had a fence on one side only, and some of those fences have been entirely too low to give me any sense of security; some jetties I have had to walk along have had no fence at all; then there are the fallen logs across creeks; slippery logs that you're supposed to walk on ...

I must have had some bad experience with a brother pushing me off such a log or jetty in my distant past because somehow a sense of imbalance comes over me.

It seems to create quite a bit of fun for my wife and family as I firstly try to escape the situation, then when I absolutely have to venture out, with great determination and gritted teeth, with a wobbling gait and not-looking down, I manage it.

Here is a photo of me “managing” in Perth recently!

To hearty congratulations by said wife and family. All very encouraging, of course, until I have to walk back to terra firma! Then it’s on again!

Anxiety. It’s part of life, isn’t it? You’re probably anxious now – wondering if I’m going to mention one of your anxiety-points: maybe being late – that “I’m late for this important meeting and there’s nothing I can do about it” feeling; or being a passenger in a car being driven by your teenager; or walking out to bat for your cricket team when you are last wicket down and the team needs 10 runs to win

...

But they are not even the serious ones, are they? They DO seem pretty serious at the time but not when set against serious illness like COVID-19, or accident and injury, retrenchment and financial need, loss of loved ones, or family relationship problems.

What were the people in Philippi who received this letter from Paul anxious about? They were facing persecution for their faith. Many were being totally ostracised and isolated by their community because they no longer engaged in the all-pervasive state religion. At any time the mob or the authorities could turn on them, threaten them or imprison them for being Christians. Imagine that. It is what our brothers and sisters in Christ suffer under oppressive regimes across the world – because they hold their allegiance to Jesus their Lord more highly than allegiance to religious culture or secular authority. And Paul himself, writing from prison in Rome, had the Damocles sword of martyrdom hanging over him as he wrote – Anxiety.

We have just been through 2020 - a year of fear. A lot of collective anxiety. In fact, world-wide anxiety. And now, in Australia, we are starting to do the hard work of picking up the pieces of normal life, emerging from our cocoons and getting on with busyness again! Exchanging one anxiety for another.

Right now we have a time of holiday - and peace. Penny introduced that as a sermon theme for January two weeks ago and Brendan led us in the immortal words of peace in Psalm 23 last week. Today, some of the most helpful words in the Bible about releasing our worries and anxious thoughts.

So many times I have read these words to anxious people, so many times I have repeated them to myself in anxious moments: “take your worries to God in prayer, in this new situation. Roll your



burden on the Lord. And with thanksgiving that God can handle them, open yourself to the peace that is beyond your ability to create and feel – trust your Lord to keep your heart and mind – emotions and your thinking – protected and strong. That is God’s promise to you.”

Let’s look at some of the words here - I’m glad this verse includes the words “in every situation”. Because it is the situations that life throws at us that create concern, worry and then anxiety, isn’t it? If you google the word “anxiety”, you find the descriptive words “intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations”.

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*“... in every situation ...”*

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Now, situations are hard to avoid, aren’t they? In fact, life is one situation after another! You’ve only just finished driving through peak hour traffic, just a metre away from the huge wheels of those great trucks at 100km/h, when the boss asks you to speak to all the assembled company about your work, then when you’ve struggled through that, a phone call comes about your child in trouble at school ...

Or the family car develops a problem – and you’ve been told the repair bill will be a four-figure amount – and you simply don’t have the money to cover it. When Ruth and I were in Perth over Christmas, one night our son-in-law’s car was crashed into when parked outside a friend’s home – and it was written off! We are just so thankful that only a few minutes before they were getting out of the car.

Then there are the ongoing deep concerns about the health of a loved one – maybe whose health issues seem so permanent and unfixable - Situations in life.

Some are urgent - needing immediate attention – (and you don’t have time to quietly pray about them). Others are like running sores that seem unfixable. Both types of situations giving you a lot of concern, which can lead to anxiety.

Now I want to skip over the next few words – “prayer and petitions” – come back to them in a minute – and jump to the phrase “the peace of God that transcends all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”. Those are words worth mulling over a bit.

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*“The peace of God that transcends all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”*

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A young teenager named AJ was living in Canada in his home with five siblings, going to school, all pretty normal. His dad was a minister, AJ was in the youth group of the Church. One day, his dad was “relieved of his job” because an affair he had been having with a Church staff member had become public knowledge. Suddenly the family were out of a house, Church, income – they were in shock and shame – and were pulling away from each other as a family. And AJ had suddenly lost his friends.

He had to fit into another school, as the family had to move to live with their grandparents across the country – he was so lonely in his class and now he didn't have a youth group of Christian friends. AJ fell into a dark hole of anxiety and depression.

One day he read these words of Philippians 4 that we are looking at today. "The peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." As he read it, he got so angry at both his father - and God. In his words: "I raced into my mother's room and blurted out 'This says we are supposed to have peace, but you don't have it, my dad doesn't have it. Our family is a mess.'" His exhausted mother said "You'll have to seek God and let Him speak to you, AJ. I don't have an answer for you ..."

That sat AJ back on his heels. He realised he needed to do this himself. To bring himself, his hurt and sadness, his situation to God. For AJ, it meant wrestling with God - wrestling with his emotions, his anger, his temptations to turn away from God, turn away from forgiveness .... But he knew he needed peace of mind – a slowing down of his racing mind – and he needed peace of heart – a dissolving of his pent-up emotions.

His own words: "The more I reached for God in heartfelt calling for His help, and soaking myself in Bible reading, the more I found out that God is peace. Jesus is peace. I am peaceful as long as I am close to him. My problems are handled and managed as long as I am close to him."

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*"God is peace. Jesus is peace. I am peaceful as long as I am close to Him."*

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I'll come back to AJ's story in a minute – but let's think about that statement "I am peaceful as long as I am close to Him".

That says to me that there is some effort involved in gaining the peace of God. Taking time to be close to God involves effort on our part. I don't find it easy to centre-down my thoughts, put aside the many thoughts, demands, things to be done that crowd my brain ...

I've been told so many times over the years that meditation, contemplation, really concentrating on what's in front of me and gently steering other thoughts away, would be good for me. Would gradually teach my brain that there are other things to do first thing in the morning than immediately gathering all of yesterday's thoughts, worries, concerns and noise together again - that quietness, centring down, deliberately bringing to God the situations of life and rolling worry onto His shoulders is good for me. And it's something I've learnt to do and continue to learn, over and over!

And I think that is what Paul is saying here about our communication with God – so let's come back to those words at the beginning of the verse: "prayer and petition, with thanksgiving".

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*"...by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving"*

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I think many Christians hear the word 'prayer' and silently shut-off inside, because, well, it seems like you're talking to yourself, you don't get a voice replying like in normal conversation, it's hard because of other thoughts crashing-in all the time. I think we are mostly past those thoughts here at Ringwood Church – but I'll tell you what DOES make us shut-off thoughts of prayer – it's the pressure of life, and tiredness when we DO have time maybe it's some disappointment along the line with God.

If I may be brave enough to translate those words again for us today – “reverence, intensity and gratitude”.

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*Reverence; Intensity; Gratitude*

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I find those words are motivational. As I speak to God – whether out loud or silently, firstly reverence for the Lord of all, reverence for his great Heart of love towards us, then Intensity – not flippancy – intensity – it's what those words petition or supplication convey – speaking out to God the depth of the situation as we understand it and imploring His answering action. He has broad enough shoulders to carry us and can handle us sharing our rawest emotions. “Cast ALL your cares on Him because He cares for you.” Then beyond you, personally, intensity ... as you speak to the Lord of All about big issues around us.

If you feel our country's leaders are not listening, then bring the issues to God who does listen – the scourge of homelessness, locked-up refugees, the cry for an indigenous treaty, climate change action. And bring to God the pandemic that grips the world, the exhausted health workers and so many grieving families. These big issues as well as ongoing pain of people you know – suffering grief and loss, perhaps violence, abuse, addiction, mental anguish over family members. Intensity ... if you don't bring them to God, who will? And if you don't make yourself available to be part of God's answers for them, again, who will?

Then Gratitude – not only giving thanks for the good things of life but really believing in God's listening, all of heaven silent as we pray, and His wisdom in the best way the prayers are to be answered. Gratitude – developing an attitude of gratefulness throughout each day. Ending each day with reflecting, with gratitude, on God's goodness and care. Even writing it down. Building positivity and hope through trusting God with thankfulness.

I said I would come back to AJ's story. Over time, the brokenness of AJ's family started to mend. Today, his parent's marriage is in “an incredible place” thanks to his mum's “willingness to extend forgiveness and mercy”, his dad's “true repentance” and God's “grace and radical provision”. AJ himself – married to an Aussie girl he met over there, now living here – doing some study to prepare for whatever God has for him. He says “Through this terrible time, I was given something that set me up for a win - don't hide your brokenness ... have a genuine encounter with God ...”

I was talking with one of our people here at Ringwood about this promise of God for peace of heart and mind – and he said to me “I think the key to understanding it, is that very word “understanding”. He said God's peace is way beyond our understanding – but it's within His



understanding. It “transcends all human understanding” but it is within God’s understanding.

Again, we come back to the magnificent God we worship - deep, intimate knowledge and understanding of us and of this needy world – much deeper than our own understanding. That motivates me to pray. That says to me “prayer changes things”. That calls me to carve out time each day to come to God in reverence for His greatness, in intensity for the great needs around us, and in deep gratitude for His listening ear and ability to do, as Paul says in Ephesians “immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work in us”.

Finish with these verses we have been inspired by today – in The Message paraphrase:

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*“Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It’s wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the centre of your life.”*

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## 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

CCLI Song # 7030123

Brian Johnson | Joel Case | Jonathan David Helser

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## Communion

*Have some food and drink prepared for this time*

**Welcome to this time of Communion. Today our theme is Rest: Release.**

*Kaye Reid*

Have you had times where you have felt like God is absent or that you are distant from God? Have you had times where you have felt disconnected or have drifted away from good and helpful rhythms? Perhaps during this past year of isolation and lockdowns some of our usual practices such as gathering in person and sharing communion together were not possible in familiar ways and needed to be rediscovered and imagined in new and different adaptive ways. While I have missed aspects of communion occurring together at the same time and place, it has also given space for other authentic and meaningful ways of celebrating communion.



Last week while Paul and I were enjoying a week by the river in Warburton, we received the worship resources email from church that comes through on a Friday while we were sitting outdoors at a café enjoying a beautiful view over the river and towards Mount Donna Buang along with a lovely shared breakfast and hot drinks. So, we watched the communion video together and adopted what remained of our meal to be our communion elements and our outdoor café location as our sacred space to remember the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the one we follow, and to recalibrate our spirits, and our lives towards God.

Through God's grace and guiding, sometimes we have been able to see the gifts that have emerged for us from this past challenging year. You may have had some similar experiences that have been



meaningful and authentic for you in sharing communion in different ways and in different settings. For some of us this has been in pyjamas and with simple but enjoyable food and drink from home, or a teapot with a tea cosy on Zoom with others, or creating a beautiful sacred space with more formal symbols that are set aside for this purpose and shared with our household.



I want to encourage you that during this year, irrespective of how, where and when we are able to all gather together to worship this year, that you create and hold on to your own practice and your own regular rhythm of celebrating communion, on your own or with your household, life group, care circle or any other group.

This might be on the day you worship or gather together each week, Sunday for most people but any time that works for you or your group or household is good. When you sit at the table together for a meal is a great time. For a family or an individual perhaps Sunday lunch or Sunday night as you

have dinner. Decide what aspects you might include – praying and reading words of scripture, discussing stories about Jesus, remembering or noticing God with you - and what your symbols of communion are – perhaps the meal you are sharing or some particular elements that are set aside for this purpose - and discover together what communion celebrated together and shared together as an integrated part of our everyday life can be for you.

This is probably a new practice for you and your household, one that is intentional about remembering and talking about Jesus who we follow, and recommitting our lives together as followers of Jesus. Like most new practices it will need your commitment and intentionality to make this happen. But let's not miss the opportunity to create or embed a new possibility that will keep bringing us back to our faith and the focus of our lives.

We know in our minds but let us also know in our hearts and our spirit that God is always present but it is often ourselves and our way of life that contributes to our lack of attention or awareness or participation. While it can feel sometimes like God is not present, we know, trust and believe that God is present in all time and space. We are all invited to be attentive and to participate.

So, whether you are sharing in communion now or at another time with your household or others, as you do so notice the symbols that you have with you, notice your surroundings and your context, notice your body and breathing and position yourself to be receptive to God's presence with you. Take some moments to commune with God, reflecting on your week, giving thanks to God with a grateful heart and bringing before God the moments and situations that you regret, that don't sit easily, that you wish to more fully understand and to be transformed. Seek and accept forgiveness and extend forgiveness to yourself and others. Be reconciled and at peace. In a posture of gratitude and grace receive the symbols of God's love for you expressed through the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

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*We invite you to eat and drink in remembrance of Him*

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## Kids Hope



We partner with Eastwood Primary School to provide mentors to at-risk children. Being a mentor involves reading, playing games or chatting with the same one child for one hour each week during school terms. There is a waiting list of children. If you have a spare hour a week and are interested in becoming a Kids Hope mentor, please contact the church office or send an email to [office@ringwoodchurch.org.au](mailto:office@ringwoodchurch.org.au). Paul Arnott coordinates this program for us.

## January Update

*Brendan Petty*

Acknowledging that we're still as geographically scattered as ever at the moment, we will be providing a broad range of ways to connect in with worship and communion during January. We'll be producing pre-recorded worship videos, paper church, communion reflections (pre-recorded) and also you are welcome to attend the chapel at 10am on Sunday mornings again to watch the worship video, have communion and to chat with others. We will be serving communion again, in sealed single-serve cups to minimise handling as we re-engage with this practice together.

## 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!