



21 April 2020

Holy Communion for our scattered community this Sunday

Dear sisters and brothers,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

It seems impossible, and quite surreal that just over 5 weeks ago on the 15 March, I addressed a congregational meeting and made the announcement that the Church Council were considering the need to suspend Sunday services because of the increasing coronavirus situation. It seemed such a ridiculous thing to be suggesting. Yet, the decision was taken out of our hands by the stand the government needed to take to safeguard our country and our lives.

It has not been easy; in fact for many this has been a traumatic time with isolation, unemployment, businesses and schools closing, and panic buying making shopping trips a harrowing experience. But through it all, the church has stayed the course. By that, I am not talking about the organization, but you, the people of God. The peace, hope, joy and love that is the fruit and foundation of the Christian faith has helped us to not only manage or survive, but to thrive in these dark times. More people have engaged in our online services than ever participated before.

Just as Christ appeared in a room of scared, frustrated, bewildered disciples after his death and resurrection, he has come into our homes bringing new hope and still giving us reason to rejoice, and the spirit-led ability to worship our loving God, who will never leave, nor forsake us.

Our Scripture reading this Sunday is from Luke 24:3-35. It is the story about the risen Lord Jesus travelling the Emmaus road with two disciples who for some reason did not recognize him. When he entered their home and broke bread with them, their eyes were opened to the reality of who he was.

This Sunday, as we recall this story, we will also celebrate Holy Communion. We will also seek for Christ to be known to us in the breaking of bread.

The Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia have made this possible by allowing congregations worshipping in isolation and scattered homes to celebrate Holy Communion during Streamed services. Our Elders and Church Council have agreed that it is important for us as a congregation to continue to have Communion, particularly to assist us to remain connected with each other through Christ.

Paragraph 8 of the Basis of Union clearly indicates the importance of Holy Communion to the Church:

8. HOLY COMMUNION

The United Church acknowledges that the continuing presence of Christ with his people is signified and sealed by Christ in the Lord's Supper or the Holy Communion, constantly repeated in the life of the Church. In this sacrament of his broken body and outpoured blood the risen Lord feeds his baptized people on their way to the final inheritance of the Kingdom. Thus the people of God, through faith and the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, have communion with their Saviour, make their sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, proclaim the Lord's death, grow together into Christ, are strengthened for their participation in the mission of Christ in the world, and rejoice in the foretaste of the Kingdom which Christ will bring to consummation.

Sharing the Lord's Supper was a hallmark of the early church. We are reminded in Acts 2:46, *"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts."*

For this strange season – however long it may be, we too will be breaking bread in our homes.

In preparation for this to happen next Sunday, we ask you to make the following preparations:

- Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-28. Holy Communion is not to be taken lightly. While we may be in our own homes, the importance and solemnity still remain. Thus, we need to examine ourselves and recognize that it is still the Lord's Table at which we will meet.
- Have a small amount of bread and wine/fruit juice (preferably grape juice) ready. We will not stipulate what is required, but as you prepare yourself during the week, give thought to what is suitable to allow you to best engage in this holy feast.

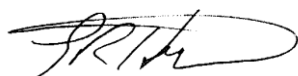
We do not know how long this social isolating will remain in place. It is our plan to provide a service of Holy Communion on the first Sunday of each month as has been our tradition, until such time as the situation is resolved. If you feel for whatever reason, that you do not wish to celebrate Holy Communion in your home as outlined above, that is okay. There is no compulsion to participate.

I really look forward to worshipping with you this Sunday, and in particular, to breaking bread with you all.

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,
and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father,
to him be glory and power for ever and ever!*

Amen. (Revelation 1:5b-6)

Your servant in Christ,



Pastor Graham Huth