**Worship suggestions while away from my Church community 20th – 22nd March 2020 Lent 4**

Hi everyone. This is the first edition of worship suggestions. Consider printing a copy or two and dropping it into someone who does not have a computer, internet access or who is not particularly tech savvy.

Why not ring someone who also is not able to attend worship and share the prayers together. Pray for each other over the phone. Do this at the time you would have otherwise met to worship. Or arrange to meet (if appropriate) outside to share in the time. Read and discuss the readings and the reflection.

**The service**

**Pause to listen to a musical version of the 23rd Psalm.** A beautiful one is by Sons of Korah from their album Refuge. You can also hear it on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNMpXR7zJ6E>. An alternative for fans of Paul Kelly is “Meet me in the middle of the air” from his album Death’s Dateless Night. You can also listen to it on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g34-nB3oym4>.

**Prayer**: take a moment to be quiet and be still. Breath in the presence and an awareness of God.

* Thank God for the gift of those who love you and you love.
* Thank God that quiet spaces allow us to listen.
* Ask for God’s Spirit to comfort guide.

*Loving God, you are more intimate than all other friendships and love. By the strength of Christ, please lift us high above common wants and expectations, into the light and power of your Presence. Lead us to wonder, and from wonder to love, and from love to that worship that only lovers can offer. In the name of Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen! (B. D. Prewer © 2001 adapted)*

**Read**: Ephesians 5:8 – 14 *(© Nathan Nettleton 2002)*

*In the past, the darkness was your natural habitat, because you needed its cover to hide the way you lived. But now you are united to the Lord and are at home in the light. So live lives that reflect the light. Be shining examples of all that naturally grows in the light — goodness, honesty, and integrity. Do your best to discern what will be most pleasing to the Lord, and let that set your agendas. Have nothing to do with the things that people will only do under cover of darkness. Blow their cover instead, for such things produce nothing good. It does no one any credit to even talk about the corrupt activities that people go to such lengths to keep hidden. The truth about everything is seen when it is exposed to the light, and those things that can stand the light are worth seeing. That’s why it is said,*

*“Wake up, sleepy head!
Rise from your grave,
and Christ will light up your life!”*

**Pause** a moment to reflect on the reading. Note questions or uncertainties for you. Note striking and positive things. Share your questions or thoughts with someone (e.g. over the phone).

**Read**: Richard Rohr published the following beautiful meditation yesterday (Thursday 19th March 2020). His reflections are available via connecting to his emailing list or on his web site. Details are below.

**Love Alone Overcomes Fear***Thursday, March 19, 2020*

It is shocking to think how much the world has changed in such a brief time. Each of us has had our lives and communities disrupted. Of course, I am here in this with you. I feel that I’m in no position to tell you how to feel or how to think, but there are a few things that come to mind I will share.

A few days ago I was encouraged by the Franciscans and by the leadership team here at the CAC to self-quarantine, so I’ve been in my little hermitage now for three or four days. I’ve had years of practice, literally, how to do what we are calling “social distancing.” I have a nice, large yard behind me where there are four huge, beautiful cottonwood trees, and so I walk my dog Opie every few hours.

Right now I’m trying to take in psychologically, spiritually, and personally, what is God trying to say? When I use that phrase, I’m not saying that God causes suffering to teach us good things. But God does use everything, and if God wanted us to experience global solidarity, I can’t think of a better way. We all have access to this suffering, and it bypasses race, gender, religion, and nation.

We are in the midst of a highly teachable moment. There’s no doubt that this period will be referred to for the rest of our lifetimes. We have a chance to go deep, and to go broad. Globally, we’re in this together. Depth is being forced on us by great suffering, which as I like to say, always leads to great love.

But for God to reach us, we have to allow suffering to wound us. Now is no time for an academic solidarity with the world. Real solidarity needs to be felt and suffered. That’s the real meaning of the word “suffer” – to allow someone else’s pain to influence us in a real way. We need to move beyond our own personal feelings and take in the whole. This, I must say, is one of the gifts of television: we can turn it on and see how people in countries other than our own are hurting. What is going to happen to those living in isolated places or for those who don’t have health care? Imagine the fragility of the most marginalized, of people in prisons, the homeless, or even the people performing necessary services, such as ambulance drivers, nurses, and doctors, risking their lives to keep society together? Our feelings of urgency and devastation are not exaggeration: they are responding to the real human situation. We’re not pushing the panic button; we are the panic button. And we have to allow these feelings, and invite God’s presence to hold and sustain us in a time of collective prayer and lament.

I hope this experience will force our attention outwards to the suffering of the most vulnerable. Love always means going beyond yourself to otherness. It takes two. There has to be the lover and the beloved. We must be stretched to an encounter with otherness, and only then do we know it’s love. This is what we call the subject-subject relationship. Love alone overcomes fear and is the true foundation that lasts (1 Corinthians 13:13).

**Gateway to Action & Contemplation:**
What word or phrase resonates with or challenges me? What sensations do I notice in my body? What is mine to do?

**Prayer for Our Community:**
O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other’s burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts’ longings for the healing of our world. [Please add your own intentions.] . . . Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God, amen.

**Include your own prayers for yourself and others.**

**Pause to:**

* **Break a piece of bread and give thanks** to God for Jesus, God’s grace and remember that God’ Spirit is with you.
* **write/note** what you can do to bless others and show love today and the next week.

**In conclusion, hear this old Celtic blessing** as shared by Bruce Prewer:

*Closed to you be every pitfall,*

*Smooth to you be every steep hill,*

*Warm to you be every bare place,*

*Sweet to you be every stream of God.*

**Resources:**

Material from Bruce Prewer – [www.bruceprewer.com](http://www.bruceprewer.com)

Material from Richard Rohr – [www.cac.org](http://www.cac.org)

Material from Nathan Nettleton - <http://www.laughingbird.net/LaughingBird/Welcome.html>

YouTube – [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

If you would like to know more about accessing YouTube material or any of the resources, give me a call or email me, Rev Peter at ph 0418 570 013 or revpeterc@gmail.com.