

**PENTECOST 18**  
**4/10/20**  
**CAVES BEACH**

**Communion.** Those watching or reading this service should take this opportunity to go and get some bread or a savoury biscuit and some juice or wine ready.

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

We come to remember Jesus, the faithful one.

**"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."**

We come with praise for Jesus, the compassionate one.

**"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."**

We come to listen to Jesus, the teacher.

**"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."**

We come to follow Jesus, the crucified and risen one.

**"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."**

**Opening Prayer**

Sustaining God, be with us!

**Without you we are nothing; with you we find strength for each day.**

Feeling God, be with us!

**With your confidence we can break with the past, and find joy in facing new challenges.**

God of the Church, be with us!

**In your Spirit, fellowship becomes a reality and worship is heartfelt.**

God of Jesus, the Christ, be with us!

**In the Christian Scriptures, the example of Jesus leads us on, and his risen presence strengthens us. Amen.**

**HYMN 207** Jesus shall reign

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BE4DDB5whyk>

**PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION**

Glorious God,  
creator and sustainer of all that is,  
we praise you for your grace and goodness  
that extend throughout the universe.  
We praise you for the gift of Jesus  
who embodied your loving kindness and justice.  
We thank you for the provisions of the earth  
that nourish us in so many ways.  
We declare our love for all that you are  
and all that you do,

and pray that we may always act and think  
in ways that reflect your presence and purpose.  
Receive our adoration we pray.  
Merciful God,  
who looks upon the repentant heart with kindness,  
hear us as we seek your forgiveness.  
We know how easily we get captivated  
by the concerns of our day,  
shutting you out of our lives.  
Too often we are over-confident in managing  
what we do and forget that we are your servants.  
We push your mission into the background  
and focus on our own well-being at the expense of others.  
Too often we reject your correction,  
believing that we know better than the truth  
of Christ's teaching  
and wilfully go our own way.  
Forgive us, we pray.  
Forgive every act of thoughtlessness,  
greed and injustice.  
Restore us in the likeness of Christ  
and renew our minds and spirits, we pray. Amen.

### **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

The mercy of God is everlasting.  
If we turn in faith,  
God will forgive and restore us.  
We live in the light of God,  
forgiven and free.

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

### **READINGS**

#### **·      Philippians 3:4b-14**

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

7 Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. 8 More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. 10 I want to know

Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, 11 if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

· **Matthew 21:33-46**

3 "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. 34 When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. 35 But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. 37 Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' 39 So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 40 Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 41 They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

this was the Lord's doing,

and it is amazing in our eyes'?

43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. 44 The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."

45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. 46 They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

**HYMN 342** When I survey the wondrous cross

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iK8kYlBn\\_qI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iK8kYlBn_qI)

**SERMON**

At times like this when we are coming through eight or nine months of the COVID 19 pandemic it is important to take time to reflect. We have come from a time of bewilderment, fear, lockdown and gradual re-emergence. For many of us it has been a massive jolt to our faith and spirituality.

Regular participation in worship in the many differing ways which we have experienced has been a valuable spiritual discipline for some people but also

confusing for others. Over time our experience of worship can be life changing but lately it has been out of the ordinary to say the least.

When worship is combined with other disciplines like prayer, meditation, reading the Bible and living in a mutually supporting community, worship can be a very powerful part of our life. When this is disrupted it shakes our perception of our lives.

We still hope that a time of worship will lead us into a deeper connection with Christ. In troubled times like this we need this connection rather than the forced separation from the world around us caused while in lockdown. Yet at the same time we can also feel that the connection to our faith can slip away a bit as we are diverted by other seemingly more pressing issues and the dramas of the pandemic. It is almost like we become immune to the connection and the vitality of worship when we are stopped from joining in. This can leave us feeling empty.

The question then is:

What do we do now?

Are we leading ourselves on a wild goose chase?

Reflecting on Paul's passage we know that our search to know Christ is, by its nature, an elusive journey. This comes from never being able to fully box Christ into some set formula. It is hard enough to fully know another person like our life partner, let alone Christ. We always seek to understand others based on our own interpretation of our world. This search by its very nature has its limitations. We cannot see the world through our partner's eyes, let alone through Christ's perspective.

Paul talks in depth about how his world view was shattered and reshaped by Christ. We all tend to see the same things differently and therefore come to differing conclusions. This includes our perceptions of our faith. Our perception is completely fallible if we solely rely on our own concepts and interpretation of our world to build our faith without the support and guidance of the Bible and our community of faith. Having admitted our limitations in seeking to understand the inner workings of others it is even more of a challenge when we seek to fully understand Christ. Understanding Christ comes through how we perceive Him in our environment and the people we interact with. It is more than just what we once learned at Sunday School.

This means that we need to interpret and reinterpret the Biblical messages free from the background noises of the world. We also need to keep our hearts open to hear Christ, to see Christ and to spiritually connect with Christ in the middle of our lives today.

Thankfully Paul comes to us saying that even he has not fully reached that connection which he earnestly sought. It is a goal that he is always moving towards. Looking further at the passage from Philippians we are guided to reflect on who we are. In order to work on this we are guided by Paul to look at what he calls his 'confidence of the flesh.' Put another way, it is about having confidence in ourselves to be able to fulfil our objective of building our faith.

Paul recognised that while he had achieved many worldly objectives growing up as a devout Jew he had not fully achieved his goal of connecting to Christ. His credentials in some ways held him back as they were only worldly qualifications. While he may have been academically at the top of his class in religious studies as a Jew this was in fact a hindrance now that he followed Christ.

Here Paul is brutally honest about himself. He says that these qualifications amounted to little more than garbage when it comes to following Christ.

Paul's ability to reflect so deeply at this time arose out of his training as a Jewish scholar. There were in fact some positive things coming from his time learning about prayer, discipline and his Jewish heritage. However he now knows that there is more to it. His experience in no way was a substitute for the intimacy he sought to find in his relationship with Christ.

I am sure that most of us have experienced the power of our faith through Christ's teaching. It has had varying levels of positive impact in the ways we have grown and been shaped in our lives. If we are honest with ourselves then there are probably many things that we would like to keep building on in our lives.

As we admit this we must avoid thinking that from now on we can just participate in our Christian community without making any real efforts to grow in our faith. Just being part of worship on Sunday's does not 'cut the mustard.' Paul is less than complimentary about such an approach when he describes it as garbage.

We don't need to suddenly renounce all that we have done but we do need to constantly keep trimming our spiritual life to allow for new growth, much like we do when we trim the dead winter growth from our shrubs to allow the new spring growth to flourish.

At times like this when the old comfortable ways of doing things are challenged we need to be open to the ways that the Holy Spirit brings new opportunities for growth to us. Things which perhaps had lost some of their vitality can now be renewed and refreshed. We cannot just sit back and rely on all the old ways of doing things as we think that we don't need to adapt to the world we live in today.

It is at these times when God is calling us to make the supreme effort to adapt and grow and change that we need to strive to open ourselves up to allow our hearts and hands to reach out to embrace the new potential coming to meet us. If we just stick to the old norms we run the risk of making them into idols which only serve to stifle our abundant faith and spiritual growth.

We need to keep pressing forward to keep fully engaged with Christ.

**HYMN 442** All praise to our redeeming Lord  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNnMhzETlb8>

### **PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING**

Receive our gifts, O God, and with them  
the dedication of our lives, we pray. Amen.

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

We come before God, our heavenly Father, in prayer. Let us pray:

Lord God, we thank you for the privilege and joy of sharing in the sacrament of Holy Communion today. We thank you for the spiritual nourishment that you provide and pray that as we have partaken of this spiritual food that we will be strengthened and renewed for service.

We pray for all who are struggling with difficulties, whether because of ill health, age, or worry about the care of another. We pray for your comfort and healing mercies upon all who are in sorrow or any other trouble. We pray for those in caring roles, that you would give to them wisdom, patience and gentleness. We pray for peace in our hearts.

Loving God, we pray for young people who are unable to find work, and families who are anxious about finance especially for rent and food. We thank you for help that has been provided through government and other agencies, and pray that those who decide guidelines may have flexibility and compassion where individual cases need consideration.

We pray for our government leaders in both federal and state parliaments, that always their leadership may reflect their care of your creation, including all people who inhabit our land.

We pray for those whose roles look wider to international relationships. Lord, there are so many competing interests, so many different ideologies. We pray that leaders of nations might serve the common good. We pray that they might use their authority so that resources are shared. We pray particularly for the World Health Organisation and for all who are working for a Coronavirus vaccine, and that when safe it will be administered fairly.

Loving Lord Jesus, we give thanks that the Good News of your resurrection gives us all hope and joy. We pray that we might live with an attitude of gratitude each day of our lives, not forgetting that you gave your life for us on the cross, that we might have life and have it abundantly. Enable us by your Holy Spirit to live in love for you and for one another.

Loving God, accept these our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

**HYMN 511** Let us break bread together with the Lord

**COMMUNION**

The Lord be with you.

***And also with you.***

Lift up your hearts.

***We lift them to the Lord.***

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

***It is right to give our thanks and praise.***

Thanks and praise, glory and honour are rightly yours,

our Lord and our God,

for you alone are worthy.

In time beyond our dreaming

you brought forth light out of darkness,

and in the love of Christ your Son

you set man and women at the heart of your creation.

By the gift of the Spirit

you bring to completion the work of your Son. You lead us in truth and give us

power to proclaim the gospel to the whole world.

And so we praise you with the faithful of every time and place,

joining with choirs of angels and the whole creation in the eternal hymn:

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.***

***Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.***

We thank you that you called a covenant people

to be a light to the nations.

Through Moses you taught us to love your law,

and in the prophets you cried out for justice.

In the fullness of your mercy

you became one with us in Jesus Christ,

who gave himself up for us on the cross.

You make us alive together with him,

that we may rejoice in his presence

and share his peace.

By water and the Spirit

you open the kingdom to all who believe,

and welcome us to your table:

for by grace we are saved, through faith.

We bless you, Lord God, king of the universe,

through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who on the night of his betrayal  
took bread,  
gave thanks,  
broke it  
and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take this and eat it.  
This is my body given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.  
In the same way, after supper,  
he took the cup,  
gave thanks,  
and gave it to them, saying:  
Drink from this, all of you.  
This is my blood of the new covenant  
poured out for you and for everyone  
for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, whenever you drink it,  
for the remembrance of me.  
With this bread and this cup  
we do as our Saviour commands:  
we celebrate the redemption he has won for us.  
Pour out the Holy Spirit on us  
and on these gifts of bread and wine,  
that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ.  
Make us one with him,  
one with each other,  
and one in ministry in the world,  
until at last we feast with him in the kingdom.  
Through your Son, Jesus Christ,  
in your holy church,  
all honour and glory is yours, Father almighty,  
now and for ever.

***Amen.***

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.  
The cup we take is a sharing in the blood of Christ.  
The gifts of God for the people of God.  
Receive this holy sacrament  
of the body and blood of Christ,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.



**DISTRIBUTION****PRAYERS AFTER COMMUNION**

Creator of all,  
We give you thanks and praise  
That when we were still far off  
You met us in your Son and brought us home.  
Dying and living, he declared your love,  
Gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.  
May we who share Christ's body live his risen life;  
We who drink his cup bring life to others;  
We whom the Spirit lights give life to the world.  
Anchor in us the hope that we have grasped;  
So we and all your children may be free,  
And the whole earth live to praise your name;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**AMEN****HYMN 530** Now let us from this table rise**BENEDICTION**

Let us go to live in the light,  
that God may be honoured.  
Let us go to live with justice  
that the gospel of Christ might be realised.  
Let us go in the power of the Spirit,  
that we may serve God's mission of reconciliation.  
May the love of God be in our hearts,  
the truth of Christ be upon our lips  
and the power of the Spirit be in our service,  
this day and forever. Amen.