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**mission**  
QUEENSLAND

Albert Street Uniting Church  
**News from the Pews**  
*June 2020 Issue 156*



SEASONS OF GRACE

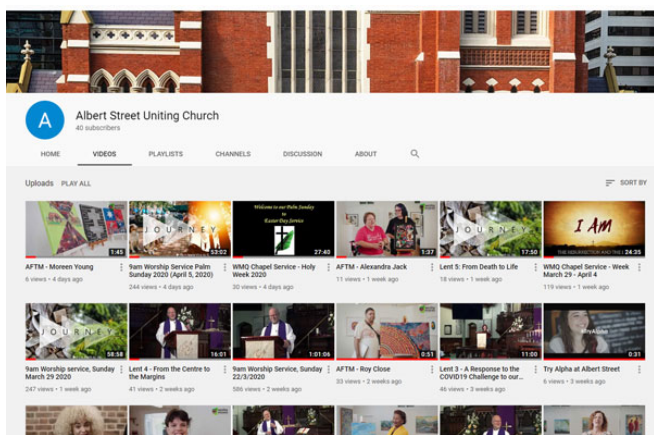
**THE LIFE OF PAUL**  
SERMON SERIES

# What's On in June

## Online Services

Our weekly services can be found online on **YouTube**. A link is placed on Facebook too so our usual 9am Sunday can be viewed in the comfort of your home!

Simply put "Albert Street Uniting Church" into the search bar on the YouTube page and our channel will come up. Subscribe to be notified when we post the next full service, sermon or other video for you to watch.



## Social media & Email

Keep in touch with us via Email, Facebook and Instagram - latest news, things to read or listen to - while we're all waiting out the COVID-19 shut down.

Remember the Church is not about the building – it's the people. We are the Church.

## Our Cover

Our sermon series for June through to September is called "Seasons of Grace – the Life of Paul." Join us in an exploration of the impact of the life and times of the apostle Paul. Cover Photo by Ray Hennessy on Unsplash.com

June 21

## No Albert Street Service

On Sunday June 21 we will be all joining in the Queensland Synod special service for the Uniting Church in Australia's Anniversary service.

The Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod have their own YouTube channel -

<https://www.youtube.com/user/UnitingChurchQLD>

From which you will be able to watch the service.

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## Albert Street Uniting

Our Call

In response to God's faithfulness to us, we are committed to:

- proclaiming the good news of Jesus the Christ, Son of God;
- being a welcoming community of Christ;
- building faith and compassionately serving in mission.

[albertstreet.church](http://albertstreet.church)



## A meditation on Hope by Rev Kath Behan

When we find ourselves in situations of difficulty and suffering, whether through ongoing illness, broken relationships, or facing disasters, we come to a place where we are forced to stop and think about the meaning of our lives. We are brought face to face with our own mortality and we start to question all that we hold to be true. This is a healthy human response to suffering because it invites us to invest into searching out the life that we sense deep within us is either missing, or of which we need to be reminded.

This is the essence of hope in the midst of suffering: a belief and a trust in the possibility that there is more to life than what we see with our eyes. If our lives lack meaning or purpose, if we cannot see beyond our circumstances, if we doubt that there can ever be fulfillment, then all that is left for us is despair and resignation. But if somewhere deep within us we sense the stirring of a thirst for new life and possibility, then hope fills us with an openness to the world that keeps us moving along treacherous paths ahead.

Hope, then, is about being willing to let go of what we once knew to be true with our eyes, and looking deeper to see where the signs of life are all around us.

*Stop for a moment and focus on your breathing – in and out, in and out. As you breathe, think of each breath as a moment of hope for life. This may be all that you are capable of doing at the moment – but that is enough. And slowly you may be*

*surprised by the stirring deep within you for life...*

**Hope proclaims that we are not alone in this world...**

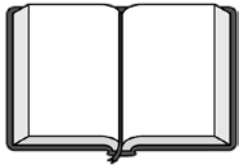
There is a moment when you're standing at the edge of the ocean as the waves lap around your feet, and the sand begins to disappear beneath your feet with the swirling of the water, and the waves continually pound against you, forcing you off balance just a little...when you're reminded that you are not alone in the world. There is a greater presence all around us. God who knows the number of grains of sand on the beach, who knows the number of hairs on your head, is with us. Oceans, mountains, creeks, rosebuds, grasshoppers, sunrises, sunsets are all promises that point beyond themselves to the beginning of something greater. Hope is that which seeks not endings, whether it be the end of pain or life or discomfort, but rather seeks the beginning of new life where we are more concerned with asking, 'God, where are YOU?', than we are with asking, 'How can God allow this to happen?' The difference between these questions is the difference between personally connecting **with** God, and wondering **about** God.

What would it be like for you to ask the question, 'God where are You right now?' Why not have a go and ask it. (This is prayer to God.)

Has anything changed for you in asking this question?

Do you still need to ask the other question, 'How can God allow this to happen?'

# Seasons of the Spirit



## **Trinity Sunday: June 7, 2020**

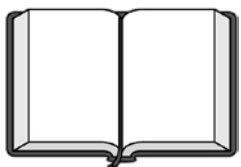
Thought for the week: The Mountains Are Calling

Focus Scripture: **Genesis 1:1- 2:4a**

Trinity Sunday speaks to the abiding presence of the Trinity, told through God's love for Creation. In this Earth-centred framework, humans are called to a dual responsibility of care and wonder. We see the overriding call to love Earth as God loves it and to see God's love and abiding presence in it. **Genesis 1:1—2:4a** shows God creating a beautiful and intricate order out of a formless void. God speaks the world into being. Later, the memory of God in human flesh inspires Paul's community toward restoration and peace. What of humans in this created order? God creates humans last, putting off their creation until an entire world of beauty already exists. The command for humans to have "dominion" might, to our ears, conjure ideas of domination over the land, but this interpretation is actually "peculiarly modern." Pre-Enlightenment era interpretations of this text assumed that "total control obviously belonged to God alone". Dominion does not refer to limitless power, but to the steadfast care of a sovereign or caretaker for a domain or common home.

### **Reflection**

God of abiding and active peace, guide us to sustained attention and wonder toward the bounty and rhythms of Earth. Help us to hear your voice and see your name written across this community of life, and to serve your creatures with love. Amen.



## **Pentecost 2: June 14, 2020**

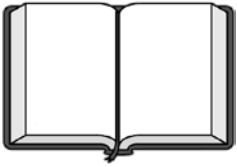
Thought for the week: Sacrifice

Focus Scripture: **Matthew 9:35-10:8, (9-23)**

There are many in need of Jesus' healing ministry. Jesus acknowledges that he cannot do this work alone and calls disciples to join him. However, the authority to cast out unclean spirits and cure disease requires that the disciples sacrifice their former lives and any hopes of wealth or prestige. Jesus instructs them to begin their ministry in the Jewish community. While this may seem like an unfair exclusion of the Gentiles, it demonstrates the need to limit ministry at times so that it can be most effective, particularly when resources are few. The community needs to heal from the traumas experienced in the violent destruction of the Temple. The passage points to the importance of ministering to and strengthening community. But this requires sacrifice and compassion on the part of those facilitating healing. The responses of the traumatized community are diverse, ranging from hostility and suspicion to gratitude and hospitality. Jesus is aware of this and instructs the disciples to mindfully discern their ministry.

### **Reflection**

Healing God, help us to open ourselves to your call to aid others. Teach us how to sacrifice our own comfort and expectations to better serve the needs of our hurting world. Grant us vision, strength, and joy for this work. Amen.



### **Pentecost 3: June 21, 2020**

Thought for the week: Solidarity

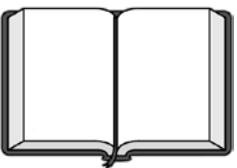
Focus Scripture: **Matthew 10:24-39**

Jesus invites his followers into space of discomfort and division. Jesus highlights that to follow him involves sacrifice and a willingness to disrupt the status quo – secrets will be brought into the open, family conflicts will arise, lives will be lost. This disruptive space mirrors the trials occurring within Matthew’s primarily Jewish audience. The community was struggling with leadership, tradition, and ritual practice issues following the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. Those who were following Jesus presented further complications as they disrupted communal unity through their new beliefs and practices.

Jesus reassures his followers that God values and cares for all people. Just as God cares for all Creation. While this reassurance might bring comfort, Jesus concludes with the reminder that his message does not bring peace, but the sword. To bring about the reign of God requires radical changes in society; changes that challenge power structures. Followers are called to enact this change and face the consequences that emerge from it.

#### **Reflection**

Gracious God, you are with us in times of great joy and in our wilderness moments. Help us to stand fearlessly in solidarity with those who are marginalized, just as you have been present with us. Grant us the courage to seek justice in your name. Amen.



### **Pentecost 4: June 28, 2020**

Thought for the week: Choosing a Braver faith

Focus Scripture: **Matthew 10: 40 -42**

Jesus’ words provide a simple but difficult charge to those who wish to be disciples: to recognize Jesus and other prophetic voices in the most marginalized people in society, and to choose generosity. The action he suggests – to offer a cup of cold water to another – is quite small, but often feels impossibly difficult in our daily lives. Our love of money, security, social acceptance, can often drown out our braver loves – of family, the community, strangers, justice, and marginalized people. Love has always been, in some ways, countercultural and dangerous. Early followers of Christ themselves were targeted by authorities for upending social structures within their places of worship, calling slaves and masters equal. But they knew that to welcome the marginalized was to welcome Christ.

What this passage seems to suggest is that faith is not blind obedience, but rather an allegiance to a braver love that falls outside of our everyday comforts. It is a faith not in money or success, popularity or security, but in the love of God who commands only that we love God and others, especially the marginalized.

#### **Reflection**

God of courage and peace, help us to follow your example and love courageously. Help us to trust that your wisdom and care can carry us when the world threatens danger or harshness. Help us to be people of brave love and generosity. Amen.

## Reflection by Rev Graham Keech

Brene Brown in her book "Dare to Lead" encourages us to identify our 2 core values so that we may better live into them. "A value is a way of being or believing that we hold most important" (B Brown "Dare to Lead" p 186). Brene argues that in reality we only have 2 core values and the rest flow from these.

I identify my 2 core values as **Grace** and **Faithfulness**.

### **Grace:**

My understanding of Grace has been profoundly shaped by Paul's writings - which is interesting given we are about to enter a preaching series called "Seasons of Grace" following Paul's story and his letter to the church in Rome.

Romans 5: 8 and 10 summarizes Paul's understanding of Grace for me:

*'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us...For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!'*

Grace for me is a way of speaking about God as the One who acts first (the prime-mover) with acceptance, with love, with forgiveness etc. It is not that we love God; rather God loves us and God's love calls forth love within us. It is not that we accept God; rather God embraces us in acceptance and this calls forth trust. It is not that we first ask God for forgiveness; rather God forgives us and this forgiveness leads us to repentance (see also Rom 2:4). It is not that we hold on to God; rather God holds on to us. And so on.

As a core value, I explain **Grace** as "*acting first with acceptance and love. Creating a safe space for people to be themselves - to experiment, explore, have fun, fall, laugh, cry, celebrate and grow.*"

Brene Brown also encourages us to identify behaviours that support us in living out our core values and also "slippery" behaviours that are indicators that we are not living in our values. For the purpose of transparency, as I join with you as part of the ministry team, I will share these with you. I will be glad if you encourage me when I live into my values, and 'call me out' when I slip from doing so.

### **Grace:**

#### behaviours that support

- listen well without judging, saving, fixing or advising
- being in touch with my feelings so I am not afraid of other's feelings
- giving everyone a go (and a second go) - inserting trust rather than fear

#### slippery behaviours

- judging people by their outward appearances
- diminishing strong emotions in myself and others
- judging people (and even worse, judging them in front of others) from past experiences

As a core value I explain **Faithfulness** as *“being true to who I am in relationship with God and others.”*

### **Faithfulness:**

#### Behaviours that support

- living in God’s grace
- following God’s call
- trust
- being trustworthy - being a safe person for my wife, children, grandchildren and others

#### Slippery behaviours

- getting too caught up in the externals of life
- self-indulgence/numbing
- over-analysing - second guessing myself

Thank you for the chance to minister with you and to grow in God’s grace and faithfulness through our time together.

Graham Keech



### **Art from the Margins**

**136 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley**

Art from the Margins now has an online store:

<https://artfromthemargins.myshopify.com/>

Supporting AFTM helps people with little means to create art and show their work.

They are providing workshops and creative ideas via our Facebook group [AFTM Art Workshops @ Home](#), please feel free to join.

### **Community Meal**

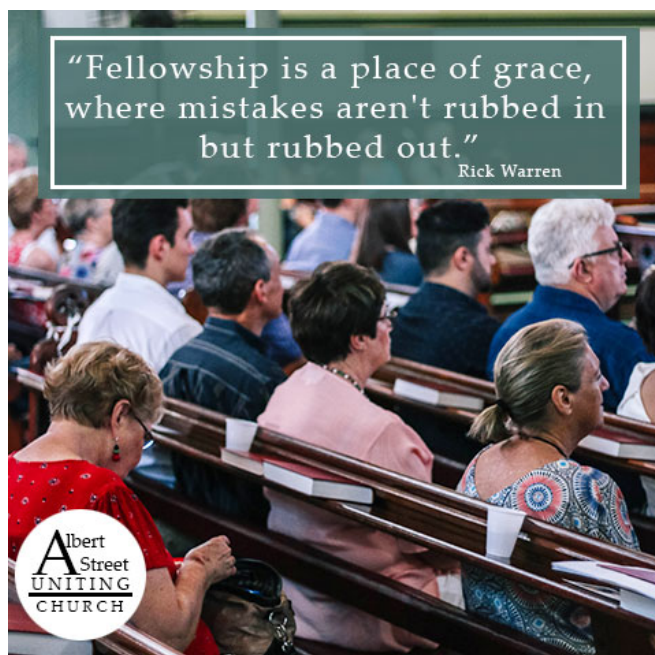
**316 St Paul’s Terrace, Fortitude Valley**

Community Meal as a service operates primarily through the use of volunteers.

Can you help on a Monday or Wednesday night? Visit

<https://www.wmq.org.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities>

to apply. Volunteers are always needed. Take away meals continue to be served and volunteers are still needed to help prepare and package the meal. Please pray for the vulnerable in our community.



# Your Church Contacts

## **Superintendent Minister:**

Rev Dr Peter Hobson

Office: 3071 3060 (Day off: Thursday)

Mobile : 0410 518 027

Email: phobson@wmq.org.au

## **Congregational Minister**

Supply Minister :

Rev Graham Keech

To organise a home visit please contact the office.

## **WMQ Council**

Dr Ian Airey OAM (Chairperson)

Dr Hanna Sidjabat (Secretary)

## **WMQ Board**

Mr Paul Newman (Chairperson)

## **Organist:**

Mr Greg Hartay-Szabo

Mobile: 0414 699 899

Email harybo@bigpond.com.au

## **Church Office**

**(Tuesday – Friday, 9.00am – 4pm)**

Mrs Susan Pietsch

Office: 3071 3060

Email albertstreet@wmq.org.au

Level 6, 140 Ann Street, Brisbane

## **Elders Committee**

Dr Yvonne Burns AO (Secretary)

## **Congregation**

Mr Alan Grummitt (Chair)

Ms Natalie Madsen (Secretary)

## **Sunday School**

Mrs Cathie Phillips

Mrs Judy Ellerington

## **Safe Church Convenor**

Ms Margaret Pollock

## **Open Church Convenor**

Mr Bill Porter



Albert Street Uniting Church is the spiritual home of Wesley Mission Queensland.

## **Wesley House Building Manager (Monday – Thursday, 8am – 4pm)**

Mr Tye Shepherd

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