

PRESBYTERY PORT PHILLIP WEST

21 MAY 2020



Stop Saving for a Rainy Day! It is raining now!

Rev. Linley Liersch

The passage from Acts 2:42-47 is one of my favourite Bible readings, because it demonstrates the Christian community embodying the gospel. The people in the Lukan passage were obviously lucky, they still got to go out to the temple for worship.

In their own homes they shared meals. This included Holy Communion because it speaks about the 'breaking of the bread' with 'thanksgiving'. Just as we are allowed to celebrate communion on-line and gather in our individual homes, where bread is broken. We 'virtually' share in this holy meal. Eating this holy meal remains a mark of unity, solidarity and deep friendship for the church today. *(Margaret Ackland 'Last Supper' Plate 21)*



This early community continued to 'gather together in close fellowship', sure has a different meaning these days! With our own households being too close for comfort, going stir crazy from a lack of outings. But in another way, gathering on-line as a wider church and missing that 'close fellowship' of a face to face encounter. Indeed many of you are recording worship to an empty church and a camera, trying to call on the spirit to be present, not with those gathered - but with those in their homes.

Today, a few congregations are advertising ways to give money to the church, and finding people far and wide financial supporting their on-line congregation. The New Testament community shared what they had in common with each other. It was very much a community that said: "This is ours and no one will go hungry today!" In fact, they would sell their possessions to provide for others in need. It is the Presbytery's job to help congregations sell their unwanted land and buildings to provide for a what each one needed. Now it is not just about saving for a rainy day, for it is raining for the church now and there is need to share in ministry and mission today.

More than ever as a church, in a post-Covid 19 environment, when we emerge from our 'bunkers'... we may need to share what little resources we have with the wider church. To sustain our church moving forward. Not holding tightly to what is ours, but always remembering it all belongs to God'. We offer it all, for God's work with people across the church and throughout the world.

Financial Tips for Congregations!

Discipleship in Disruption

What if COVID – 19 has actually given people more free time to think about their own spirituality?

Are we building on-line spaces for Discipleship?

A Presbytery wide conversation aimed at sharing our learnings around making disciples. Beyond worship what are we doing? How are we offering ways for people to discuss their faith? This Zoom session will be recorded for 'Regenerating the Church' FaceBook.

Peter Batten will be joining us from the Presbytery of Gippsland. He will be reflecting on how bushfire recovery is making opportunities for people to seek meaning.

Host: Linley Liersch & Mat Harry (eLM)

Guest: Peter Batten <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88453485163> Meeting ID: 884 5348 5163



Pastoral Note

“Circumstances have changed for us all. Some people may have to reduce their giving. Others who are still employed should discern if they can be more generous. Perhaps you are saving more at the moment and can afford to give more to the church. Your church continues to need your financial support. Together we can get through.”

9 minutes @ 9

Lord, you are the God who provides for us in so many ways. This week we pray for:

- ✠ Those within our community who have lost their jobs and businesses and are facing financial hardship.
- ✠ Those people for whom this time has caused them to reconsider their approach to material possessions.
- ✠ Those for whom this time has left them without the means to put food on their table and they are having to ask for help, sometimes for the first time.
- ✠ We give thanks for the various financial packages that the government has provided for our community at this time.
- ✠ We pray for banks, landlords and others to show compassion and justice when dealing with financial issues.
- ✠ That the generosity that we have seen with people looking out for each other will continue post-covid.
- ✠ Churches that are struggling financially that they reach out for help and be able to trust in God for God's provision.

If you would like to share your prayer points with us to be included in this weekly newsletter, please contact one of the ministry team. **Narelle Collas.**

Minister's Catch Up

Tuesday 26th May

10—11:30 am

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81527915569>

Meeting ID: 815 2791 5569

What does the Bible have to say about Finances?

Rev. Jeanne Beale

The short answer is “a lot!” I am offering half a dozen readings that we, as Christians, can explore when approaching finances.

- The first is the concept that God will always provide for our needs [**Philippians 4:19**]. Putting our trust in God when things are tight financially is quite a discipline, but I find it is always more rewarding to trust God over any financial institution, as God always has my interest at heart, rather than trying to gain interest from me. Trusting God to provide for my needs has never let me down, no matter how tight the finances have been.
- The second is the biblical concept of tithing [**Malachi chapter 3**]. If we are disciplined to give from what we have, be it 10% or any other fraction, when we are prepared to share what we have, we begin to understand the blessings of the rewards that come from financial sacrifice. In this time of Covid-19 we saw greed and selfish behaviour rise, but was then very quickly replaced by sharing and generosity. When the chips are down, our true selves come to the fore and we come to realise that what we give to one another is never wasted, in fact, it produces a rewarding yield.
- Following on naturally from this is the adage “it is better to give than receive”. [**Acts 20:35**] Now I know I am a bit of a hoarder, but this comes out of a desire not to waste; finding someone who needs these goods gives me no end of pleasure.
- Next, we have the old “root of all evil” concept. [**1 Timothy 6:10**] The key here is that it is not money that is the root of all evil, it is the love of money that is the problem. When we treat finances as “more important” than our mission or our call we begin to lose our way. I find that when we put God’s work above finances, somehow what is needed is found.
- Then there is **Proverbs 22:7** where “The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.” I have watched lenders entice the vulnerable poor into debt cycles that are crippling. If I can help family and friends get out of the clutches of these lenders to a place where they can breathe again, the relief and freedom that comes with breaking the debt cycle is a beautiful thing to be part of.
- Finally, I cannot escape the parable of the lost son, commonly know as the “Prodigal Son” [**Luke 15**], where, even if we blow all that we have financially on wayward living, when all is lost and we turn and face God, like the father in this parable, all is forgiven and we are welcomed with open arms. What a Gracious God we have! **Just a handful of references. Perhaps one has a gift for you today.**

Offering Tips

1. On-line Giving. Use ‘B-Pay’.
2. Direct Debt. Congregations that are participating in direct debit are surviving the storm.
3. Opening the office once a week and having an offering bowl there.
4. Put your bank details on you website, live-streaming and FB. People who are following you on-line may like to give to support your church.
5. Envelopes could be collected from homes once a month.
6. Congregations members post a cheque.
7. Church provide envelopes with church bank account details on the front which can be delivered to the bank.
8. On-line deposit into church bank account.

Hi Jeanne,

Tim Keller talks about the “Prodigal God”. That God is the spendthrift in the story that wastes his money on his son and still lavishes more on him when he returns. Such is God’s abundant love! Linley.

Treasurers Notes on Financial Implications of Covid 19

Doug Whan—Presbytery of Port Phillip West Treasurer

Congregations should NOW review their 2020 budget. The 8 major items to be reviewed are -

1. **Income**

Weekly open plate offerings. As churches are likely to be closed for at least six months open plate offerings will be considerably affected. Remember that during this closure there will be Easter Sunday which for many congregations the open plate is considerably large.

2. **Hire of Churches and Halls**

During this closure period ALL activities at Churches and halls have ceased which will result in a considerable loss of income. The Church Council should consider "Will all the tenants return when things are back to normal" when reviewing the budget.

3. **Fundraising**

The cost of cancelling fundraising events should be adjusted to the revised budget

4. **Opportunity Shops**

Loss of income due to closure of an opportunity shop should be adjusted to the budget

5. **Interest/Distribution Received**

As interest rates have fallen recently, it is likely the original budget amount may have to be reduced.

6. **Expenditure**

Church Service Costs. All costs which related to running a church service should be reviewed to see if there will be any savings? Or have the costs of going on-line, subscribing to zoom, webcams etc increased expenditure?

7. **Electricity Cost**

As the church properties will not be used there should be considerable saving in the electricity costs.

8. **Capital Items**

Any capital items which have been included in the budget, consideration should be given to postpone this expenditure.

Treasurers Webinar
Synod & Presbytery Staff
supporting you.

