

the new vine



UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Blackall Range Uniting Churches
(Kenilworth, Maleny, Montville and Palmwoods)

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An Anthology

Poems of the pandemic
as submitted by
the congregations of the
Blackall Range Uniting Churches

(May it be the first of many)

EDITORIAL COMMENT

To help us get through the lockdown, it seemed a good idea at the time, to float the possibility of our producing an anthology of poetry that shared some of our concerns, fears, and experiences of the pandemic. It would help fill those odd, idle moments, I thought. Then, within days, they lifted the lockdown, and we were somewhat more free again to go about our normal lives. Nevertheless, many persisted for which I am grateful. This volume is the result.

Many readers know of my two major thoughts about such things, but I'd like to share them with everyone.

I believe there is an element of the Creator God in all of us – *created in His image*. I also think we do not always recognise this within ourselves, for whatever reason. And so, I am at pains to try to encourage people to find that spark of creativity within and to whip it into a flame. Poetry, of course, is but one expression of this. There are many more and I would encourage all to seek it out – art, music, woodwork, knitting, patchwork, photography – the list is endless – but we can take it, play with it, and see it as God's gift to us and not just another craft or hobby.

My other thought is that we can see this creative and playful imagination so easily in children – and we marvel at it. We all had it all those years ago! But we then go to school where we are forced to conform and so often, we lose the urge to create. What's the point? But when we reach the age we are at now, my sense is that we can find and release this creativity again. Hence the invitation to try to write poetry – for those whose gift is words, and for those who were, perhaps, unaware of the power of words, thoughts, and contemplation.

I don't know about "the poets" who contributed, but I, for one, am greatly impressed at what follows. You would not believe the number who said something like – "I have never done this before, so you don't have to use it. I will not be offended if it doesn't make the grade." I included everything I was given in appreciation of what it cost to produce. It was very hard work for some, and others are terribly self-conscious and anxious about exposing themselves so publicly in this way. But the variety....

Thank you to each one for opening yourselves in this way.

Being thus encouraged, I am now wanting to suggest that there may be value in our doing an anthology each year. This would allow people to write throughout the year, about whatever spoke to them, and we could hold them all for publication at the same time. With no real time limitation, I think we would be amazed at what we produced and, also, how many others were inspired to 'have a go'. Thoughts please.

Can I recommend you read slowly and think about each poem. There are different subjects, different styles, different moods, different approaches – all arising from the pandemic.

Take your time and enjoy

Peace and blessings

Graham

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PART A: Walking through the pandemic [general poems]

It was suggested we might write about 'Following Jesus through the pandemic' or any topic that touched our imaginations. The request was deliberately broad to allow for our imaginations to run free. This is where they went when not reflecting on a particular piece of Scripture. What follows shows how diverse a group we are. Very encouraging.

HAVE YOU SEEN GOD?

Have you ever seen God
Coming from the clouds
To settle on the earth?
Or maybe seen God rising from the fog
That settles on the lake?

I've never seen God do either of those things
And maybe you haven't seen them either.

But I bet you have seen where God has been.

Have you seen a new born baby?
Or been standing beside a loved one dying?

You have seen God
But not with your eyes.



A LIMERICK

There was an old woman called Joyce,
Who found she hadn't a choice.
You must wear a mask and do as we ask
Or we'll take from your pocket or purse.

A POEM [arising from the lockdown]

Every day when I read Psalm 23, I become re-energised. This Psalm offers us hope for the future, and of a home with God. It rejoices in the good things we enjoy and is honest about the things that frighten us or bewilder us.

Each day I count my blessings as I look out to my own green pastures and quiet waters,
Tucked away in my home, I feel thankful that God is with me.
The Coronavirus keeps infiltrating,
A dark Covid valley,
Death, illness, job loss, emotional turmoil.
I will fear no evil,
God is with us; no matter what,
We're never alone.
There is hope: we will come out on the other side,
Loving each other, being there for one another,
Joining together in the face of the coronavirus enemy.



THE SONG OF THE DELTA STRAIN

Every morning at 10am
The song of the Delta strain rings out
Causing us to gather
Attend and listen

Thank you, Queensland
You've done a great job
A record number of tests done
Keep up the good work
Wear your masks
Just stay at home
Any symptoms at all
Go get tested
11 new cases
Out and about
Infectious in the community
We just don't know
We'll have to wait and see

The reminder...
Not much certain in this life
Just Birth and Death
And God's love in between



I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.

Rev Martin Luther King, Jr.

"With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right....."

Lincoln 1865

"Yes, man has a terminal disease. It is called SIN."

Billy Graham 1984

Judge not, that ye be not judged

Jesus Sermon on the Mount

A PRAYER POEM

Your loving kindness is great, O Father God,
Your faithfulness fills the skies with beauty and
colourful scents, O Jesus Christ.
Your glory is vast, Heavenly Spirit.
Help us overcome loneliness, isolation, and fear of sickness,
For we can all delight in your caring presence for
Others as well as for ourselves.
May we all be truly thankful. Amen



NIGHTTIME

When I lay hidden by the night
What thoughts flood through my mind
What past history lingers there
What future visions elude me.
The night is soft and still
But are my visions rising
Does my history have meaning
And are my thoughts misleading.
What things I should have done
Keep coming back to haunt me
What kindness never given
What words not said forgiving.
But soon the morn will come, I see with clearer eyes
The day has just begun, I have a clearer mind
I have the time to think again to overcome my dreams
It's simple, for the things I did not do, can now be done today.



LOCKDOWN

Parts of me want to rebel against lockdown
Although I realise this is selfish
Nothing seems simple anymore
Don't know what to do
Everything's a challenge
My life seems stagnant
I must realise what it is -
COVID

LUCKY, LUCKY, LUCKY ME

Lucky Lucky Lucky Me
I'm Covid free.

Lucky Lucky Lucky Me
I've had my vaccine shot by two.

Lucky Lucky Lucky Me
I've also had my flu shot too.

Lucky Lucky Lucky Me
My mask is keeping me safe.

Lucky Lucky Lucky Me
I can now have my coffee at Maple 3.

Lucky Lucky Lucky Me
I can now go to church.

Lucky Lucky Lucky Me
All Australians could be like me
And live in this part of God's great country.

Lucky Lucky Lucky Me
There is more that I won't do
So
Lucky Lucky Lucky – You.



A POEM [with some metric connect with "Australian Sunrise" by Cuthbertson.]

The Courier Mail arrived early
and that was good to see,
but the morning news was awful,
and grim as grim could be.
For the covid numbers were growing
Forty times, as easy as could be, and up to forty three
New South Wales was desperate just as we could see,
and other States in lockdown
could only wait to agree,
that early lockdown was essential;
though at first the PM would not decree
that all must be prevented
for events of family.
Now it is Astra Zeneca, or Pfizer or Moderna,
One or all of the three.
Though what we do for best
is not where the matter rests;
Grave is the awful warning
and grave is where some will lodge,
for organizing injections has been rather hodge podge.
Future outcomes, therefore, are now rather grim;
Prime Minister, Premiers, leaders all say, "It's up to him or them."
I wonder what will be the outcome,
"Patience my friend" is the counsel
and this will morph into history,
with some saying that it is with us for all eternity.



LOCKDOWN

Lockdown provides

 Liminal spaces
 Times and places

Liminality provides

 Transformation chances
 Life giving dances

Transforming provides

 Life changing choices
 Amid life's many voices

Choosing provides

 Free will to flourish
 Life in its fullness

Lockdown provides



COVID WALKING

Journeying – Mary Cairncross

Quiet	space
Majestic	creation
Diversity	wildlife
Guidance	signs
Pathways	choices
Filtering	beauty
Meeting	people

Replicating life

Time spent walking a circuit
Returning to where you started
Journeying with Jesus.



PANDECMONIUM

We can't go there anymore
The powers that be, have shut the door
Used to be one country US
Now it seems there's eight of us

Must wear masks no matter what
Try with Hearing aids and stuff
Careful when you take it off
Otherwise it sure will cost

Wonder when it all will end
Could we all go round the bend
Different rules for every day
Would that it would go away

Sadly little chance of that

LOCKDOWN

Worry and stress and more anxiety
What has happened to our society?
COVID - 19 and the new Delta virus
Is enough to make everyone feel very nervous.

Scripture and prayer and meditation
Help to change the situation
So let us forever look forward,
Keep strong in our faith and we'll survive
Another lockdown with Jesus by our side.



JOY

How long, how long oh Lord
Must I share my shame with you
Why do you not reply to me.
Is your silence your response.

Your beauty surrounds me
But your silence is thunderous
What have I done to be forgotten

I know that you will comfort me
Then Joy will fill my soul
But how long, how long must I wait.



FOLLOWING JESUS

Following suggests movement.
But where are we going?

Lockdown suggests staying home.
Not going anywhere.

Confusion.

The pandemic is cruel.
It disrupts and disorients

But, perhaps there's an answer,
Stay still, travel inwards.



AS WE SIT AND KNIT

Knit one, purl one
Masking up has won
Social distance, lock down
Smile with eyes, don't frown

Knit one, purl one
Walk briskly, can run
Fresh air, that's free
Some positives for me

Knit one, purl one
Home school grandson
Huge joy, but eight
Challenge to motivate

Knit one, purl one
Let's garden in sun
Better still, wash car
Water play, best by far

Knit one, purl one
Read book most fun
Stay home, write letter
Chat with friend, feel better

Knit one, purl one
Give patience, God's son
Have faith, be kind
Life's lessons help find



THE CORONA VIRUS

Rat a tat tat -
Three men and a bat
Concocted a brew
That very few knew.

As thousands grew ill
And came down with a chill
T'was to become a virus
To kill most of us.

From somewhere it came
And was met with disdain
It's a hoax said Trump
As the virus took a jump.

World leaders called a lockdown
Which was met with a frown
But it is very serious
The terrible virus.

From China's wet market
It is said it was sent
Do you believe that?
'No way' said the cat.

So now we are waiting
For this virus to pass
And meanwhile wear masks
Till it has left us at last.



MY COVID WORLD

This virus has neither rhyme nor reason - hence the shape and selection of these words

Lockdown - no longer the preserve of prison riots and terror attacks
Online - shopping, church, QR codes, anything from A to zoom
Creative hearts, collective minds, confronting corona challenges
Keept your distance-virus "kreep", "kontainment" plans, keep safe
Divided opinions - communities fenced off, border control
Orchids opening - come closer – observe - no social distancing in my shadehouse!
Worn out workers – sore, straining, striving, solution searching. **WEARY**
Neighbours – caring, sharing, comforting. **NEARBY**

Children - what sort of world are we leaving to you?
Oh to travel to gaze on distance places, on almost forgotten faces
Vivid colours – sunrise, sunset- viral views vigorous, vital, virus free!
Intensely intricate emotions - families, schools, shops, airports, hospitals
Dingdong another delivery drop - like the bread, ice, milk,
papers of childhood - dropped right to our doorstep
19 Psalm 19 - read it. Be uplifted.

"The heavens declare the glory of God"
"No speech no language no voice needed"
Find renewal in God's perspective.
"Day unto day night unto night"
The New Creation Awaits Us.
New Creation Is Here.
Now!



REFLECTION ON PSALM 130

"I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits
and in his word, I put my hope.
I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning."

Wait
Wait
We wait.



*Peace is not a passive but an active virtue. Our Lord never said, "Blessed are the peaceful", but
"Blessed are the peacemakers."* Bishop Fulton John Sheen

*"A drowning man cannot pull himself out of the water by his own hair. Neither can you do it.
Someone else must rescue you."* Karl Barth preaches Deliverance by Faith

PART B: Reflections on Psalm 6

Liena distributed to us all, a lament based on Psalm 6. This made me wonder what others may take from that psalm. So, I asked, and here are the answers.

REFLECTION ON PSALM 6

Covid is full of pain
It falls on us like rain
We lockdown the whole nation
Without an invitation.

Some suffer every day
As on their beds they lay
They need a respirator
Provided by their doctor

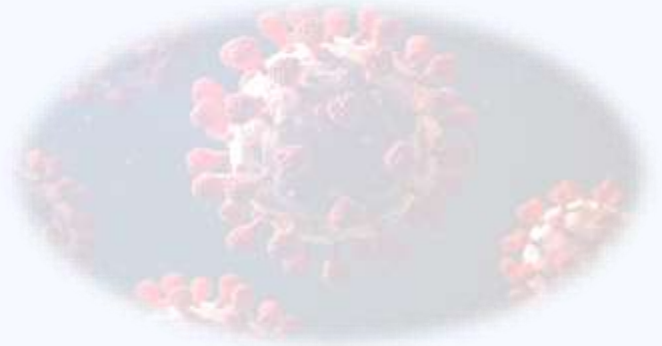
Dear Lord, there's lots of crying
And always there is dying.
Help us in all our grieving
For we are now despairing.

We drown in our sure grief
Balanced against belief
We wonder why this virus
Has settled so among us.

Please Lord protect and care
For people everywhere
They are unsure and frightened
Their fear is daily heightened.

We kneel before you now
Seeking the answer how
Your love will flow among us
To heal and reassure us.

We know you are so near
You'll cancel every fear
Praise Father, Son and Spirit
Present in every crisis.



A 2021 VARIATION OF THE PSALM 6 - A LAMENT

God, You have every right to be angry,
How long, Lord, how long will it be
Before we feel we can breathe again?
I am worn out from hearing the Earth groaning
And staggering from one calamity to another.
Wildfire, earthquake, flood and famine,
Lawlessness, fanaticism, war and disease unrelenting.
I toss and turn, I cannot find peace
As I hear more news of suffering and pain.

What's happening, Lord? Am I alone
In thinking that what was clear is now confusing
And what was good is now somehow bad
And what was bad is now good?
Many things that were serious are now amusing;
I am left to make sense of what is best
But what wisdom can I use to find a way
That brings me to where my mind is at rest?

I know You are there in this isolation, Lord.
You do not ignore me or leave me alone.
I know if I turn to the left or the right
Your voice will remind me to walk in Your way.
Though enemies hurt and dire times erupt,
I know You are working all things for my good.
I'll wait upon You and regain my strength
My Redeemer lives and He raises me up.



A LAMENTABLE LAMENT (Based on Psalm 6)

Almighty God, thank you for caring enough to be angry with me, and even when I'm getting a caning it tells me you are.

Languishing is my specialty, especially when Covid strikes the world and my community.

I thought it may have been the onset of arthritis, but it is you troubling my bones: haven't you got anything better to do as you cope with the Pandemic?

My soul being troubled is not a recent experience but part of the way I often feel when I look out on the world and its troubles.

Have to disagree with David when he asks you to save his life, for you have been at it with me since the day I was born; your steadfast love has been there like a super saving blanket, even when I do stupid things and hurt those I love.

Death could be a thinking time depending on how and where it is spent! Presuming my brain is intact, why could I not remember God for he/she has been with me for the past eighty-four years.

Moaning is a very fatiguing type of emotion and when I can, I try not to participate in a personal or general moan; grizzle I may do, but not moan if I can help it.

When thoughts of my first wife's death come, there is sometimes a time of inward grief, but not many tears.

Macular degeneration I have in my left eye, but that comes from a leaking blood vessel and not any grief.

Weak eyes are not so good if it means it affects your driving and reading and the comprehending of beautiful things such as flowers, sunsets, and the faces of loved ones.

Of course, there is still touch and perfume, so all is not lost. Did David ever smell a flower and what sort of bath talc did Bathsheba use?

Metaphorically speaking workers of evil can take different forms: e.g. Negative thoughts - so not a bad idea to tell them to be gone.

Amazing that despite all the negatives he lists, the Psalmist can still believe God hears his supplications or his prayers, for they are probably one and the same.

Would not waste time on asking that my enemies be ashamed and sorely troubled for they already have the burden of their ways to cope with.

Amen



PART C: REFLECTION ON PSALM 108

For those who do not know, Helen Uhlmann prepares a weekly prayer sheet that she distributes to members of the 'prayer chain'. It usually starts with a reflection on scripture that guides those praying as they move through the list. In the week when the idea of a special anthology edition of *The New Vine* came to me, Helen had used Psalm 108 as the focus for prayer and it seemed to suggest that we could focus on it for some poems. So, I wrote to those who meet weekly before the service for prayer at Maleny, and suggested they do this. Here is the result.

PSALM 108

I choose to set my heart firmly on You.
To sing songs that express the praise
That rises in my heart as I think of You.
You are good and faithful and true
And Your love doesn't fail us.

And yet...

Here we are
Our world in dire need.
Fighting an invisible yet powerful enemy;
Insidious, cleverly adaptive
And always a step ahead
Of our best human efforts.

We look to You
Our God who saves.
Help us!
Deliver us!
Trample down this enemy!

I choose to set my heart firmly on You.



UNTITLED

When will it be my dawn?
Should my soul be still?
Your glory wellborn.
My harp for sure, but your will.



UNTITLED [2]

So, sit back and meditate
Who the heck's that at the gate
A delivery van! Hey, Great.



INSPIRED BY PSALM 108

My name is David and I wrote a psalm
In fact I wrote a few;
I didn't know that they'd end up in a book
Read by people like you.

As a boy I cared for my father's sheep
Working on my own;
It certainly gave me time to think
And practise slinging stones.

My father and brothers were not that impressed
When the prophet made his choice,
But I ended the loud-mouthed giant's life
And took away his voice.

My musical skills were put to use
In the palace of King Saul,
And despite his angry tormented mind
I gave to him my all.

I knew there was something more than this
Shaping me from the start;
For I was given a purpose to be
"A man after God's own heart".

I won many wars and took the spoils
And the people of me would sing
"He's slain tens of thousands", thus
"Should he not be king?"

I had cruel foes and strong friends,
I celebrated successes,
But I suffered much and sorrowed
In the wake of my wrong choices.

I was a shepherd with a Shepherd,
A king with a King, a lord with a Lord;
I was saved from my enemies
But brought low, as with a sword.

So I wrote psalms and songs of praise,
I wrote about my grief;
I pleaded for a clean heart
And, despite my shadows, came relief.

I love you, O Lord, my strength,
My light and my salvation,
You are in my streams, peaks and valleys,
You are sovereign above every nation.

I am David; my life but a breath,
My achievements, on balance, are nothing;
But God in His mercy lifted me up
And gave me a song everlasting.

Yes, His faithfulness and His love
Reaches far beyond the skies,
And in that promised dwelling place
Is where true victory lies.

A POEM BASED ON PSALM 108 V3

*I will praise you, Lord, among the nations;
I will sing of you among the peoples.*

“WITH GOD WE SHALL DO VALIANTLY”

When I hear “valiantly”, I often think of warriors, brave and strong,
Of soldiers on the frontline, of those who help when things go wrong,
Of explorers crossing deserts, jungles, ice or other scary place,
Of mountaineers, deep sea divers or those who go to outer space.

But what of farmers doing it tough with bushfires, flood and endless drought,
Of parents raising disabled kids with future days in doubt,
Folk serving at the margins in disasters and with those who are diseased,
Of Christians in lands where faith in Jesus brings suffering from authorities displeased.

What of Christian couples who have waited for their special day to wed,
To find only 20 can come and be fed.
Of those who have lost loved ones in these times of seeming madness,
But bravely face with only 10 their day of grief and sadness.

We are reminded, “With God” is the answer every day,
As we struggle with adversity and whatever comes our way
Our families, work, our service and even play
Are victoriously transformed when we live valiantly, trusting in His way.



COVID/PSALM 108

I sit and I ponder, why this? Why now?
Where has it come from? What is the purpose?
How long, oh Lord, must we be separated, isolated, trapped?

We feel lost, uneasy, the enemy unseen,
Not sure how to act, or which way to lean,
Not knowing how to reach out to a world of despair.

And yet we are not separated from you!
Your presence and love surround us still.
We feel upheld by your very hand!

Forgive us we pray Lord, as we bend to our knees,
Mercy and healing for those in need,
Wisdom and grace for those who lead,
You are our defender and shield in times of trouble.
Your infinite wisdom our compass and guide.
My heart is steadfast!



PART D: A PIECE OF HISTORY

This comes out of left field, as they say in the classics. It comes from an e-mail from one of our people that explained that this pandemic crisis has happened before in another guise. In fact, it happens every 100 years e.g.

1720	THE PLAGUE
1820	CHOLERA EPIDEMIC
1920	SPANISH FLU
2020	CORONAVIRUS

Of particular interest in our context was the poem below. Still appropriate today?

History repeats itself. Came across this poem written in 1869, reprinted during 1919 Pandemic.

This is Timeless....

And people stayed at home
And read books
And listened
And they rested
And did exercises
And made art and played
And learned new ways of being
And stopped and listened
More deeply
Someone meditated, someone prayed
Someone met their shadow
And people began to think differently
And people healed.
And in the absence of people who
Lived in ignorant ways
Dangerous, meaningless and heartless,
The earth also began to heal
And when the danger ended and
People found themselves
They grieved for the dead
And made new choices
And dreamed of new visions
And created new ways of living
And completely healed the earth
Just as they were healed.



PART E: SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

After this project was launched, it was discovered that one of our number was forced into home quarantine. One of over 13,000 people. Someone asked him if he was prepared to record his experience and submit it for publication. When I heard this, I suggested it could be in prose - an offer accepted gratefully. The second is also in prose, and I was taken by how each, in its own way, was poetic. Not traditional poetry, but by using images and thoughts to convey meaning beyond the obvious, and the language used, bring them to the edge of poetry, if not place them within it. So, I have bound them together.

A REFLECTION ON PSALM 108 V1 IN THE LIGHT OF MY 2 WEEKS IN QUARANTINE

*“My heart, O God, is steadfast:
I will sing and make music with all my soul.”*

Steadfast! Now that's a word we don't hear a lot of these days.

Perhaps more often we hear words like uncertainty, change, flexibility, adaptability, versatility and the like, but rarely steadfast.

But steadfast is a beautiful word. It has always been so for me - but in times of complete isolation, it is precious indeed.

Steadfast speaks to me of a rock on the seashore – strong, immovable, though pounded day in and day out by all manner of weather.

It speaks of an anchor bedded deep into the ocean floor holding the ship safe and secure in the face of wind and waves.

It speaks of a journey grounded in a belief in the mission it is on, an unwavering determination and commitment to reach that final destination in spite of disappointment, hardship and the temptation to give in or give up.

It speaks of a skyscraper rocking back and forth in an earthquake but safe on a foundation prepared for just that day.

It speaks of the faithfulness of a dog standing by its injured master in the blazing sun, without food or water, until help arrives.

I count myself blessed that despite the concerns, heartache and disappointment associated with COVID, my heart remains steadfast on God.

This is not a new thing for me however, as I have learnt over the last 60 years to lean on Him and walk with Him every day and I have never experienced a time when I have felt alone – lonely yes, but never alone.

As was the case when John was imprisoned on Patmos, isolation for me has meant more time to reflect on matters of eternal significance. However, this is not a new experience and in this difficult time it has been very natural to continue to live in His presence and to trust Him to see me through.

I am sad when I reflect on the modern concept of “steadfast” as being akin to stodgy, dour, stubborn, dutiful or an unwillingness to embrace new things - for it is none of these.

When our heart is steadfastly fixed on God, day by day, in the ordinary things of life, we can rejoice in the good times and endure in the bad – safe, secure and certain of His love and provision in this world, and our eternal destiny in the next.

Having said all this, I am looking forward to getting back together with my brothers and sisters in Christ.

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION FOR PANDEMIC TIMES

Meditation through the Pandemic – a journey leading into the Presence of God.

Simple silent still – essential elements

2020 tossed out our complicated, noisy forever moving lifestyles. Multi-tasking a requirement, silence uncomfortable, couldn't sit still. Thrown out of our comfort zones we were stunned. Later we embraced the freedom of release, slower pace, treasured friends and connections, simplicity and nourishment of good food. Complacency set in.

2021 sees us confused, dismayed, angry, on edge. Everything questioned. Incessant news updates. The light at the end of the tunnel blurs. We want to get back to our pre-pandemic lives. Do we really? Were we ever safe?

As I walk along the platypus discovery trail, the early morning whip birds, rainbow bee-eaters and red breasted tiny flashes, overwhelm with the joy of creation. Black cockatoos cry out in the distance. The platypus whisperer shares his finds. Standing *still silent*, we embrace this feast. *Simple* joys surround and surprise us.

Simplicity silence stillness

So, every day we humbly open our consciousness to the presence of God Not talking to God, or thinking about God, not asking God for our needs, or even pouring ourselves out to God we let our thoughts drift away, please don't evade this space. Pay attention. Patience. Faithfulness. Perseverance.

Sitting *still silent simple*.

"Be still, and know that I am God" Psalm 46:10

Marantha – come Lord Jesus.



PART F: CONTRIBUTORS

From the outset, the promise was that poems would be printed anonymously. As it turned out, that was a good way to go. However, I felt the need to identify those who had opened themselves, in such a short time, to give of themselves in this way. Many would have changed a few things if they had had more time, I understand that, but what has come forth I find inspirational. I hope you have too. Names are in alphabetical order by surname and are in no way related to the order of the poems. I am also pleased to say that many submitted more than one poem.

JOYCE BUTTERFIELD
SUE CALLAGHAN
GRAHAM DEMPSTER
RAY ELLEMOR
BOB GRICE
COL HARDING,
JOYCE HARLEY [Bob Philpot's sister in Korumburra Victoria]
MOYRA JONES
DOUGLAS MCCUBBAN
BOB PHILPOT
MARGARET POW
BARBARA RICHARDS
MURRAY ROBERTSON
ROBYN ROBERTSON
PAUL TARBUCK
GRAEME TOSH
HELEN UHLMANN
PETER UHLMANN

I end with an apology. There is one short poem which, for whatever reason, I could not find a writer when I checked back on my computer files. So, if the poem is yours, and your name is missing from the above list, please accept my apology and let me know who you are so I can correct the record for posterity, at least.

The pithy sayings that appear at the bottom of some pages were sent to me and offered as “stocking stuffers”. We have used them where we could, and am grateful for their presence.



PART G: A BONUS

As I was nearing the end of the compilation process, the Assembly weekly Newsletter came, and it included a range of COVID prayers [written for A National Day of Prayer on 22.8.21] which I thought might complement what we have written. Here is a sample.

REV SHARON HOLLIS, UCA PRESIDENT

God of mercy and compassion,
 We pray for the world as across the globe we face the challenges of COVID.
 We give you thanks for those who care for the sick,
 for those who work on limiting the spread of the disease
 and those who develop and administer vaccines.
 We remember before you all those affected by COVID,
 comfort those who mourn the death of a loved one,
 heal those who have COVID-19 or suffer the long-term effects of having had COVID.
 Sustain those who work in health care, testing and vaccination.
 encourage those who are supporting education remotely,
 console those who must stay at home,
 and bless and protect those whose work is essential for our wellbeing.
 We long for a world where access to health care and vaccines are shared equitably.
 Strengthen the efforts of those who work to end COVID for all.
 And fill us with a desire to work for justice and care for all.

Amen



REV ROBERTA STANLEY, UAICC QLD and BABINDA RIVER OF LIFE CHURCH

“Blessing and Honour and Glory and Power be unto Him that sits upon the Throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” [Rev 5 : 13]

Thank you, Lord, it's to you we look for help and strength.
 To whom else can we go?
 You alone have the words of Eternal Life.
 Lord, as we go through these difficult times,
 we pray you continue to show us your Love, Mercy and Grace;
 Speak Peace to our troubled hearts.
 Speak Comfort to our Fears.
 Speak Words of Love to our confused Minds.

Lord, bring Light that you may show us the way through this Darkness.

Amen



**BISHOP PK SAMANTAROY, 'BUNU',
DIOCESE OF AMRITSAR, CHURCH OF NORTH INDIA**

Our dear loving and living God,
Today we celebrate the amazing power of your holy word
that gave us hope through your Son Jesus Christ
who died and rose again.
We thank you for sustaining our life
in the midst of the devastating pandemic.
We also thank you for the love, care and contributions
we have received from the people we love.
Millions of people have died, and many are lucky to be alive
but are devastated by the impact of the pandemic
economically and psychologically.
We confess that we have sinned against you
by being too involved in this world
and not caring for your people and the creation.
Forgive, O God, our sins and help us to reach out
to the poor, the sick and the needy
and share our gifts with them.
May our faith bring hope to the hopeless,
and comfort to the suffering people.
May we always find your goodness
and glorify your holy name.

Amen



REV SANDY BOYCE, PILGRIM UNITING CHURCH

We are weary, O God

Weary of the magnitude of problems in our world.
Weary of troubles that overwhelm us.
Our global community has seen too much
Despair, disappointment, loss and grief.

In your company, O God,
we have the courage to face our realities,
and to name them in the spirit of prayer.
In between the words, we leave space for silence,
for those things that can best be expressed
by sign and sorrow.

We never expected to live with uncertainty for so long.
We never expected lockdowns to keep us apart this long.
We never expected so many celebratory moments to be lost.

We long to be set free from limitations.
We long for consolation, and gentle understanding.
We long for a return to normal,
but know now that will be elusive.

Even as we journey through these dark valleys
we pray because we are not alone:
God is with us, and remains with us forever. Thanks be.

Amen