

# Church in a Bag



Dubbo Uniting Church

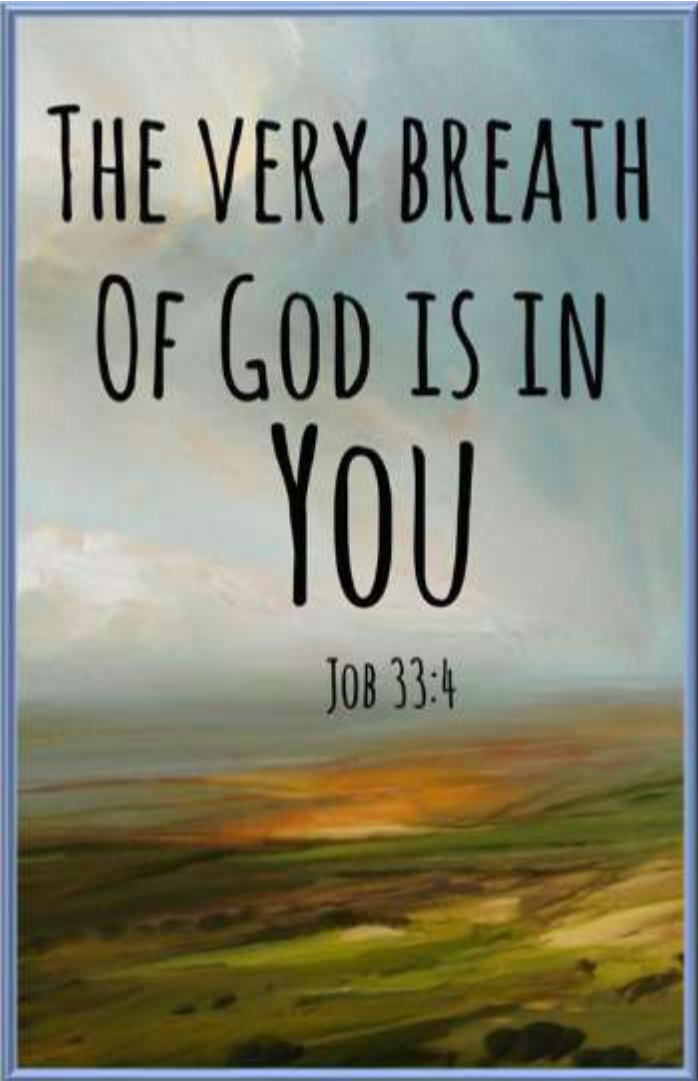
64-66 Church Street

Dubbo NSW 2830

p: 6885 4200

e: [dubbouca@bigpond.com](mailto:dubbouca@bigpond.com)

w: [dubbo.uca.org.au](http://dubbo.uca.org.au)



THE VERY BREATH  
OF GOD IS IN  
YOU

JOB 33:4



# Contents

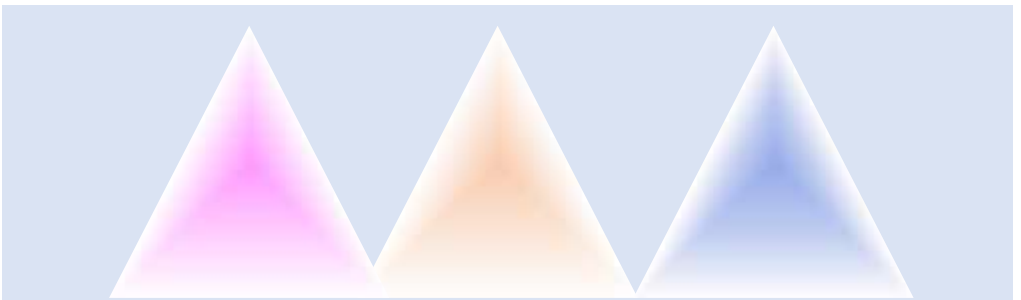


**Sunday 5 September 4**

**Sunday 12 September 8**

**Sunday 19 September 11**

**Sunday 26 September 15**





# 5 September



## A Gathering

Lord, our needs have been great during these troubling times. The reality of this pandemic has hit home and we have been challenged.

As the ramifications to health (especially our mental health), to our economy, to our freedoms to connect locally and with the wider world sink in, help us to place our trust in you.

We know that you transform lives, you bring healing, you bring hope and that you are a compassionate God. Help us to stay strong and enable us to use the love in our hearts to be of service and lift others.

Remind us that whenever we have asked for your healing hand to rest on others, it rests on us also.

In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen

## Preparation

The open Table of the Lord is of great comfort, especially at those times when we question whether or not we are worthy of a spot. How amazing that God invites *us* to partake of the bread of mercy and drink from the cup of love!

No matter how much we try to live our lives with an open heart, there are surely times for us all when we are challenged by the knowledge that the Table of the Lord is truly open to all. As the Epistle of James

reminds us, we all have deeply ingrained instincts about who the 'undeserving' are and perhaps, albeit subconsciously, tend to favour and defer to those who seems more

knowledgeable, better informed, more successful. What a privilege it is to learn of Jesus' mercy to a courageous woman.



How privileged we are to have known many others who are strong, who are inspirational and yet full of humility, as they take their place at the Table, expectant about who else will share. How privileged are we that, through prayer, through faith, through open hearts and filled with love, we have the potential to be numbered amongst them.

Reading

## Reading

Mark 7:24-37



## Reflection

Many years ago, as a newly graduated teacher on my first appointment, I found myself boarding with a wonderful lady on the cusp of her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. In the small village where we lived there were two churches, Roman Catholic and Church of England. In the neighbouring village was the Methodist Church. For the past forty years my landlady, three Sundays out of four, had played the organ at the monthly services for all three churches. She was also the 'go to person' for funerals and weddings. As a Methodist herself, she was sanguine about not receiving the sacraments at the

Catholic Church but very appreciative of the blessing she always received. She was less sanguine but philosophical, about being unable to participate in Holy Communion at the C of E. The parishioners thought differently, and eventually they reached a compromise with the church hierarchy whereby she could receive Holy Communion as long as she remained seated at the organ and did not come to the Table. How astonishing - a bending of 'the rules' to feed her the 'crumbs' under the table!

As a young adult about to embark on my own journey of faith, I found this decision to be both puzzling and confronting. Just as confronting is today's story in Mark. What courage it must have taken for this young Syrophenician woman to ask Jesus for help and to heal her daughter. What a strange confluence of possibilities has brought them together at a time and place where the boundaries of culture, location and prejudice intersect. At first beseeching, it is tough going to see how her pleas may go unanswered. To be rebuffed so cruelly by a man, apparently following 'the party

line', does not fit Christ the healer we know today. It is then quite marvellous to behold how she moves on from this rebuff to argue her case with great insight, as to how those 'crumbs' from 'the party line', far from excluding her, will provide sufficient nourishment to make healing possible.

What a watershed moment when Jesus, recognising the depth of her faith and her very real understanding of the reality of Christ's mission, extends his compassion to her - a gentile woman - and heals her child. Then the richness of this story continues as the woman is sent home to be reunited with her daughter who has been healed. No begging Jesus to accompany her, 'just to be sure'; but once again, the courage to accept his word, armed by the assurance embedded in her faith in him, and is contented with the knowledge that her pleas have been answered.



insight to recognise that a community of faith must be a truly safe place where all are welcome at the Table of the Lord. A place where faith can grow because love is in abundance. A place where that community of faith is not necessarily bound by the confines of a building but where opportunities to engage and share with all humankind are keenly sought and totally treasured.

My landlady was like that. Undeterred, she had continued her music ministry. Her faith and her open-heartedness opened a pathway for me, as well as for so many others, and I was truly blessed.

This story is timeless and so relevant for us today. How vitally important it is for us to have the



# A Song to Sing or Read The Summons

Will you come and follow me  
if I but call your name?

Will you go where you don't know  
and never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown? Will  
you let my name be known?

Will you let my life be grown in you  
and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind  
if I but call your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind and  
never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare should  
your life attract or scare?

Will you let me answer prayer in you  
and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see  
if I but call your name?

Will you set the prisoners free  
and never be the same?

Will you kiss the leper clean  
and do such as this unseen  
and admit to what I mean in you  
and you in me?

Will you love the "you" you hide  
if I but call your name?

Will you quell the fear inside  
and never be the same?

Will you use the faith you've found  
to reshape the world around  
through my sight and touch and  
sound in you and you in me?

Lord your summons echoes true  
when you but call my name.

Let me turn and follow you  
and never be the same.

In Your company I'll go  
where Your love and footsteps  
show.

Thus I'll move and live and grow in  
you and you in me.

*Words and music by John L. Bell and Graham Maule*

*Copyright 1987 WGRG, c/o Iona Community,  
Glasgow, Scotland*

*Used with permission CCLI 173204*

## Blessing

Go now, and invest your lives in  
the works of faith.

Make a name for yourselves for  
generosity and compassion.

Fulfil God's holy law  
by putting love into action  
as eagerly for others

as you would for yourselves.

And may God be your defender  
and provider

may Christ Jesus dispel all that  
disturbs or disables you  
and may the Holy Spirit  
make you rich in faith  
and loving and merciful in action.

We go in peace to love  
and serve the Lord  
in the name of Christ.

**Amen**

©2003 Nathan Nettleton LaughingBird.net

**With thanks to Janice Monk  
for preparing today's reflection**



# 12 September



## PRAY

### Pause Reflect Ask Yield

Today we pause our normal rhythm and pray a special Sabbath Prayer. A prayer for peace (shalom) to our God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: the one who transcends all-knowing and understanding. He is the one who guards us in our hearts and minds to move forward in peace, hope and justice.

### Pause

Read and pause for a moment on this passage. Pray for as much time as you would like with Jesus on these words.

Psalm 116:1-7

I am loyal because God listens to my voice and my prayers for grace because he has bent his ear to me, and through my days I will call. Deaths ropes encompassed me; the grave's restraints found me.

When I find pressure and sadness,  
I call out in God's name:  
Oh no God, save my life!  
God is gracious and faithful.  
Our god is compassionate.  
God keeps watch over the simple people.  
I sank low, and he delivered me.  
Turn back, my entire being, to your rest, God – he has dealt to you.

### Reflect

In his book, "Sabbath as Resistance", Walter Brueggemann says "I have come to think that the fourth commandment on Sabbath is the most difficult and most urgent of the commandments in our society because it summons us to intent and conducts that defies the most elemental requirements of a commodity-propelled society that specializes in control and entertainment, bread and circuses...along with anxiety and violence...sabbath becomes a decisive, concrete, visible way of opting for and aligning with the God of rest."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*.





Take a moment to reflect on this comment.

Now join in prayer  
God of rest, I opt for You and I align myself with You today. Give me quiet strength to defy control and anxiety, maybe even entertainment too, and instead help me to fully enter rest. I trust You and welcome Your presence and your Peace with me today.



## Ask

Take a moment now in prayer to ask God to bring people to your mind who are practicing peace. Who are these people in your life? Pray over them and ask God to further inspire and shape them as peacemakers. Pray with Jesus if there are ways he's asking you to bring peace too.

## Yield

John 20:21-22

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.

Brothers and sisters, receive the promise and the commissioning in these works, and pause for a moment now to receive the Holy Spirit. You might like to close your eyes as you do this, or open your hands with your palms facing up, or take a deep breath.

If it helps, repeat the words silently or in your heart, "Come, Holy Spirit"

## Sabbath Blessing<sup>2</sup>

May this day bring Sabbath rest to my heart and my home.

May God's image in me be restored, and my imagination in God be re-storied.

May the gravity of material things be lightened, and the relativity of time slow down.

May I know grace to embrace my own finite smallness in the arms of God's infinite greatness.

May God's Word feed me and His Spirit lead me into the week and into the age to come.

---

<sup>2</sup> Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, [petegreig.info](http://petegreig.info)



# A Song to Sing or Read

To end your time with God today,  
listen and contemplate with this  
song [The Blessing - Australia](#) (click  
on the blue text if you can) or the  
lyrics are below:

The Lord bless you and keep you  
Make His face shine upon you and  
be gracious to you  
The Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.

Amen  
Amen  
Amen

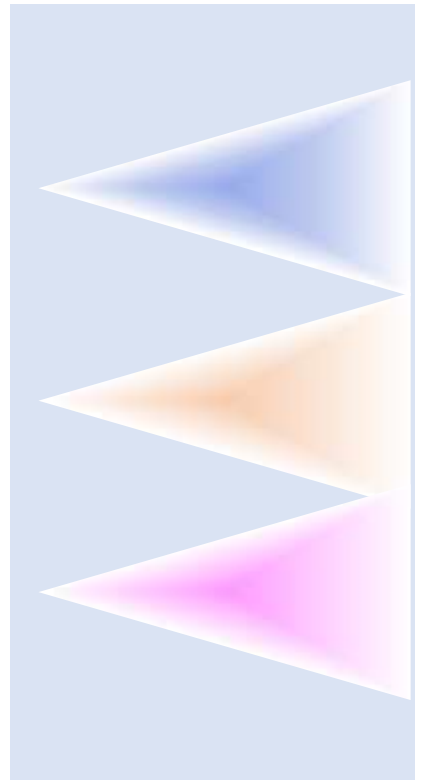
May his favor  
Be upon you  
And a thousand generations  
And your family  
And your children  
And their children  
And their children

May his presence  
Go before you  
And behind you  
And beside you  
All around you  
And within you  
He is with you  
He is with you

In the morning  
In the evening  
In your coming  
And your going  
In your weeping  
And rejoicing  
He is for you  
He is for you

*"THE BLESSING" Words and Music by Christopher Joel  
Brown, Cody Carnes, Kari Jobe, Steven Furtick © 2020  
Capitol CMG Publishing/Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC  
"THE BLESSING AUSTRALIA" © Copyright 2020  
WorshipCollective.co/The Blessing Australia  
Used with permission CCLI 173204*

**With thanks to Meg McCloud for  
preparing today's reflection.**





# 19 September



## A Gathering

Lord, at this time, I prepare myself  
to heed your word.  
I prepare for you God:  
for your presence  
to draw near to you in the stillness  
of my mind and heart.  
I prepare for your peace.  
I prepare to hear your word and  
be renewed by your Spirit.  
I prepare so that while I pray and  
reflect on your message to me  
I will be strengthened  
by the Holy Spirit  
to witness for you  
throughout this coming week.  
I am prepared  
in this moment of silence  
for God is with me now.  
Amen

## Preparation

In 1965 the Rolling Stones were  
the wildly rocking, counter-suit to  
the 'mop tops' Beatles. The song,  
"I Can't Get No Satisfaction"  
particularly resonated with me,  
both for its driving beat and its  
lyrics that spoke of the ongoing  
frustration and confusion with the

messages I was getting from my  
friends, my family; the demands  
and challenges of leaving home;  
going to Uni getting on with life;  
about having all the good things  
promised in life and finding it just  
wasn't happening.

Our readings and thoughts today  
can be reflective of this when, in  
our lives, there remains a sense of  
*no satisfaction* from the overload  
of constant and conflicting  
messages of 'must have'  
advertising, the number of FB likes  
and confusion of fake news. We  
hear of profit driven businesses  
making millions, while the same  
media sources report rising  
homelessness, spreading hunger,  
ongoing gender inequity, cultural  
isolation and social intolerance  
around us.

And no advice of nominated  
experts can come up with a means  
of betterment. Certainly, *No  
Satisfaction* here.



For most of us, we would have had 'that time' or many times when we wondered where are the 'well dones'; the successes for our efforts; some evidence of achievement; a bit of recognition of where there has been a betterment. *Where and when can we get some satisfaction?*

Perhaps, today you can glean from the passage in James what will challenge you to see the dangers of seeking without wisdom or poor motives. Mark then will remind you - as he recounts the exasperation of Jesus for the disciples' inability to grasp the purpose - of humble service to bring them to the greatness of God.

I'm wondering if there are ways to gain satisfaction and are they linked directly with knowing the greatness of God's love over any human wisdom?

**Reading** Mark 9:30-37

## Reflection

Pastor Brett Blair recounted this short example of *"If anyone wants to come first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all"* (Mark 9:35).

Some years ago, St Paul School of Theology in Kansas City was seeking a new president. Over one hundred candidates applied for the position. The search committee narrowed the list to five eminently qualified persons. Then somebody



came up with a brilliant idea: let's send a person to the institutions where each of the five finalists is currently employed, and let's interview the janitor at each place, asking him what he thinks of the man seeking to be our president. This was done and one janitor gave such a glowing appraisal of William MacElvaney that he was selected President of St Paul School of Theology.

Somebody on that search committee understood, in a flash of genius, that those who live close to Christ become so secure in his love that they no longer relate to other people according to rank or power or money or prestige. They treat janitors and governors with equal dignity. They regard everybody as a VIP. Children seem to do this intuitively; yet many times, adult Christians have to relearn it.

Do we know that point that we must stop measuring people by their successes and start regarding people for their service; for their sacrifices? What is greatness in the kingdom of God, but to be servant of all?

Jesus is trying to teach the disciples an object lesson about greatness, about servanthood, about leadership. He is saying to them and to us, "Have you lost the childlike joy and love and faith that once were yours?" He is also saying to them and to us, "If you want to walk on secure ground in this world, it helps to carry someone with you."



## A short song to sing or read

This tiny song by John Bell is ... well tiny. Just 15 words but I (editor) was inspired by a joyful video of this song.

God loves us all  
Strangers and friends  
God loves us all  
And it never ends.

*John L. Bell  
© 2008 WGRG, c/o Iona Community, Glasgow, Scotland  
(Admin. by Willow Publishing Pty. Ltd.)  
For use solely with the SongSelect® [Terms of Use](#). All rights reserved. [www.ccli.com](http://www.ccli.com)  
Used with Permission CCLI 173204*



## Closing Prayer

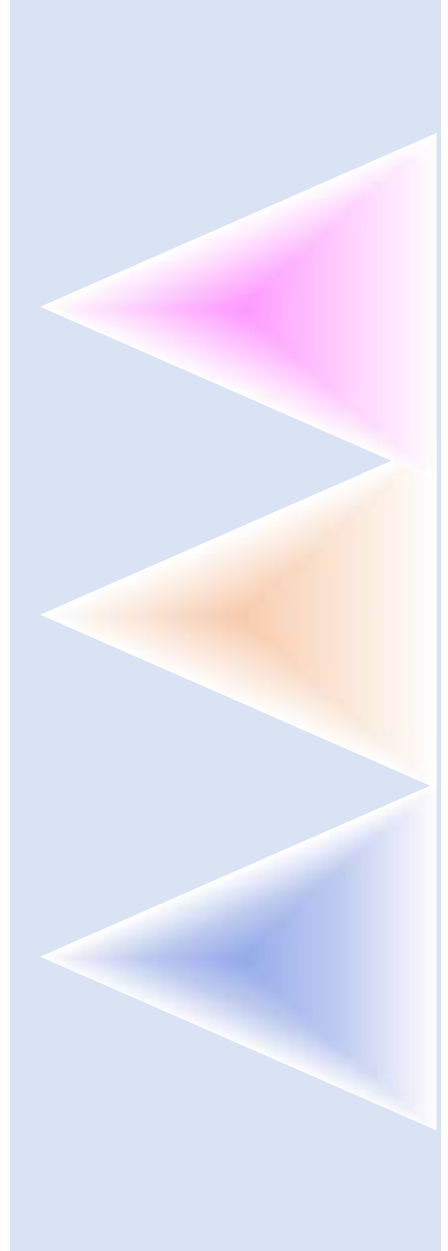
Lord, at this time we know that we are not alone for we live in your world. We believe in God the father who has created and is creating; who has come to us in your presence, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, to teach us, to open our eyes beyond what lies before us in service to you.

Lord, we trust you. We have listened to your words of promise and mission. We seek your light in the darkness; we breath in the life extraordinary brought through your spirit in us.

Saviour, today and everyday forward, we all want to share a new journey with you. We are travellers in your world and we know that you meet and travel with us, ensuring that we do not lose focus of why you came and taught us; were crucified, died and then rose again. We pray for the courage to bear our witness for you, even while we live with doubts and questions.

Make us today, a witness for you, Christ, in every moment.  
Show us today, the way to better serve you. Amen

With thanks to Dan Eaton for preparing today's reflection.





# 26 September



## Reflection

A Reflection for the people of the Lord today from Colossians.

Chapter 1, verses 15-18.

How amazing are these words from Paul to the church in Colossae?! Take a moment to read them again to let them soak in.

Paul's language here is beautifully poetic as he describes the nature of Jesus and how he sits at the centre as King both in and over the beginning of creation. He is the one that sustains creation even now. In this place that Christ has, in and through creation and in his incarnation as he walked the earth, he is the image of God. He makes the one that we cannot see visible He makes our invisible God visible.

Reflecting on this brings new meaning to the words in the Lord's Prayer:



Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name.

Truly our God is one to be revered, honoured and worshipped in awe knowing that the one who walked the Earth is also the one in whom, through whom and for whom everything was and is created; the one who sustains everything even now.

Let's take a moment to think of something that we have seen with our own eyes, perhaps in creation

or nature, that made us take a step back in awe.

Question for further reflection:  
What can this teach us about the awe and reverence that is appropriate to hold toward Christ?

Chapter 3, verses 1-4

What an amazing truth to cling to!  
And all the more incredible remembering the words of Paul that we read in chapter 1.

The same Christ who sustains all things is the same Christ with whom we are raised; in whom our lives are now hidden; with whom we will also appear in Glory!  
Amen.

Jesus who came near in flesh, who is far above us sustaining the cosmos, also draws near in each of us personally, raising us from death into new life so that we may also appear with him in glory!

This great perspective on our own life and existence is a transforming one. It seems so appropriate that Paul would encourage us to also set our minds on things above, and not on earthly things. Now Paul, in this letter, also gives many

practical, every day instructions to the Church in Colossae. That suggests then that Paul is then very concerned about our everyday lives. Sometimes we think that because of the 'bigness' of God, our everyday moments are unimportant. However, from Paul's instructions and his message to us about how near God is to us in Christ, we learn in fact that the opposite is true. That the everyday moments are beautiful and important. After all Paul writes, *"Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him"*. (Col 3:17)

It would seem then that Paul's point is that we should see all things in our lives from this great new perspective of Christ's great authority and supremacy; by His nearness to us and, in fact, our nearness to Him.

Knowing Christ and being raised in him, and knowing that we will appear with Him in glory one day, grants us a great perspective from which we can set our minds on the things above and see all things from this 'perspective of above'.



Knowing that this great perspective of above is for God's people and part of being raised with Christ, it is something that we can step into with the help of the Spirit. When we pray 'Give us this day our daily bread', perhaps we can think of the Spirit granting us this perspective, sustaining us as the people of the Lord.

Question for further reflection:  
In what everyday moments might we need the Spirit's help to see this 'perspective of above'?

Ultimately, we have great gifts from Jesus Christ, many which we have to be very thankful for.



## A song to sing or read All Creatures of our God and King

All creatures of our God and King  
lift up your voice and with us sing  
alleluia, alleluia!

O burning sun with golden beam  
and silver moon with softer gleam.  
O praise him, O praise him  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Swift-rushing winds that are so strong  
and clouds that sail in heaven along  
O praise him, alleluia!

Fresh-rising morn, in praise rejoice  
and lights of evening, find a voice:  
O praise him....

O flowing water, pure and clear  
make music for your Lord to hear  
alleluia, alleluia!  
O fire, so masterful and bright  
providing us with warmth and light  
O praise him....

Dear mother earth, who day by day  
unfold rich blessings on our way  
O praise him, alleluia!  
All flowers and fruits that in you grow  
Let them his glory also show  
O praise him....

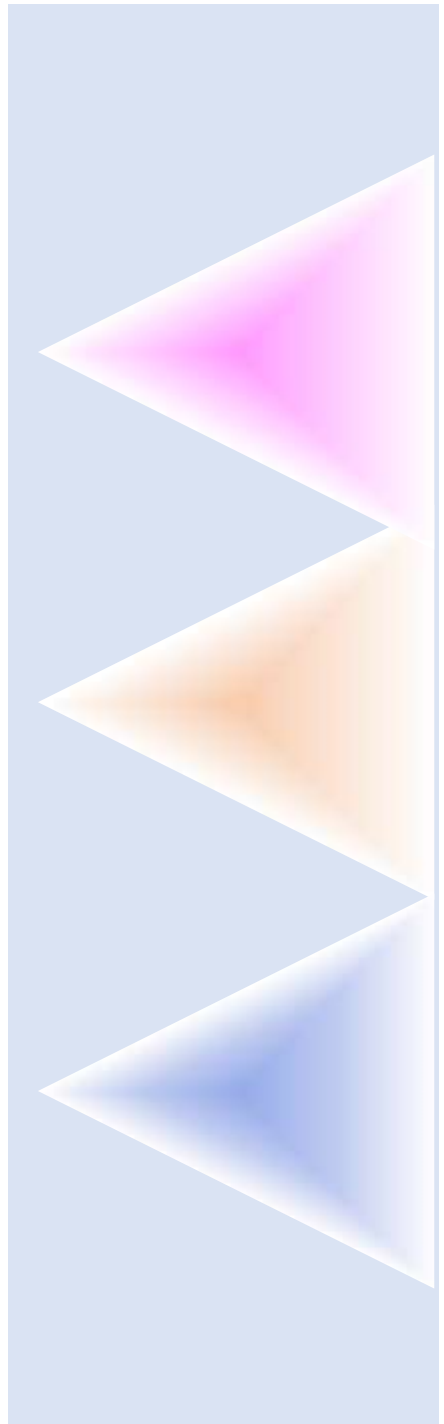
And everyone of tender heart  
forgiving others, take your part  
O praise him, alleluia!  
All who long pain and sorrow bear  
praise God and on him cast your care  
O praise him....

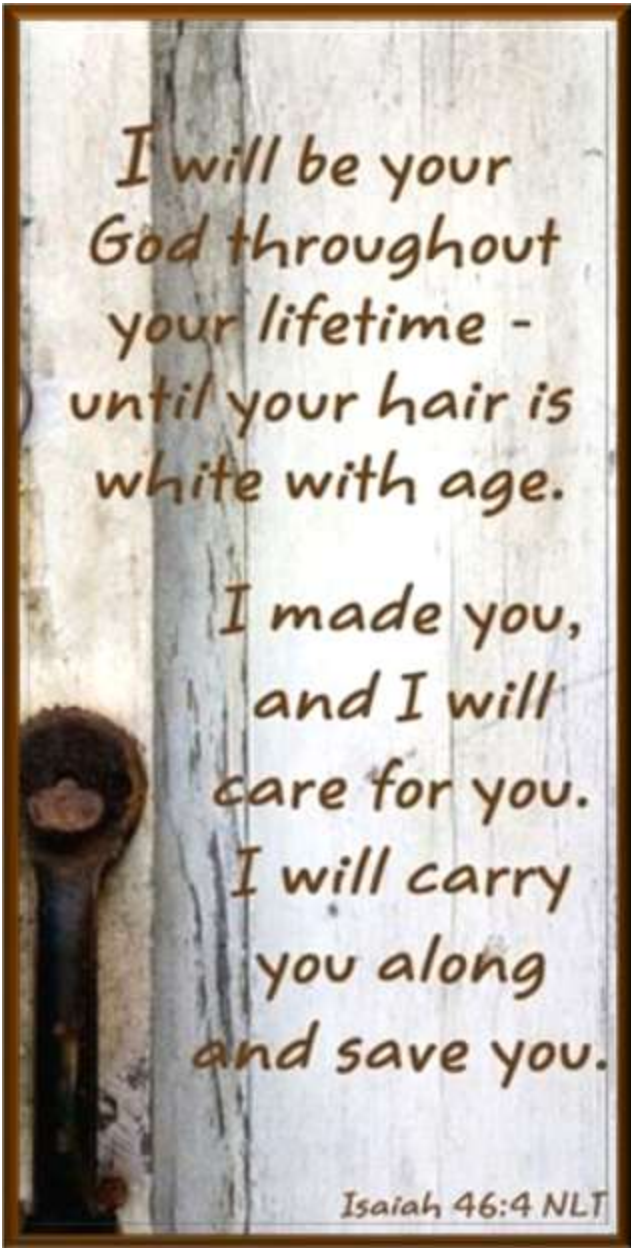
And you most kind and gentle death  
waiting to hush our latest breath  
O praise him, alleluia!  
You lead to heaven the child of God  
and Christ our Lord the way has trod  
O praise him....

Let all things their creator bless  
and worship him in humbleness  
O praise him, alleluia!  
Praise, praise the Father  
praise the Son  
and praise the Spirit, Three in One  
O praise him....

*Words and Music in the Public Domain*

**With thanks to Tim McCloud for  
preparing today's reflection.**





I will be your  
God throughout  
your lifetime -  
until your hair is  
white with age.

I made you,  
and I will  
care for you.  
I will carry  
you along  
and save you.

Isaiah 46:4 NLT



**Dubbo Uniting Church**  
64-66 Church Street  
Dubbo NSW 2830  
p: 6885 4200

e: [dubbouca@bigpond.com](mailto:dubbouca@bigpond.com)

w: [dubbo.uca.org.au](http://dubbo.uca.org.au)