

Prayers of Intercession – March 2020 (Fifth Sunday in Lent) - Prepared by Scott Phillips

(Informed by this Sunday's readings - Ezekiel 37: 1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8: 6-11)

We pray for the whole state of Christ's Church.

Heavenly Father, on this Fifth Sunday in Lent, we pause to rejoice in the ways that your Holy Spirit breathes new life into our bodies and minds. At a time when we are vexed and troubled by a respiratory disease, COVID-19, you remind us (through this week's scriptures) that your 'breath', your Holy Spirit, brings us refreshment, hope and newness of life.

By the prompting of your Holy Spirit, lead us along your Way of loving kindness, forgiveness and reconciliation, the Way that your Son, Jesus, has opened to us.

As the Psalmist reminds us, in Psalm 130, hear our voice when we cry to you in fear and anxiety; reassure us through the sense of forgiveness and hope that your unfailing love gives us; and so, prepare us to serve you and our neighbours, now and always. May this be our Spirit-led commitment: to build your Heaven on Earth, guided by our Lord and Saviour, our Teacher and our Friend, Jesus.

Bless all those who work to open up your Scriptures, administer your sacraments and show forth your wholehearted love in the world. At this time, when our church buildings have been closed for public health and safety reasons, we especially pray for our Vicar, the Reverend Elizabeth Murray, that she may feel supported and loved by the parish community she is serving and leading.

Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

We pray for the world

Jehovah-Rophe ('The Lord Who Heals'), we pray for the world community as we struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic. May your Church shine as a beacon of light and hope at this time. Today, we remember the work of Mother Theresa, the Sisters of Charity, and nurses and doctors far and wide. Help everyone who works to show your loving face to people in need of healing and reassurance. May people who turn to you at this time know they are loved by you, wherever they might be in the world, even when they face the prospect of death and dying. And make each of us channels of your love, compassion and healing.

- We pray that you strengthen and comfort parents right now, as they worry about the health and wellbeing of their children. Help them during these school holidays, and enable them to support their children's education when schools are shut down as a public health measure.
- We pray for men and women who have lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Help them receive income support, so that they can continue to provide for themselves and their families.
- Amidst the stress and tension that comes from people living at close quarters during the lockdowns imposed on the community by our governments, to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we pray that people can live peacefully and not experience family violence. Wherever family violence does occur, we pray you will lead the victims (especially women and children) out of those circumstances. Help mothers and their children to find safe shelter and sustenance. And transform the hearts of those men who resort to violence to express their feelings of anger and anxiety, so they become peaceful, sensitive and loving towards their partners and children.
- We pray for societies around the world experiencing difficulty due to natural or human-induced tragedies. We remember the people of Christchurch, especially our Muslim brothers and sisters,

as they rebuild their community after the massacre last year. We pray for people whose lives have been turned upside down by bushfires, droughts, floods, and other impacts of climate change.

- We pray for stateless people seeking refuge and welcome, as they seek to find a new home for themselves and their families.
- Lord, we pray for our Aboriginal brothers and sisters. Guide our governments and each of us to achieve reconciliation and to close the gaps between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Australians.

Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

We pray for our families

In our Sunday devotion time, we thank you for our mothers, our fathers, our brothers and our sisters, our daughters and our sons. May we be like the holy family of Mary, Joseph, Jesus, his brothers and sisters, always submitting our will to your will? Help us to be there for each other, whenever and wherever we need help, understanding and encouragement.

Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We pray for those in need

Jehovah-Jireh ('The Lord Who Provides'), we pray for all those people who, at this time, are in trouble, need, sickness, grief or any other adversity. At this time, we especially pray for people who have been infected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19), that they may receive good medical care and be restored to their former state of health. We pray for all those people who are in care, in hospital or in a hospice at this time. We pray for the homeless, that they might find a place of shelter. We pray for people seeking employment, that they may find work. And we especially remember all those people mentioned in our pew sheet this Sunday.

Lord we bring before you people in our individual hearts as we pause in private prayer.

Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer

Finally, we pray for those who have departed this life

Lord, we rejoice today with all those who have entered your heavenly realms, at peace now in your kingdom, sharing in the communion of saints. At this time, we remember people around the world, including those here in Australia, who have died as a result of illness caused by the Coronavirus. May the gifts of your Spirit that moved them also inspire us to walk in your path of goodness and love, all the days of our lives?

Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

Almighty God, you have promised to hear our prayers. Grant that what we have asked in faith, we may by your grace receive, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.