

North Lake Macquarie Uniting Congregation

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G'day my Friends,

I hope this letter continues to find you and your family well. There are various stresses and strains that may have been growing in you and in your family over recent weeks. I'm feeling the strain of being isolated from or at distance from others. On the other hand some may be getting more and more used to this 'new normal' of isolation and social distancing. It's possibly going to take us all some time and effort to come out from behind our locked doors and re-enter our family, groups and community.

Today is **Pentecost Sunday** (*Acts 2:1-21 & John 19: 20-23*) when the first disciples experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit poured out upon them, enthusing and empowering them. Jesus had previously spoken about being 'born again' – born of the Spirit of God. His disciples, on that first Day of Pentecost were behind locked doors, in fear for their lives, not feeling brave, and perhaps feeling somewhat defeated. Like the disciples we too find ourselves isolated, behind locked doors, some are literally in fear for their lives, and perhaps feeling somewhat defeated or despondent concerning present day circumstances and the days ahead. The disciples had no idea what lay ahead... what their daily life would be like; what their working life would be like; or what their worship would be like. They knew that all of the above would be different but they didn't know what that 'different' would be.

Jesus had done his best to prepare his disciples for the days ahead when he would no longer be present and promised them that he would still be with them. He spoke of a Counsellor, Comforter, Advocate (as His own Spirit's presence) who would be upon them, with them, and within them (John:14:26). This presence - His presence - would be all they would need.

Whether they had the faith to believe and trust Jesus' words we don't know, but with God's Spirit in their hearts they found themselves empowered to unlock their doors, to open them and go out. They then began to act boldly as they faced friend and foe, confidently sharing God's love. Now, without fear they entered into Jesus' ministry and without thought for self, giving themselves to that friend and foe. They were expelled from worship in their traditional, familiar, comfortable setting (*in the synagogue*). This was a traumatic and fearful time for them to say the least. In response they came together in new ways that developed into new styles of worship as the Church was being born. Today we are the people who are forming the new Church. Just as they never volunteered for this neither did we; but, like them, we will come together in new ways and develop a new style of worship for Church and community today. We have sung about this:

"One more step along the world I go, one more step along the world I go; from the old things to the new, keep me traveling along with you, and it's from the old I travel to the new; keep me traveling along with you."

Peace be with you,
Kenneth.