

Dear Pilgrims,

How quickly things have changed, even since the weekend. Every day we are confronted with more news, more information, more necessary changes to our way of life. We are all going to find ourselves responding in different ways to this news of the escalating pandemic and it's far reaching impact. No one is immune from the heavy cloud which is hovering over us.

However, we can choose to live hopefully, and gratefully – **taking care of ourselves and those around us**. We can choose to be aware of the vulnerability of people who live alone, or whose age or chronic illness makes life all that much harder. We can choose to find practical ways to encourage and support those people who are susceptible to depression and anxiety, young families and single parents. Maybe we can think of ourselves as people called to share the grace and compassion of God as '**alongsiders**' – people willing to move alongside others [*but not too close!*] to lighten their load for a while. Phone calls, emails, text messages are all easy ways to come alongside someone else for encouragement and offers to assist if requested. Letting someone know that you are praying for them, and encouraging them to call you if they need help can make an enormous difference.

Last Sunday at 10am we trialled a hastily put together '**live streaming**' of a **Pilgrim Worship Service** which could be accessed live via the Pilgrim Uniting Church Facebook page. This service continues to be available by clicking the clearly marked links on the church website. This first effort has been greatly appreciated by many. By Monday night, it has had 507 views on Facebook.

This **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March the scheduled 'Combined Service'** will go live on Facebook at 10am, and be accessible on the Pilgrim website: <https://pilgrim.org.au>. This practice will continue until we are able to resume our weekly gatherings for worship and fellowship. What a day that will be!

We are very aware that quite a number of Pilgrims do not have easy access to Facebook or to the internet more generally. We will do all we can to ensure that **paper copies of Orders of Service and Sermons** are distributed in a timely fashion to those in this position.

Many people have been asking about our **Lounge Ministry** which offers a place of hospitality and safety to many people who are doing it tough. Unfortunately the latest government regulations mean we are now unable to keep the Pilgrim Lounge open. We are doing our best to refer people to other services which, at least for now, are able to remain open. On a brighter note, we are able to continue our **Sunday Night Tea** program, albeit with a revised approach. Last Sunday evening we distributed 70 carefully prepared 'takeaway' dinner bags to grateful guests.

We have also had enquiries about how people can continue to give their **offerings while Church services are not being held**. Some people have decided to post cheques to the Pilgrim Office. Others are simply using their Offering envelopes and putting them somewhere safe until forwarding them to the Pilgrim Office. And others are taking this opportunity to begin giving to the Ministry and Mission of Pilgrim electronically - by Electronic Funds Transfer. If you currently use electronic banking you'll find setting up electronic giving very easy to do:

Direct Debit details:                      BSB: **035-006** (Westpac)  
                                                            Account Number: **224080** (Pilgrim Church UCA)

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,  
Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbours.

Grace and peace,

Rev Dr Greg Elsdon

Rev Sandy Boyce