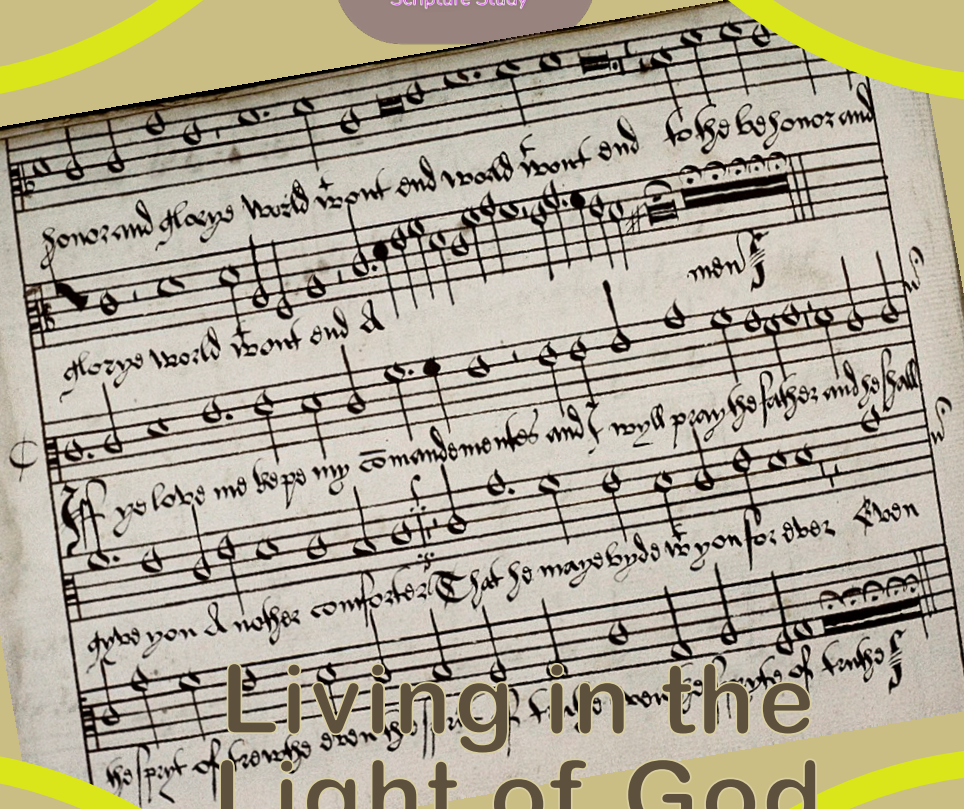




## BREAKING OPEN

Scripture Study

SIXTH SUNDAY OF  
EASTER  
May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026



# Living in the Light of God (not alone)

Dennis Webster

A weekly reflection based on the teachings at St Peter's by the Lake, Paynesville, together with a study guide based on the readings, some liturgical resources RCL Lectionary, and a weekly devotion

Revised Common Lectionary Related

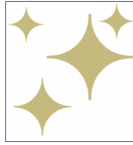
The Sixth Sunday of Easter

Acts 17.22-31

Ps. 66.8-20

1 Peter 3.13-22

John 14.15-21

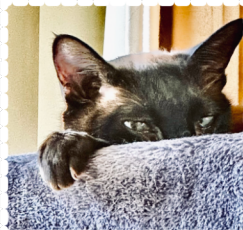


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Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

**O** Lord, from whom all good things do  
come:  
Grant to us thy humble servants,  
that by thy holy inspiration we may think  
those things that be good,  
and by thy merciful guiding  
may perform the same:  
through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In loving gratitude  
for Terpsichore  
“Terps”  
2012-2026  
Danced delightfully across the  
Rainbow Bridge 7/5/26



## INTRODUCTION

Sometimes, I have moments when the shadows seem to encroach and threaten to overwhelm me. This is nothing new for me. I do suffer from anxiety attacks occasionally, for a variety of reasons. I know the warning signs, I know how they present, and I try to re-centre myself immediately. There is a set pattern of breathing, praying, and trusting, but alas, at times it manifests as severe hyperhidrosis, and that, sadly, raises the anxiety level even more.

Unlike our Lord, I have never experienced the level of anxiety that leads to hematomidrosis, a rare phenomenon that results in sweating blood as well as water. The level of anxiety he experienced as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane is hard to comprehend. I have suggested in the past leaving an hour between “Can you not stay awake but one hour?” and “Not my will, but your will be done.” Interestingly, that seems to heighten everyday anxiety levels, as people sitting in a darkened church find the idea of one hour of silence and prayer a challenge.

In the secular world today, for some, Mother’s Day comes as a day of anxiousness as well as celebration. I expect that our church attendance will be diminished this weekend, as parents are either expected to be home and available for their families, or required to travel to see grandchildren and great-grandchildren elsewhere. I seldom watch commercial television now and, thankfully, have been largely unaware of the advertising pressure to buy “mum/mom” a high-pressure cleaner or a new petrol-saving gadget.

My mother was an early casualty of Covid-19, dying with 18 others as a result of infection at the North West Regional Hospital in Burnie. She died just short of Mother’s Day in 2020. There is, for me, an ache in my heart as I consider all that she gave to us, the hardships she endured at times, and the unmistakable appreciation of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. While I was not blessed with the call to parenthood, she journeyed openly with me and my closest friends with equal enthusiasm and love. So Mother’s Day brings baggage for me.

Following on from Domestic Violence Sunday, I am acutely aware that it brings challenges for others as well. When raised at General Synod on 7 July 2023, the Archbishop of York, Dr Stephen Cottrell, found himself a “living headline” when acknowledging that, for some in English 21st-century culture, “Our Father” may well be problematic. Enter the headline: **Archbishop calls for abandonment of traditional Lord’s Prayer** (The Guardian, 8 July 2023). A look back to an Aramaic fragment that includes the Lord’s Prayer suggests that the patriarchal interpretation is a modern English idiom and difficulty, and does not diminish the intention of Jesus. For the record, Jesus did not give the Lord’s Prayer as an example in Shakespearean English, any more than the Bible was authorised in 1611 by King James to be the one true translation.

The Church, ever mindful of the changes and chances of this fleeting world, needs to be sympathetic, open, and all-embracing when anxiety caused by circumstances brings challenge. Rigid axioms are not the Way of Christ. Continuing to explore Truth and Life is at the heart of this week’s Gospel, as it brings to a close the chapter that explains “The Way, the Truth and the Life.” And we are not alone. The Spirit of Truth will lead us. Do not let your hearts be troubled. Do not be afraid.

Wise words, and then a simple request: If ye love me, Keep my commandments.” The promise that follows is eternal.

And to note what many scholars, including Dr Andrew McGowan, have observed, what better way to begin reflection than to sing or listen to Tallis’s “If Ye Love Me”?  
The Gospel in essence. <sup>3</sup>

Front Cover: autograph score of “If ye love me”, Thomas Tallis (c 1505 – 1585)

# As we walk lightly on sacred ground, teach us Lord to make known your kingdom, and let this reflect in all that we do and say.

## Living the Life of God

This week holds a quiet tension.

We see the noise and colour of what has become Mother's Day: cards, flowers, expectations. For some, there is also a soft ache, a sense of absence or pain.

But there is also the older, deeper tradition of Mothering Sunday. Not simply a day of sentiment, but a day of belonging. A day of being gathered, formed, nurtured, and brought home.

This tension matters. Not every experience of mothering is safe. Not every story is warm. Some carry grief. Some carry silence. Some carry harm.

So we begin there. Not with assumption, but with honesty about loss and absence. Trusting that God's nearness meets us in that place.

Let us pause. Into that space, the Scriptures speak. Not with sentiment, but with truth.

In Acts of the Apostles 17, Paul stands in the marketplace of ideas, surrounded by altars and philosophies, and he notices one inscription:

*"To an unknown god."*

It is a striking image. A sign that something is missing. Despite all the searching, something remains unnamed. Distant. Almost out of reach.

And Paul says: What you worship as unknown, I proclaim to you.

But what he proclaims is not a hidden system. Not a secret knowledge. He does not invite them into something elite or obscure.

He says:

*"The God who made the world... gives to all mortals life and breath and all things."*

And then:

*"In him we live and move and have our being."*

This is not a remote God. This is a God who comes close. Who comforts. Who fills us with peace.

Not a God to be discovered by climbing higher.  
But a God already near. Closer than breath.

This nearness finds its most intimate expression in the Gospel.

In John 14, Jesus speaks to his disciples in that fragile space before his death. They are anxious. Uncertain. On the edge of loss. And he says:

*"I will not leave you orphaned."*

Not abandoned.  
Not left to fend for yourselves.  
Not cut off from life.

The word orphaned lingers. Especially this week. Because whatever our experience of family, whatever our experience of nurture or its absence, Jesus names something essential.

We are not alone. We belong to a community where God's presence brings hope. Where life is shared. We are not forgotten or without a sense of belonging. There is a depth here. It is easy to miss.

When Jesus speaks of God with that intimate language, what he himself knew as Abba, he is not offering us a concept to analyse or a category to define.

He draws us into a relationship to live.  
A relationship where life is given, sustained, and restored.  
A relationship where we are held. Not as an idea, but as people.

And so when he says:

*"You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you,"*

he is not speaking of something abstract.

He is speaking of presence. Of being with us.  
Of Spirit. Of life that dwells within and among us.

This is where Mothering Sunday, rather than Mother's Day, finds its authentic voice. Not in idealised images. But in life, that gives and sustains.

To mother in the deepest sense is not simply to care.

It is to nurture life into being. To give purpose and strength. To foster optimism and endurance. To protect dignity.  
To create space where growth is possible.  
To hold and to strengthen.  
This is not idealised, or even "woke."

It is closer to the song Mary sings—where the hungry are filled, and the powerful are unsettled.

Where life is lifted. Where what diminishes life is named for what it is.

And that is precisely what God does.

The God Paul proclaims—who gives breath.  
The Christ who says—we are not orphaned.  
The Holy Spirit, who abides with believers, is a central and enduring theme throughout both the Old and New Testaments, not simply a matter of thought. This is something deeper.

This is **resurrection** life.

Resurrection is not only something that happened. It is something we are drawn into. It is something we are drawn into.

We heard it last week, and it keeps echoing:  
We don't just believe in the resurrection.  
We are invited to live inside it.

And what does that look like?  
It looks like life is being restored where it was diminished.  
It looks like dignity upheld where it was denied.

It looks like voices heard where they have been silenced.  
The Psalm today gives us that voice:  
In Psalm 66, we hear:

*“Come and hear... what God has done for me.”*

This is not abstract. This is not a theory.  
This is testimony. A life that speaks.  
A voice that has cried out.  
A life that has passed through difficulty.  
A story that will not be silenced.  
And that matters. It matters deeply.

Because one of the deepest wounds in situations of harm, especially in the context we named last week, is the loss of voice.  
To be unheard. To be dismissed. To be made small.

And yet here, the Psalm insists:  
*Come and hear.*

And then First Epistle of Peter 3 takes that further:  
*“Always be ready to give an account of the hope that is in you—yet do it with gentleness and reverence.”*

Not aggression.  
A steady, grounded, visible hope.  
A way of living that others can see.

Drawing these threads together, we come full circle.

Mother's Day is not about pretending all is well.

It is about seeing what true nurture looks like.  
It is about becoming a community where

- \* *life is protected*
- \* *dignity is honoured*
- \* *voices are heard*
- \* *and no one is left orphaned*

Not in theory. In practice.  
Because the God we proclaim is not unknown.

This is the God:

- \* *in whom we live and move and have our being*
- \* *who gives us breath*
- \* *who abides with us*
- \* *who refuses to abandon us*

This is the God who raises the dead—and calls us to live that life now.  
Perhaps the invitation this week is simple, yet moving. To listen deeply.  
To speak truthfully.  
To nurture faithfully.

And in doing so, to become together a people in whom others can glimpse new life. Because we are not orphaned. We are held in the life of God.  
And that life—quietly, persistently, faithfully—is still rising.

## Group Reflection Not Abandoned.

The sermon makes reference the difference between Mother's Day and Mothering Sunday - one being about sentiment and the other about belonging. What does it mean to truly belong somewhere, and how is that different from just being cared for?

- The sermon distinguishes between the modern Mother's Day with its' cards, flowers, expectations' and the older tradition of Mothering Sunday as 'a day of belonging' where people are 'gathered, formed, nurtured, and brought home.'
- Think about a time when you felt like you truly belonged somewhere versus a time when someone was just being nice to you. What was the difference, and how can you help others experience that deeper sense of belonging?

In Acts 17, Paul sees an altar 'To an unknown god' and tells the people that what they worship as unknown, he can make known. What does it mean that God is not distant but 'closer than breath,' and how does this change how we think about finding God?

- Paul proclaims that 'The God who made the world... gives to

all mortals life and breath and all things' and says 'In him we live and move and have our being.' This is described as 'not a God to be discovered by climbing higher, but a God already near.'

- When have you felt like God was distant and hard to find? How might knowing that God is already close to you change the way you pray or look for God's presence in your daily life?

Jesus promises, 'I will not leave you orphaned.' What does it mean to feel orphaned emotionally or spiritually, even if you have family, and how does Jesus's promise speak to that feeling?

- The sermon explains that being orphaned means being 'abandoned,' 'left to fend for yourselves,' or 'cut off from life,' and that 'whatever our experience of family, whatever our experience of nurture or its absence, Jesus names something essential.'
- Have you ever felt spiritually or emotionally orphaned - like you had to figure everything out on your own? What would it look like to live believing that you're never truly alone?

The sermon references that to 'mother in the deepest sense' means to 'nurture life into being' and 'create space where growth is possible.' How can we all participate in this kind of nurturing, regardless of whether we are parents?

- The sermon describes deep nurturing as giving 'purpose and strength,' fostering 'optimism and endurance,' protecting 'dignity,' and creating 'space where growth is possible,' connecting this to how God nurtures us.
- Think about someone who has nurtured your growth and helped you become who you are. How can you offer that same kind of life-giving care to someone in your community or family?

The sermon talks about resurrection not just as something that happened, but as something 'we are drawn into' and can 'live inside.' What does it practically look like to live resurrection life in everyday situations?

- Living resurrection life 'looks like life is being restored where it was diminished,' 'dignity upheld where it was denied,' and 'voices heard where they have been silenced.'
- Where in your life or community do you see places where life, dignity, or voices need to be restored? How might you participate in bringing that kind of resurrection healing to those situations?

This five-day devotional invites us to "Come and Hear of God's goodness" as we explore the sermon from this weekend titled "Not Orphaned: Living the Life of God". Together, we will explore themes of divine presence, community, and the nurturing nature of God's love.



## Day 1

### Scripture: Acts 17:24-28

In the midst of our busy lives, we often search for meaning and identity. Paul's message in Acts invites us to see God not as distant, but as the One in whom we "live and move and have our being." This is a call to recognise God's sustaining presence in our everyday moments and to find comfort that we are not alone.

This message speaks deeply to the heart of our identity as children of God, living in the assurance that He is nearer than we often realise. It encourages us to embrace this closeness and to dwell in the life-giving breath He offers freely to all mortals.

- How do you feel God's presence in your day-to-day life?
- What does "living and moving" in God mean to you personally?
- Are there parts of your life where you feel distant from God?
  
- Pray for a deeper awareness of God's presence in your life.
- Reflect on moments when you have felt God's closeness and give thanks.

## Day 2

### Scripture: John 14:18

Jesus' words, "I will not leave you orphaned," bring profound comfort, assuring us that we are not abandoned. This day focuses on the promise of belonging, where God invites us into a communal relationship that transcends any earthly experience of loss or absence.

This intimacy with God, referred to as "Abba," creates a nurturing space where we are not left to fend for ourselves but instead are held within His loving care. It's a call to dwell within this relationship and to find strength and purpose in the presence of a God who nurtures and restores life.

- How do you understand the idea of God as a nurturing force in your life?
- What difference does it make to know that you are not alone?
- Are there specific relationships or experiences where you currently need God's nurturing presence?

- Pray to feel the closeness and comfort of God’s steady presence.
- Ask for the wisdom to accept God’s nurturing and share it with others.

### Day 3

#### Scripture: Psalm 66:16

The Psalm is a testament to God’s work in our lives. It invites us to come and hear “what God has done for me,” highlighting the importance of sharing our stories as acts of testimony. It reassures us that God listens, and in His presence, no voice is silenced.

This reflection on voice and testimony allows us to see God as a defender of dignity, encouraging us to speak out about the goodness we have received and the restoration we have experienced. It invites us to participatory faith, where our voices bear witness to His ongoing work in our lives.

- How has God been at work in your life lately?
- When was the last time you shared your faith journey with someone?
- What aspects of your story do you feel called to share more openly?
- Pray for opportunities and courage to share your testimonies with others.
- Reflect on God’s presence in your life and how you can use your voice for His glory.

### Day 4

#### Scripture: 1 Peter 3:15

Peter encourages believers to be ready to give an account of the hope within them, emphasising gentleness and reverence. This day examines the steady, grounded hope in our lives as we live out God’s call, embodying a nurturing and truthful presence for others.

We learn that giving an account isn’t about confrontation but about living a life so visibly filled with hope that others take notice. Our gentle witness can draw others into God’s nurturing community, where dignity is protected, and voices are uplifted.

- What does hope mean to you in your current season of life?
- How can you demonstrate your hope to those around you in non-verbal ways?
- Are there difficult conversations where you need God’s help to speak gently?

- Ask God for an ever-present sense of hope and guidance as you share it.
- Pray for gentleness and respect when engaging in conversations about faith.

### Day 5

#### Scripture: Acts 17:28

Resurrection life calls us into a transformative experience in which we live in the reality of a God who gives breath and life abundantly. It challenges us to embrace this truth and to become a community that invites others into the life-giving presence of God.

This is a call to action, urging us to live resurrection now—where life is restored, dignity is upheld, and voices are heard. As believers living in God’s life, we become vessels through which His hope and love flow, not just in words but through action and truth.

- How can you live out the concept of resurrection life today?
- In what ways can your community better reflect God’s life-giving love?
- What specific actions can you take to uphold dignity and invite others into God’s community?
- Pray for the courage and wisdom to embody resurrection life in action.
- Seek God’s guidance in ways to invite others to experience His life through you.



# End notes and further reading

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Harrington, Daniel J Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew  
Moloney, Francis J, SBD, Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of John  
Johnson, Luke Timothy: Sacra Pagina: The Gospel on Luke  
Collins, Raymond F., Sacra Pagina: First Corinthians  
Andrew McGowan [substack.com/@abmcg](mailto:substack.com/@abmcg)  
N.T. Wright, Twelve months of Sundays Year A  
Andrew Pratt, pastor and hymn writer ([theworshipcloud.com](http://theworshipcloud.com))

Let your faith and relationships  
be shaped by love and patience  
for God's love is  
revealed in lives, not letters.



## Brabarlung Totem

This is produced on  
GunaiKurnai Country and  
our respects are made to  
the First Nations people  
everywhere.

Prepared by Rev'd Dennis Webster, Rector of the Anglican Parish of Paynesville, Diocese of Gippsland for personal or small group use.

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