



MOSAIC

Reflect on the following questions relating them to yourself, your congregation/parish, and to the wider church, prayerfully considering the changes and opportunities beyond the pandemic:

How has the church existed and functioned during the pandemic?

- Have Christians connected with God – Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit?
- Have we worshipped? Prayed? Listened to the voice of the Spirit?
- Connected with one another? Been inspired or encouraged by others?
- Have we engaged in mission? Have you blessed someone? Shared Jesus' love?
- Looked for needs to be met in others?
- Seen Jesus at work in the world?
- Have we followed Jesus/joined in with his activity and his calling to us individually/corporately?

How do you answer these questions? What further questions do they raise? Pray about them.

Two stories I have heard this week illustrate different approaches to church in the pandemic and now:

My Mum (aged 85) – belongs to a numerically small Anglican church with older members. How have they worshipped and connected during this time?

Well, every Sunday they are encouraged to watch Songs of Praise on ABC 2, and sing the hymns/songs of worship, and then straight afterwards to follow with the printed readings and prayers they have received for the day from their church leaders. Mum feels joy, and a sense of unity with her Christian fellowship because she knows many of the others are doing the same at exactly that time. She is singing and praying with them. They also keep in touch via phone calls and some home visits. She still feels a part of her church. "It's wonderful" she says.

A friend - and her husband enjoy worshipping and praying together using on-line resources and services from their own church and from various other churches, near and far. And at present, feel no need or calling to join with others for small group worship, - as a couple they are a small group already!

But my friend is also involved in a family ministry team which in the past provided interactive all-age style church in their hall on Fridays, a few times per year. Now they connect via internet, email, phone etc to plan and then team up at their church hall to film an on-line version. A woman of prayer, she also intercedes for others, sometimes praying with individuals over the phone or visiting palliative/sick people from her church. And she prays regularly with a prayer partner.

We have seen many other creative ways of adapting to the challenges. Technology has been a blessing. And, as restrictions have begun to ease, small gatherings of friends are now starting to meet up for worship, prayer, Bible study and fellowship in one another's homes, again with the help of the internet and other resources. The many positive signs of creativity cause us to marvel at the way Jesus is at work doing wonderful new things in and with his church.

Consider your own experiences and struggles, plus stories you have heard. Thank God for his grace and help. Write/draw/express your stories or tell them to someone else. Share them with your leaders.

But what comes next? What questions have these experiences raised about how we live out our faith and follow Jesus in the future?

Is it realistic, practical, or even desirable, to default to worship as just that hour every Sunday? Do we continue to predominantly understand church as a building we go to? Do we revert to our dependence on ordained professionals doing most of the ministry - a pastor-centric church? What about the priesthood of all believers? – or church as the body of the living Christ? – or living stones indwelt by the Spirit of the Living God?

Dwell in God's Word as you reflect on any of: 1Pet 2:4-10, 1Cor 12:12-31, Eph 2:19-22, Eph 4:11-16

What if? – Prayerfully ponder:

What if - instead of keeping church, worship, mission, and, JESUS, in the box of blocks, labelled, "church as we know it" - we stop trying to keep the lid safely shut, and let Jesus keep it open? What if we dare trust Jesus to pour us out and re-form us?

Instead of uniform building blocks, can church/worship/mission be more like pieces of mosaic from which God creates his own picture? Different sizes and shapes and shades – God-infused pieces and colours spilling out over the boundaries to include more people, and make more patterns – as Jesus' grows his kingdom in his way?

What if we bless his people into their God-given calling as co-heirs and stewards, and creative ministers of his grace, and see where Jesus takes us?

What if being Church becomes more about the way God helps us link this multi-faceted creativity together – the old things and new things – the order and the mess – the struggles and the beauty....

- What if we seek God first in everything? Pray and listen and discern together to find the Holy Spirit's creative way forward?
- What if we encourage and support many different connections/relationships that include worship & prayer – pairs, huddles, groups, clusters, gatherings, events - any day and every day, as well as the special celebrations?
- Could we have worship that is mini, small, big, and huge?
- Could we have worship out of the church building that links strongly
 - with being community (fellowshipping/caring/sharing life together)
 - and with mission (connecting with wider community/friendship/service/evangelism)
 - with living life day by day – at our dining tables, in the car, garden, workplace, shops
- Could we have leadership teams that train, equip, resource, care, pastor, encourage, and foster all these people, links, and networks, to follow Jesus in daily life within the community?
- Could we develop diverse channels of communication and grow a culture of storytelling/sharing good news amongst ourselves first so we can then more easily tell our stories of Jesus to others?
- Can we engage with our artists, musicians, craft, and other creative people, to help us all convey beauty and love and Gospel? Expressions, symbols, actions, that engage and foster community.
- Could we be our better selves, in our natural places in the community and world, and see Jesus there day by day? Open our eyes Lord, we want to see Jesus!

Pray/reflect on how Jesus reveals his kingdom in the Gospels and within us today. Seek God's wisdom. Discuss, share/pray/listen/discern together, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, dare to dream and follow where Jesus leads.....

Our Father: hallowed be your name, your kingdom come and will be done on earth as in heaven.....

